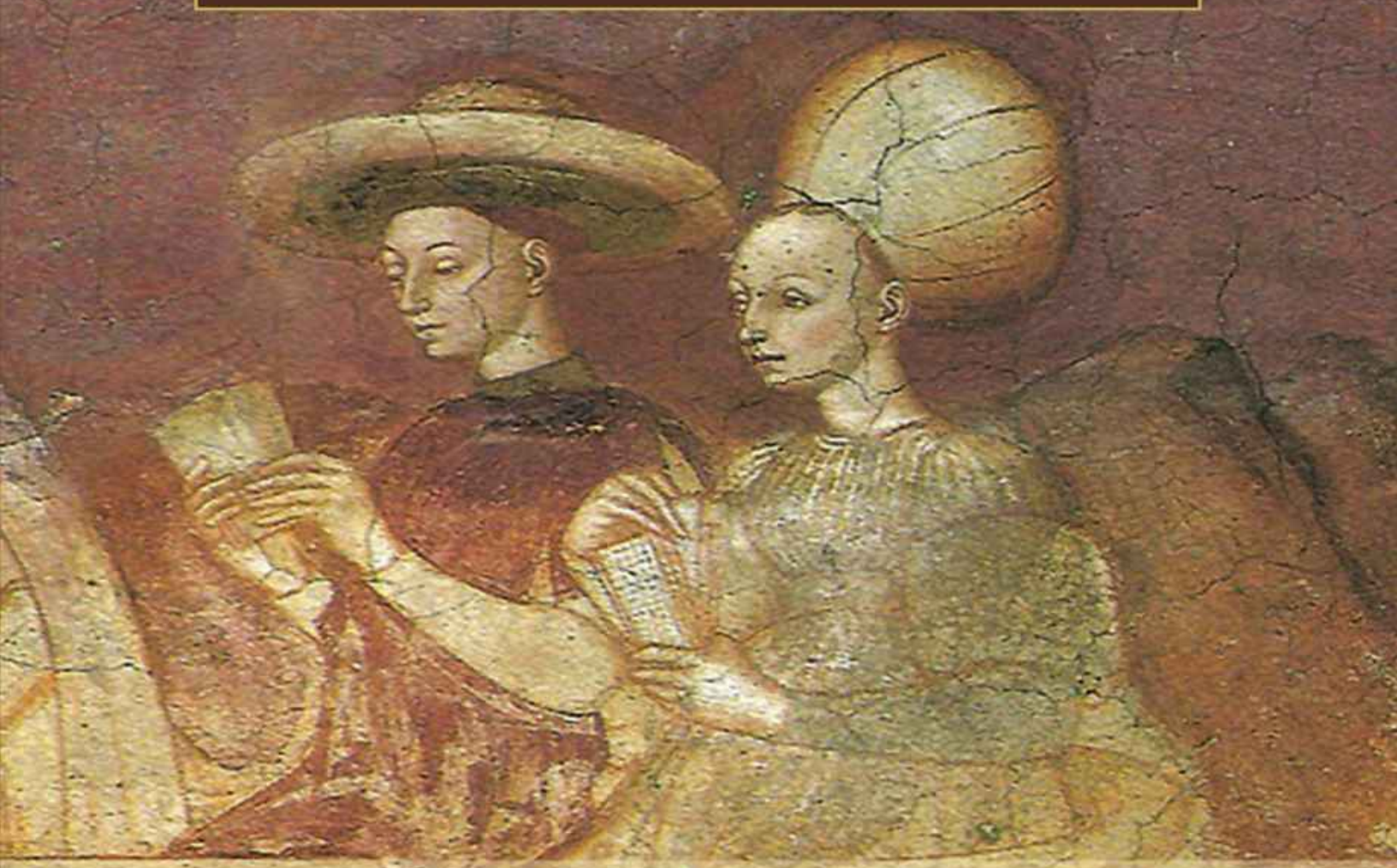
HOLISTIC TAROT

An Integrative Approach to Using Tarot for Personal Growth



"A modern alchemical achievement."
—BARBARA MOORE, author of *Tarot Spreads*

"Likely to become the essential guidebook."
—JOAN BUNNING, author of *Learning the Tarot*

BENEBELL WEN

PRAISE FOR

HOLISTIC TAROT

"A modern masterwork in the analytical tarot canon. The depth of Wen's research and the breadth of her scope are truly stunning. Her work will sit comfortably on the bookshelf with that of Stuart R. Kaplan, Mary Greer, and Rachel Pollack as defining works in modern tarot."

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"An invaluable resource and addition to any serious library. Bravo to Wen and the obvious labor of love and wisdom she has created and brought forth."

—Leigh J. McCloskey, author of *Tarot ReVisioned*

"A superb addition to the tarot canon; rather than focus on fortune-telling, here is an analytical, psychological approach borne of many years' extensive research and practice. With her outstanding knowledge of numerology and Eastern and Western wisdom teachings, Wen takes us on a tarot journey within."

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"I would recommend this book to beginner and experienced readers alike.… Wen's down-to-earth, practical book has much to offer all tarot enthusiasts."

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"A refreshing approach to reading the tarot, this book blends intuition with a modern analytical method based on traditional card reading principles—the best of all worlds."

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"An impressive, complete reference manual on tarot.… Wen is sure to become a leading authority for the next generation's tarot practice."

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"A tarot classic. Wen's writing style is empowering, warm, and witty, while her content is beyond comprehensive. From myth to meaning, from ethics to professional practice, how I wish *Holistic Tarot* had been in print when I was first learning the cards!"

—Sasha Graham, author of *Tarot Diva*

"A modern alchemical achievement. Wen blends wisdom from the East and West, esoteric tarot

traditions and contemporary psychology, and practical techniques, creating a unique approach.… All tarot practitioners will find food for thought and inspiration in this ambitious work."

—BARBARA MOORE, author of *Tarot Spreads*

"This might just be the most comprehensive (and intelligent) book on tarot I have ever read..... A brilliant, must-have book for all aspiring tarot readers."

—BRIGIT ESSELMONT, author of *Tarot Foundations*

"I own well over 200 titles on the tarot, and none of them could be what I consider a 'Tarot Bible'—until *Holistic Tarot*. Wen's attention to detail coupled with broad-based application—all infused with Eastern thought, Western esotericism, and practical experience—is staggering. It's very hard to impress this Queen of Swords, but with *Holistic Tarot*, I'm truly, enthusiastically impressed."

—JANET BOYER, author of *Back in Time Tarot*

"Wen combines an artistic sensibility with a clear intellect and writing style geared for many kinds of audiences, especially those new to seeing tarot as a personal development tool. *Holistic Tarot* is a generous guide to anyone interested in creating a future by delving into the great mystery of the present moment. I very highly recommend this book."

—JENNA MATLIN, author of *Have Tarot Will Travel*

"A comprehensive resource that supports the reader in using the wise mirror of tarot as a tool for personal empowerment."

—KIM WILBORN, founder of the Spiritual Path of Tarot Telesummit

"I loved this book! Extraordinarily comprehensive, well written, and circumspect."

—KATHLEEN MEADOWS, MA, Tarot Grand Master

"*Holistic Tarot* is the book I wish I had when I first picked up a tarot deck! This book is packed with valuable information and it is quickly becoming my go- to tarot resource."

—KATE, *The Daily Tarot Girl*

"A thoroughly comprehensive examination of the tarot. Wen approaches the subject from a modern intellectual platform that guides the reader toward using the cards for problem-solving and as a life-planning enhancement tool."

—ELIZABETH HAZEL, author of *Tarot Decoded*

"This book lives up to its title, offering everything from the history of tarot, its connection to Eastern mysticism, the use of tarot as a diagnostic tool, [and] an in-depth look at each card in the Rider-Waite-Smith deck."

—LISA DE ST. CROIX, author of *Tarot de St. Croix*

"A remarkably comprehensive book that covers all aspects of the art.… Wen has created a practical

yet highly spiritual guide that will earn *Holistic Tarot* a place among the most intelligent and useful interpretations of tarot."

—ROBERTA LEE, author of *The Language of Tarot*

"A library asset."

—JENINE ESCO, manager of the *Free Tarot Network* and *Free Reading Network* for the American Tarot Association

"From our new generation of smart tarot voices comes Benebell Wen. Her fresh and practical perspective on tarot as a tool for modern living, along with her well-researched understanding of tarot's history and traditions make this an important book for any student or teacher of tarot."

—CHRISTIANA GAUDET, author of *Tarot Tour Guide*

"A powerful demonstration of the sophistication an organized and systematic person can draw forth from a simple pack of tarot cards. Wen's synthetic approach is on display throughout, interweaving theories and methods adapted from such diverse points of view as physics, magic, Chinese medicine, comparative religion, alchemy, and modern psychology."

—CHRISTINE PAYNE-TOWLER, founder of the Tarot University and author of *Tarot of the Holy Light*

"Wen's erudite, personable guide to tarot is essential reading not only for tarot learners, but also for writers, artists, and anyone interested in the mysteries of the human psyche. If you're already a tarot master, you will learn from this book. If you've never laid eyes on a deck of cards, you will learn from this book.… Wen illuminates the symbology of tarot, and how to use the cards, in great depth and with tremendous care."

—AMY GLYNN, author of *A Modern Herbal*

"Rich with sound advice, insightful processes, spreads for all occasions, and real-life examples. [This book] shepherds the tarot out of the outmoded dust of fortune-telling and into the fresh air of twenty-first-century strategic living."

—JAMES WELLS, author of *Tarot Circle Encounters*

"A literary feast for tarot practitioners or any interested individual who wishes to attain a deeper understanding of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot—its history, purpose, and the meaning of its profound images."

—RICHARD PALMER, author of *Tarot: Voice of the Inner Light*

"All tarot readers, beginner to advanced, will find much to stimulate their practice in *Holistic Tarot*."

—ROHIT ARYA, author of *The Money Tarot Book*

"May just be one of the most comprehensive tarot books ever written.… An instant classic."

—THERESA REED, *The Tarot Lady*

"Presenting a thorough interpretation of the cards, which encompasses philosophy, spirituality, mythology, and psychology, Wen masterfully bridges the gap between conscious and unconscious, East and West, the rational mind and intuition, the traditional and the innovative.... *Holistic Tarot* [is] a must for anyone who desires to understand tarot on all of its profound levels."

—KELLI RUSSELL AGODON and ANNETTE SPAULDING-CONVY, authors of *The Poet Tarot* deck

"An important text, a complete handbook on the tarot."

—MUNISHA KHATWANI, Celebrity Tarot Reader

"A heavy-duty resource book for the serious tarot student."

—NANCY ANTENUCCI, author of *Psychic Tarot*

"Will surely inspire you to take your card readings to a new level."

—KOOCH DANIELS, coauthor of *Tarot d'Amour*

"Rich with tarot analytics, principles, and best-practice tools. Wen expertly shares a true holistic-based application for greater understanding of the eternal 'why.' "

—NANCY LAPONZINA, author of *Yellow Pansies in a Blue Cobalt Jar*

"Full of insightful information into the depths of the tarot. I will be recommending it to my students and learning from it myself."

—PRUDENCE J.M. THERIAULT, host of *The TV Tarot*

"Incorporating an integral model of psychological and cultural archetypes, *Holistic Tarot* is sure to abet the modern reader's understanding of this age-old wisdom-based system."

—DAI LÉON, author of *Origins of the Tarot*

"This is unlike any other personal tarot book I have encountered."

—JAMES GRIFFITHS, Spiritualist Medium and Resident Psychic at *Newsquest*

"Wen's approach to tarot is to treat it as a psychological tool that can be used for yourself for decision-making processes and self-actualization or read for others professionally.... Will become a permanent fixture in the tarot literary canon."

—BONNIE CEHOVET, author of *Birth Cards, and You*

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BENEBELL WEN

North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

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Published by North Atlantic Books
P.O. Box 12327
Berkeley, California 94712

Cover image: Detail from *The Tarocchi Players*, by Giovanni da Vaprio
Cover and book design by Susan Quasha

Holistic Tarot: An Integrative Approach to Using Tarot for Personal Growth is sponsored and published by the Society for the Study of Native Arts and Sciences (dba North Atlantic Books), an educational nonprofit based in Berkeley, California, that collaborates with partners to develop cross-cultural perspectives, nurture holistic views of art, science, the humanities, and healing, and seed personal and global transformation by publishing work on the relationship of body, spirit, and nature.

North Atlantic Books publications are available through most bookstores. For further information, visit www.northatlanticbooks.com or call 800–733–3000.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wen, Benebell, 1981-
Holistic tarot : an integrative approach to using tarot for personal growth / Benebell Wen.
pages cm
ISBN 978-1-58394-835-4 (alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-58394-836-1 (ebook)
1. Tarot. I. Title.
BF1879.T2W39 2014
133.3′2424—dc23

v3.1

To James, my Temperance

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Chapter 1

Tarot Analytics

A Holistic Approach

TAROT IS A PRACTICE rich with history and cultural knowledge. It is a science of the mind.

Through its development, tarot cards have absorbed the wisdom, the narratives, the philosophies, the cultural anthropology, and the moral lessons of many societies, many religions, and many schools of thought. It represents the spectrum of human archetypal conditions and personalities, which can be used by the modern day practitioner for psychological projective evaluation. Tarot helps us look within ourselves to understand our emotions, the reasoning behind our words and conduct, and the source of our conflicts.

This book will present tarot as a holistic tool that can help us mine our own unconscious[1] to find answers. You can learn to use tarot to make informed decisions and improve your future. The cards do not tell us what to do. Rather, they help us think about our problems from a different perspective and, like a diagnostics tool for decision-making, help chart a road map for the solution. Most people's typical analytical process incorporates rational and emotional intelligence. By learning and applying tarot, one can add a third dimension: that of spiritual intelligence.

I do not support fortune-telling and I do not believe in future-telling. My approach to tarot is not predictive. It is analytic. The signs and symbols of the cards facilitate retrieval of information from the unconscious and move it to the forefront of the conscious plane of the mind, which can then help us form creative solutions, present a different angle to a problem that we have been looking monotonously at, or offer the breakthrough that allows us to move forward. I call it "tarot analytics."

When we study the imagery and symbols on the cards in a tarot spread, we activate our imagination. That imagination then activates our intuition, which is often the only instrument we have that channels a clear path for us to the truth of a matter. That truth is often found in the unconscious. Tarot analytics can extrapolate what is otherwise latent in the unconscious archives of our mind and raise our truths to the surface of our consciousness.

If I ask you, "What will happen when I put my hand into the fire?" and you answer, "You will burn yourself," are you predicting the future? In one sense, yes, you are. What you're doing is tapping into your conscious knowledge to access information that will provide you with insight into the most probable outcome of my contemplated action. Tarot operates in the same way, albeit for more complex human inquiries. Tarot helps you tap into your unconscious knowledge, raise it to the surface of your conscious mind, and access otherwise latent information—in either the subconscious, personal unconscious, or even collective unconscious—to help provide insight into the most probable outcomes of your contemplated actions.[2] When people lack understanding of this, they might become superstitious, and infuse tarot with mystical powers that it does not have, either viewing it as a tool of the gods or a tool of the demons. I assure you that it is neither. As with any instrument, you can use tarot for good or with ulterior motives.

Tarot analytics is about using tarot to empower, and to help you confront the most probable outcomes of your actions so that you may rectify any missteps today to ensure a better tomorrow.

Skeptics will say that there is no objective truth to the tarot, only the subjective. We project our personal stories into the card meanings and make that our truth. That is exactly right. And that is exactly how it helps people gain insight into situations that otherwise seemed hopeless—because stress, frustration, and everyday worries clutter the consciousness and obstruct their view of the solution. We reconcile our personal story with the narrative of the cards and through that process begin to see our own situation through new perspectives and from different angles. Forks in the path that can positively change our outcome are illuminated. We begin to see our options. That is how tarot analytics can help. It is subjective, because it cannot tell you anything you don't know already. It tells you exactly what you know, but have not yet permitted your conscious mind to confront. It is about accessing the unconscious, the same theory behind psychoanalysis and modern-day psychology.

The tarot is our counselor. We consult it for the same reasons we consult our mothers, our best friends, confidants, grandfathers, spiritual leaders, holy books, inspirational and motivational literature, mentors, and teachers: we seek understanding through the wisdom that others have acquired so that we may in turn nurture our own wisdom.

Throughout the ages, the greatest leaders of human history have sought out oracles for counsel, especially in their most uncertain times. In an oversimplified comparative explanation, tarot analytics can serve as an oracle, but that's not what it is. The comparison doesn't completely explain its function. Tarot is a mirror. It reflects back who you are. It shows you your strengths and weaknesses. It makes you confront the decisions you have made in the past, your attitude, both good and bad, and how these components have affected your life. It's uncanny how, with tarot, just the right archetypes are always drawn to help you understand what you need to do to move forward. I have no concrete explanation for why exactly it works, though this book will offer a few theories.

In April 2013, a Vatican circular quoted Pope Francis: "In order to solve their problems many people resort to fortune tellers and tarot cards. But only Jesus saves and we must bear witness to this! He is the only one."[3] Of course, "only Jesus saves" is open to a myriad of interpretations. Using any object, even tarot, for fortune-telling cannot solve problems. In fact, I believe it creates more problems, because fortune-telling manipulates our expectations.

Tarot analytics is not fortune-telling. This book will not teach you how to use tarot to locate your future husband or predict how many babies you will have. While some people do attempt to use the tarot for fortune-telling—the same way they use tea leaves, coins, crystal balls, a bamboo container full of sticks, or reading palms to attempt divination—fortune-telling and divination are far from the objectives of this book.

Rather, tarot analytics applies tarot in the same vein as mind-mapping, a method for better visualizing viable solutions to a present problem. It provides a way of reflecting on the events and people in your life, along with your dominant personality traits, in order to better gauge exactly what you must do to overcome your obstacles. It is problem-solving in the form of analysis, not problem-solving by invoking the counsel of spirits. Tarot should not be used for flirting with our insecurities and telling us what to expect. So do not read this book if your objective is to learn fortune-telling. There are other texts out there that can help you with that. In tarot analytics, you need faith only in your own ability and tenacity to walk the path of your own choosing.

There is no contradiction between the belief that "only Jesus saves" and applying tarot analytics to chart out career goals. Any predictive attribute of tarot analytics is like checking the weather forecast for the weekend before a planned road trip. The forecast helps in your preparation only. Based on a

meteorologist's analysis, a most probable weather outcome is offered, but other unpredictable factors can change that outcome at the eleventh hour.

Having grown up in the Chinese/Taiwanese culture, I was routinely exposed to East Asian fortune-telling practices: face reading; palmistry; Ba Zi, which is the practice of revealing your destiny through date and time of birth; and many more. What I have learned is that fortune-telling is a rudimentary understanding of the cosmic forces that govern us.

While I acknowledge that we are each predisposed to a particular path, no one, no destiny, no pattern of constellations can make us walk any one path. There is no such thing as inevitability. When I see chocolate bonbons, I am most certainly tempted to eat a few, or all of them, and chances are I will eat a few (or all of them). What it takes for me to resist chocolate is a far greater exercise of effort and personal willpower than it would be for, say, my sister, who dislikes chocolate. Thus, when it comes to chocolate, she and I walk different paths. While I am prone to eating every piece of chocolate in sight, she can demonstrate remarkable restraint. Nonetheless, it remains fully within my control not to load up on sugar. If I make the effort to set a greater goal of personal health, I might harness from within what it takes to not eat the entire offering of bonbons. That is how disposition affects, but never determines, our future.

Likewise from an early age, everyone around me, including myself, observed in me a natural inclination toward the arts. That natural inclination is of no relevance if other factors aren't present, such as luck, study, or active pursuit of my arts-related dreams. As it turned out, my studies, active pursuits, and even the disposition I developed took me on a different path: one in lawyering. We do not have predetermined fates; rather, we have dispositions. From there we walk a garden of forking paths,[4] and the forks we choose are what determine our future.

Talk to ten practitioners of tarot and you will get ten different answers about what tarot is, how it works, and even what the cards mean. That's because tarot has never been a formalized practice, and many approaches have emerged over the centuries. Most books try to respect the different approaches and offer an over-broad explanation of tarot, which generally leads to even more confusion as to what tarot is, how it works, and even what the cards mean. Here, I acknowledge up-front that there are countless approaches and interpretations of tarot, and even countless uses for this inanimate object, from a European card game to fortune-telling and divination, to integration into alternative religious practices, to my use, which I call tarot analytics. I will outline how the everyday student or professional might use a deck of tarot cards to set goals, to understand where they are in their lives and the direction they'd like to move in, and to use tarot analytics to help *make* business or personal decisions, *not* to foresee what will happen to their business or in their personal lives.

Throughout the text, "practitioner" refers to the tarot reader and "Seeker" refers to the one requesting the consultation. "Practitioner" is fitting because it suggests an active engagement with the tarot. "Tarot reader," a more frequently used appellation among the tarot community, denotes one who has a more passive relationship with the art. Art, which is what the tarot is, should be an active engagement.

"Seeker" is used for the same rationale: it suggests an active engagement, one who is taking spirituality into his or her own hands. "Seeker" is capitalized as a capitonym throughout the text in deference to the spiritual significance of seeking answers from the tarot. Note that the traditional moniker would be "querent."[5]

Case studies are also provided, based on actual individuals and readings, though names and

identification information have been changed. The purpose of the case studies is to show by example how the principles discussed in this book can be applied. As you review the case studies, place yourself in the position of the practitioner and note how the conclusions you reach echo or differ from the conclusions provided in this book. By noting specifically how your conclusions differ, you can begin to tailor your own interpretive method in tarot analytics, which is exactly what this book hopes to encourage. Your approach must be personal, intuitively attuned to you, and not parroted from texts, other practitioners, or purported standards.

Chapter 2

A Concise History Lesson

THE EARLIEST FORM OF playing cards are said to have originated in China.[1] Records of playing cards date back as far as the Tang Dynasty, 618 AD to 907 AD[2]. These early versions were rich with cultural and mythical references relevant to their time and place, though they were intended for games, not divination. Also, these early versions from China were more similar to modern-day dominoes or mahjong than playing cards. Yet many believe these were the predecessors of tarot. Legends say that the emperor's concubines entertained themselves by divining fortunes through these playing cards.

Around that same time on the Korean peninsula, under the Silla kingdom, Korean shamans were shooting divinatory arrows made with bamboo and cock feathers.[3] These arrows were believed to reveal the future and other hidden knowledge that the shamans could interpret for soldiers and warlords.[4] In the sixth century, these divinatory arrows were reinterpreted into silk card strips etched with insignia. The silk pieces were organized into eight suits: men, fish, crows, pheasants, antelopes, stars, rabbits, and horses, and numbered one through nine.[5] Whether the original source of playing cards was from the Tang Dynasty or the Silla, most scholars acknowledge that they came from the East.

Trade eventually brought the playing cards to the Islamic societies. Many historians believe that a set of playing cards created in Egypt during the Mamlûk empire and consisting of four suits—Polo Sticks, Cups, Swords, and Coins, representing the interests and pastimes of the Mamlûk aristocracy[6]—were conceived by the Mamlûk Sultanate in what is now modern-day Cairo.[7] By the 1370s, merchants of Central Asia had brought these Mamlûk cards to Europe.[8] Europeans modified the cultural and mythical references on the Asian cards to reflect their own time and place. At that point, the tarot had not yet been created, but playing cards with detailed illustrations were common. The card games must have been quite popular in Italy and Spain at the time, as there were numerous laws written to prohibit the use of playing cards.[9]

Around 1440, during the Italian Renaissance, tarot cards in the form familiar to us today—the seventy-eight cards sectioned into the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana—surfaced, or at least those are the earliest records of them known to modern historians. One of the most well-known decks from that era is one hand-painted for the Visconti family, one of the wealthiest families of Italy in the 1400s.[10] Twenty-two allegorical trump cards, or trionfi, were added to the popular fifty-six ordinary playing cards (pips, which are the aces through tens, and faces, the court cards) to form the tarot, or tarocchi, a card game not unlike modern-day bridge.[11] That early version contained symbolism and imagery heavily influenced by Christianity. These Italian cards bore a striking similarity to the early Mamlûk cards from the East.[12] Playing cards were generally banned by the church at the time, though an exception was made for tarot, due in no small part to its popularity among the wealthy.[13] In contrast to the playing cards used by the lower classes, tarot was characterized as a moral, refined, aristocratic, and intellectual pursuit.

While the conception of tarot started as a game, some theorize that gypsies in the Mediterranean

were using cards similar to the tarot for fortune-telling well before the fourteenth century.[14] These scholars contend that the lack of early records showing the tarot used for divination is due to bans at the time on fortune-telling and public condemnation of it. The fact remains, however, that there is simply no record.[15] These remain mere theories.

Yet another popular legend holds that the tarot, namely the Major Arcana or first twenty-two trump cards of the deck, contain the divine knowledge of the Knights Templar.[16] It is said that while in Jerusalem, the Knights Templar discovered the Holy Grail, among other divine secrets, and brought back from the East their divine knowledge. When the Templars were persecuted in the 1300s, they memorialized their learned secrets in the imagery of the Major Arcana for future generations.[17] Historic verification of the legend is virtually nonexistent, however, especially since the dissolution of the Templars does not coincide chronologically with the conception of the tarot.

Verifiable records of tarot and mysticism did not appear until the 1700s, showing French and English occultists using the tarot as a divinatory tool.[18] In the eighteenth century, the Freemasons revived an interest in tarot with the use of the deck for divinatory and occult purposes.[19] Occultists of the time, such as Antoine Court de Gébelin,[20] a French Protestant pastor, popularized the notion that tarot cards descended from Egyptian mysticism and that gypsies brought the tarot from Egypt to Europe in the thirteenth century AD.[21] However, no known verifiable records support Gébelin's notions.[22]

Jean-Baptiste Alliette, an occultist who went under the pseudonym Etteilla, published extensively on cartomancy, subscribing meanings to each card and showing how to lay a deck of playing cards in a spread for divination. These methods were substantially integrated into later divinatory tarot practices. Etteilla's books utilized the deck of playing cards that we are familiar with today, however —with clubs, hearts, spades, and diamonds—not the tarot. Yet before Etteilla's passing in 1791, he wrote about the Egyptian Book of Thoth, much of which was later applied to modern interpretations of the tarot's Major and Minor Arcana. Both Gébelin and Etteilla were believed to be affiliated with a secret society, the Order of Elect Cohens, an occult group that preceded the Martinist Order later established by Papus.[23]

In the 1850s, Alphonse Louis Constant, also known by his pseudonym Eliphas Levi,[24] interpreted the Marseille tarot through a Hermetic Qabalah framework (to be distinguished from the Jewish Kabbalah).[25] By 1888, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn took a keen interest in tarot and popularized it.[26] Other schools of thought also adopted the tarot, such as Martinism, a branch of esoteric Christianity founded by a Spanish-born French occultist named Gerard Encausse. Encausse is known as one of the greatest tarot practitioners in history, and in the 1890s he published the seminal work *The Tarot of the Bohemians* under the pseudonym Papus.[27]

Renewed interest in tarot as an occult study coincided with the establishment of the Theosophical Society by Madame H. P. Blavatsky. Blavatksy's organization and its exploration of esoteric doctrine influenced many notable artists of her time, from writers Franz Kafka, T. S. Eliot, and W. B. Yeats to the music composer Jean Sibelius and painter Wassily Kandinsky.[28] The works of Kafka, Eliot, and Yeats,[29] in particular, were believed to be influenced by tarot semiotics.[30] Tarot as a book of divine knowledge became a popular premise during that time.

Thus the 1900s brought a number of important contributors to tarot studies. Much of today's understanding of the tarot is based on this modern heritage. In 1909, occultist A. E. Waite published his interpretation of the tarot, a deck now known as the Rider-Waite-Smith deck.[31] Modern occultists

speculate that the Rider-Waite-Smith deck was created by A. E. Waite to hide the secrets of the Golden Dawn in plain sight, and to allow Golden Dawn theosophy to be publicly available, at leas to those who are able to decode the cards.[32] Much of the deck's symbolism and imagery has its roots in Neo-Platonism, a philosophical paradigm from third-century Alexandria. In addition, mysticism, Western astrology, Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology, and both Hermetic Qabalah and Jewish Kabbalah, have been deeply embedded into the tarot. In the 1940s, Aleister Crowley created a deck known as the Thoth tarot, inspired by the Egyptian Book of Thoth.

Subsequently, countless tarot practitioners and occultists contributed their interpretations of the tarot with new decks. All of these tarot deck versions have in common the richness in cultural and mythical references relevant to the time and place of their conception, much like the deck's forebears from Asia.

Today, tarot is popularly associated with pagan, Wiccan, neo-pagan, and other contemporary alternative faith practices. That may be why there are common associations between alternative religions, magic or magick, and tarot. But the tarot is not exclusive to these faiths. It is used outside of faith in many walks of life and by people of all religious subscriptions.

Tarot has evolved through the centuries from a card game to a divination tool and is now gaining recognition for its value in psychological science. I liken tarot to yoga: It is a nondenominational practice that may be concomitant with the traditions found in certain faiths, but in modern applications can be used independently. Yoga helps with personal fitness, irrespective of one's faith, and tarot helps with decision-making, irrespective of one's faith.

In the late twentieth century, psychologists and academics started to take on a keener interest in tarot as a study. Robert Wang, one of the preeminent tarot scholars of our present time,[33] and Dr. Arthur Rosengarten, a Jungian-based licensed psychologist, pioneered the psychological use of tarot,[34] and spearheaded a new movement for legitimizing tarot practice as a psychological science.

Tarot is now used by many holistic health practitioners for mental healing. Counselors, therapists, and life coaches have applied tarot to psychotherapy. Today, tarot is also adopted as a practice of secular spirituality. Though the majority may still consider tarot to be a form of divination or fortune-telling, a rising community of practitioners have been using the cards for more rational-based applications. Tarot is no longer viewed as a pursuit for gypsies and occultists. It is an academic study that seeks to raise greater public awareness of tarot's uses for personal empowerment.

Chapter 3

Allaying Fears and Offering Theories

From Fear to Understanding

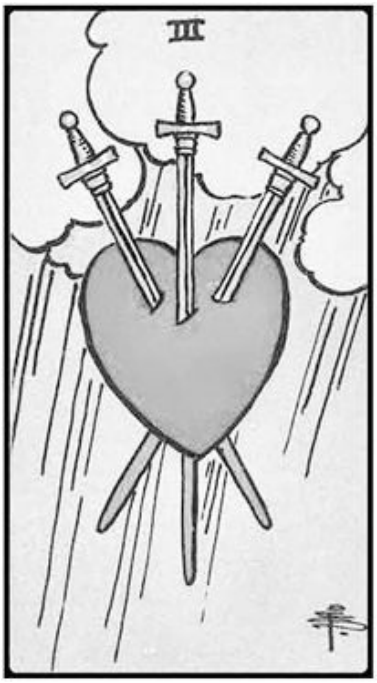
Some of the cards in a tarot deck look frightening to those who do not understand the tarot. This fear is the result of ignorance, of not knowing and not feeling in control. However, fear leads to bigotry, and bigotry leads to hatred, violence, and injury. Raising this point is relevant, considering how vehemently some oppose the tarot and those who practice it. Fear is dangerous, not the tarot. The tarot represents the spectrum of the human condition, the good, the evil, the light, and the dark. Do not fear the darker aspects of the human condition. Understand them. The tarot is a storybook about life, about the greatness of human accomplishment, and also the ugliness we are each capable of. It is not so-called gypsy magic or witchcraft; it is philosophy.

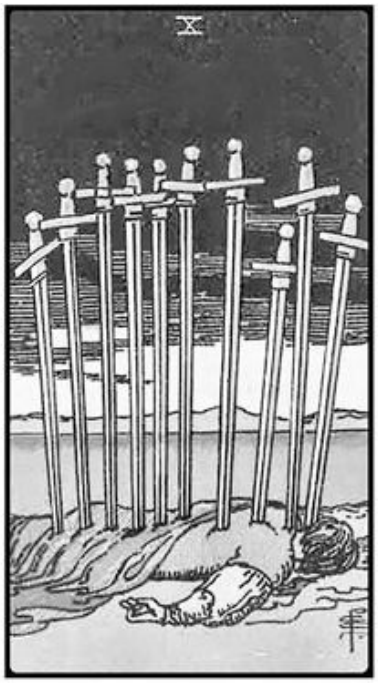
So confront your fears. Start by studying the Major Arcana cards, three in particular: Key 13 Death; Key 15, The Devil; and Key 16, The Tower. Draw them out of the deck on purpose, hold them and meditate on the imagery.

The Death card does not literally indicate death. It signifies transformation. It acknowledges difficulty and pain, but if you confront your fears and look upon the card long enough, you may also notice the bishop, symbolizing Faith.[1] You may see the glorious sunrise above his head, and realize there is light.

The Devil card is a warning: Do not be bound to the material and the superficial. Do not give in to temptation. It is an alert that greater willpower must be exercised to overcome negative influences. Likewise, the Tower card warns of the inevitable destruction and downfall of those who build for their own hubris, ego, and pride. It warns of the consequences of vanity. These are important

messages and critiques that we must be open to hearing. These messages help us make better decisions and improve our futures. When they appear in a tarot reading, they are conveying an important point that needs to be heeded, so that our lives can turn out for the best.





The suit of Swords represents human ambition, aggression, and force, which can lead to conquest, but more often to destruction. The cards warn of the latter, darker aspect. The Three of Swords shows strife and the storm of emotions and injuries to the heart caused by aggression. The Eight of Swords conjures a sense of imprisonment and feeling like there is no way out of a bad situation. However, the woman simply can't see a way out. She could use the swords around her to cut through her bondage. Thus, the card reminds us to use creativity and inner strength to release us from duress. The Ten of Swords, another card that provokes people's fear of death, does not indicate fatality in the literal sense, but represents the pinnacle of what aggression can do. It shows defeat, the result of others' jealousy, hatred, and retaliation. And yet the light in the horizon suggests that there is still the courage to rise again, this time improved with experience and wisdom. The Five of Pentacles shows destitution, a sense of homelessness, and a lack of adequate resources. It is a difficult card for most people to confront because it shows us in a state of poverty, be it financial or emotional. It is a card of personal winters. However, embedded in the card is the solution: faith. The Five of Pentacles affirms the power of prayer. It shows us that poverty and depression bring us closer to God or divinity.

There are many beautiful and glorious cards in the tarot deck as well, many in the suit of Cups, the suit of emotions. Cups remind us that it is through the governance of our emotions that we will find happiness. On the other hand, cards from the suit of Wands reveal the success of human ingenuity, though the Ten of Wands reminds us to pace ourselves and to know our own physical limits. The Two of Wands signals the start of fruition for artistic or scientific ventures and the Six of Wands shows victory and advancement in the arts and sciences.

Throughout history and even today, the tarot has been looked upon as demonic and a violation of God's command. Such fears are misplaced. The tarot is not capable of being good or evil. They are just playing cards. Drinking sacramental wine is drinking alcohol. Drowning your liver with vodka is also drinking alcohol. Alcohol is alcohol, with neither innate virtue nor innate sin. It's what you do with it. A knife can cut the ropes that bind a captive. It can also take a life. Guns murder, but also protect. If the gun is being blamed rather than people, then people misplace their fears. Only people are capable of being good or evil.

But religious condemnation is understandable when tarot is presented as fortune-telling. Fortune-telling serves no benefit. Purporting to predict the future with certainty is detrimental to the Seeker. It diverts the Seeker's focus from the present, and the Seeker's own spirituality, and redirects it to a purported future outcome, to the superficial and the material. The Seeker becomes disabled, passive, and simply waits through life for that supposed future outcome to come about. Worse yet, if the future predicted is negative, the Seeker may dwell on it to such an extent that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This harms the Seeker more than it helps. Giving credence to a prediction might disable your willpower, especially when you're young or naive. Don't use the tarot only because you want to know what will happen next or you might lose sight of what is happening *now*. Instead, use the tarot to understand *why* and *how*. You influence your future through action and attitude, not through cards.

The Christian Bible warns against seeking out soothsayers for divination.[2] Divination here refers to fortune-telling, speaking with certainty about a person's future, speaking with certainty about the will of the higher powers, and making the presumption that a human could know what the higher powers know. By that definition, I am against divination, too. My definition of divination is to see and know yourself with clarity, not see or know the future. Tarot is used to help you make sense of *you* and only you. It tells you what the most likely outcome is based on your current actions and attitudes. It does not foretell your destiny, but rather points out your strengths and weaknesses. If you have a knack for anatomy, are detail-oriented, a natural in academics, and possess an incredible amount of focus and drive, you might do well in the field of medicine. That doesn't mean you're fated to become a doctor.

I don't see how any mainstream religion could object, logically or spiritually, to using tarot as a diagnostic tool. Tarot analytics simply helps a Seeker interpret his or her present life in order to make

better choices for the future. By calling upon the wisdom of the ages, through symbols that can be interpreted through any religious framework, the Seeker is soliciting help in navigating the chaos of modernity.

Although some *do* use tarot as a divination tool, this book will present it as a diagnostics tool. Through further education and compassion, tarot practitioners can allay people's fears and eradicate the misconceptions of tarot. Do not trust my word on what tarot is or is not. Instead, learn about it, understand it, then make that judgment call yourself.

Synchronicity

With regard to why or how the tarot works, there are many prevailing theories. One popular theory is the Jungian principle of synchronicity.[3] Generally, we understand that events happen in relation to one another because of cause and effect, the causality principle. Around 1930, psychologist Carl Gustav Jung proposed a second explanation of events. When two or more events seem to be related but cannot be adequately explained by cause and effect, the theory for how and why the events occur together is synchronicity. The theory endeavors to explain coincidences, related or similar events that occur simultaneously, that have no cause and effect relationship, but were highly unlikely to have occurred just by chance.

Synchronicity was used by Jung to explain the unusual accuracy of I Ching (乖乖) divination.[4] I Ching, if an oversimplified explanation may be offered, is a book of sixty-four hexagrams that dates as far back in recorded history as 475–221 BC China. Each hexagram suggests certain keywords and is interpreted to represent an aspect of the human condition, not unlike the tarot. Like the tarot, a random generation method is used to draw out a hexagram or series of hexagrams, and the spread is interpreted by a knowledgeable practitioner who will then help provide insight into a Seeker's life. According to Jung, synchronicity explained the attuning of a psychic state with external events.[5]

I offer a few real-life events to illustrate synchronicity. The first: my husband was in Peru with friends while I remained in California. While he and his friends were hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, they noticed a barebacked hiker with a conspicuous tattoo of a nude woman curled in a fetal position, head down, with angel wings. His friend pointed and teased my husband about how much I (his wife) would love it if he got a tattoo like that. Meanwhile, back in the States, I was working on a painting and at the same time that he and his friend saw the tattoo, I painted a nude woman curled in a fetal position, head down, with angel wings. Neither one of us had communicated to the other. The next day they reached a site with Internet connection and I sent him a photograph of my painting. He showed it to his friend. "Oh, my God," exclaimed the friend, "that looks exactly like the tattoo we saw."

Another time, I was with a friend in a café, relaying a story. However, the name of the person I was talking about kept eluding me. It was not a common name, either. Let's say that the name was Saffron. As I was trying to think of the name, a white truck with saffron painted across its side drove by. These are called synchronicities.

Apophenia and Patternicity

Apophenia, another related principle—one perhaps more critical of such practices as the tarot—suggests that it is all in the mind. Basically, events are objective and even when two or more events occur simultaneously, the occurrence is random and meaningless. It is the gullible, subjective human mind that must draw a relation and a meaning between the events. The term itself is attributed to neurologist Klaus Conrad. Historian and skeptic Michael Shermer added to the theory with his own principle, called "patternicity."[6] The theories both try to explain why people seek deeper meaning in simple images printed on a deck of cards and why we assign personal relevance to those images.[7]

Despite apophenia and patternicity, tarot reading can be compared to inkblot or Rorschach tests. In such projective psychological tests, patients narrate personal, subjective meaning out of blots of ink, symbols, or objective imagery. A psychologist who is practiced and educated at interpreting the nexus between imagery and patient can then provide an analysis that will aid in the patient's therapy. Though of course there are differences, and a tarot practitioner can never, should never, and will never be a substitute for a psychologist, the underlying concept can be applied to the tarot to understand the tarot's objective function. Even when Seekers are projecting their personal situations into a practitioner's interpretation of a spread, the Seeker's projection itself could potentially be helpful to the Seeker, especially in the hands of a skilled tarot practitioner. For example, it can motivate the Seeker to be more proactive about going for his or her dreams, similar to the inspiration of a life coach. Thus, apophenia and patternicity do not invalidate the tarot, but rather, actually support an important function of the tarot. The interpretation and imagery of the cards act simply as a catalyst for the Seeker to reach his or her own epiphanies.

The Forer (or Barnum) Effect

The Forer Effect, sometimes referred to as the Barnum Effect, should not be discounted either. Psychologist Bertram R. Forer contended that no matter how vague or overbroad a personality description is, individuals who are told that such a description pertains to them will, for one essential reason or another, believe it and adjudicate it as highly accurate.[8] The concept is related to subjective validation, a cognitive bias that occurs when information is presented to an individual with the representation that such information is personally tailored. The individual will accept the information as true. These theories are considered psychological explanations for people's belief in divinatory practices such as the tarot.

Divine and Occult Theories

Another theory, albeit one that may demand a leap of faith, combines tarot and witchcraft to espouse that the predictive power innate in tarot cards will cause the events foretold in a spread to happen. The power of tarot cards enters the individuals interacting with it and the two entities become one. As one, they have a mutually profound effect on each other. Thus, while an individual has infinite probable futures prior to sitting down for a tarot reading, once the cards are spread, the future foretold in the cards becomes a reality.[9] This is the result of a magickal power in the cards, magick being a neo-pagan concept. Note the distinction between that theory and the more conventional one held in the tarot community, which is that the power of the individual is what affects the cards.

Still others believe that tarot readings operate the same way séances do: through spiritual intervention, whether a divine god, goddess, angels, ghosts of the dead, fairies, gremlins, or demons. Like a Ouija board, the cards are a mere medium through which the spirit world communicates with the sentient. Clearly there is a great range to the theories for why tarot works.

Myth of the Divination-Fulfilling Prophecy

A widely held belief of the tarot, or any form of divination for that matter, is its power to fulfill its own prophecy. If the tarot predicts an unfortunate outcome, then even if the Seeker's future was uncertain before, the power of that prediction will make the unfortunate outcome happen for sure. Thereafter, nothing the Seeker does can prevent the outcome because the act of the divination has caused the future to become fixed. Had the Seeker *not* sought divination, that future would have remained unfixed. I refer to this belief as the "divination-fulfilling prophecy."[10] The divination-fulfilling prophecy assumes that the tarot, or any divination or diagnostics tool, possesses the power to nullify free will—and divination simply does not have that kind of power. I find the theory that what the tarot predicts will happen for sure because that is the power of divination to be gravely suspect.

The future is never certain. Rather, there is a mathematical probability that an outcome will happen based on certain decisions made in the present. That probable outcome is rendered even more complex based on the decisions that others make. Events are one variable. The Seeker's attitude is another. His or her personality characteristics are more variables. Other people's actions, which lead them to either cross paths with the Seeker or not, also have an impact. There is a formula that can take these variables into consideration based on the given moment and calculate for us a most probable outcome. That is the so-called future predicted by the tarot. However, changes in those variables will change the probable outcome. If the tarot reveals that outcome to be unfortunate, then that is an indication to the Seeker that the variables need to be adjusted. Isn't that information anyone would want to know in advance? Thus, while some view the tarot as a tool for the passive, I view it as a tool for the assertive. The tarot is for the person who likes road maps and milestones, the go-getter who likes to chart his or her progress through life, write resolutions, make checklists, or carry a planner.

The cards tap into your limitless unconscious, to mine out what you already know. Every decision we make affects the path we're taking toward our future. A decision could keep us on the same course and lead to that most probable outcome if we stay the course, or it could take us off course on a new, different path. That is why the future can never be set in stone. The divination-fulfilling prophecy is a myth. When people say the cards can predict the future, what they really mean is the cards can reveal to you the most likely destination of your current journey, based on which forks you've chosen to take in the road. When you make adjustments, you change your future. Therefore, no, nothing the cards predict will happen for sure. There is no "power" to the divination, only power in your unconscious, in your own free will. If today the cards show outcomes that are not favorable, the cards will also reveal what needs to be done to change course to get that favorable outcome.

I do not believe for a second that what the cards reveal will absolutely happen. I believe that the cards are a flashlight that you can use to illuminate the dark terrain we walk through in life. If there are jagged rocks up ahead, the flashlight will shine on that, and we can diverge in time to take a

different route. Shining the flashlight and seeing the jagged rocks does not mean we must walk straight onto them. Likewise, using the tarot to illuminate where we're going does not mean we must continue on that path. As mentioned earlier, the tarot is also a flashlight that helps to illuminate our subconscious,[11] information we are not consciously aware of and yet is taking its visible effects on the conscious, and our unconscious. It presents that information in the cards so that we may confront it.

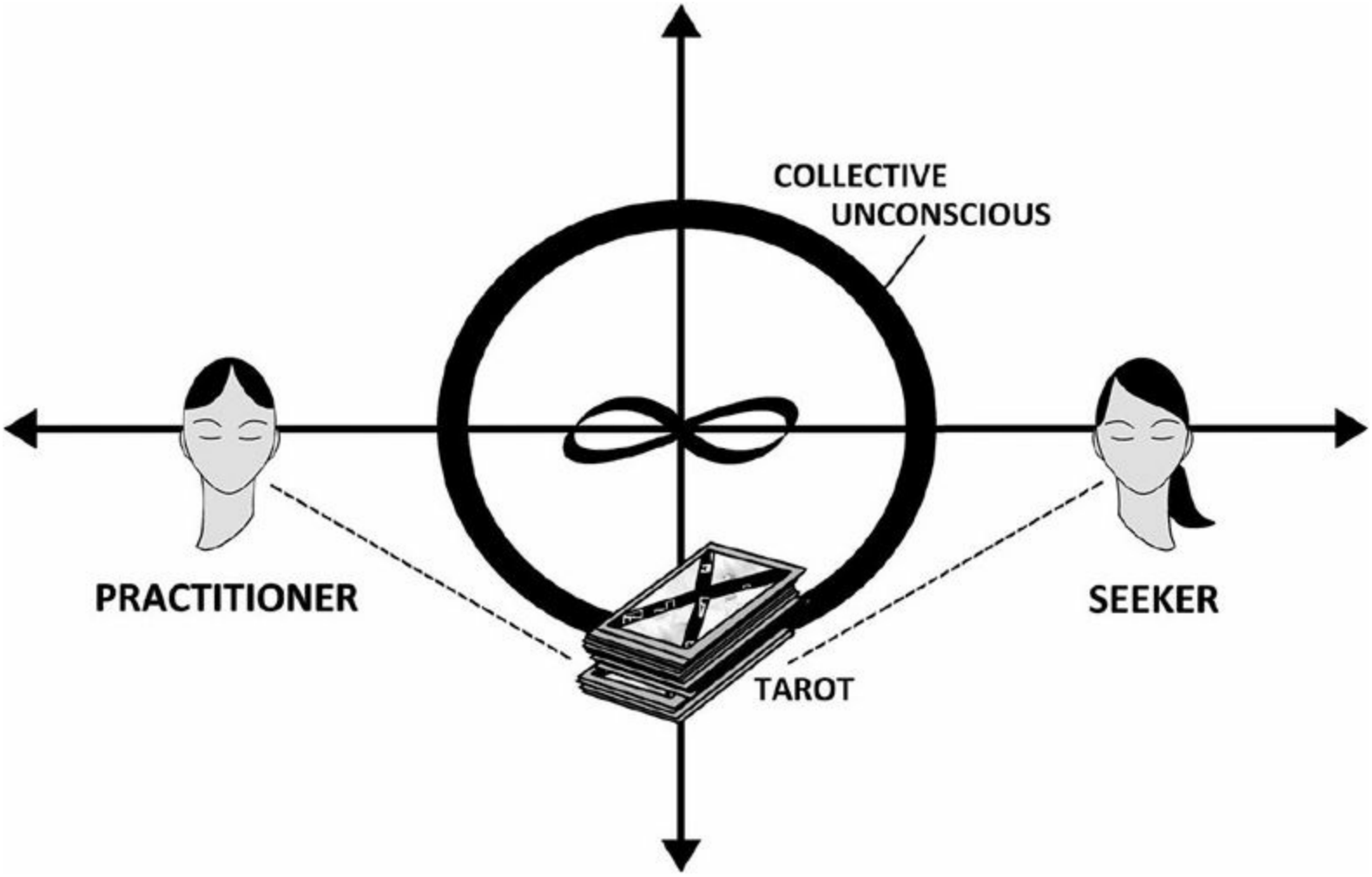
While there may be no such thing as divination-fulfilling prophecy, there is such a thing as self-fulfilling prophecy. Even when an outcome was never meant to happen or was an entirely fabricated prediction, our unshakeable awareness and anticipation of that outcome in effect causes the outcome to happen. Thus, the otherwise fabricated prediction becomes true. The self-fulfilling prophecy is a very real phenomenon. Our outlook, our *selves*, are what causes the prediction to come true, not the act of divination itself. There is a clear distinction. Divination-fulfilling prophecy claims that the objective act of divination causes an event to happen. Self-fulfilling prophecy contends that the act is and has always been arbitrary, and it is the subjective meaning we attach to that act, our outlook, that causes the prediction to come true. Self-fulfilling prophecies still occur because of free will, albeit poorly controlled free will.

The Theory of Qi

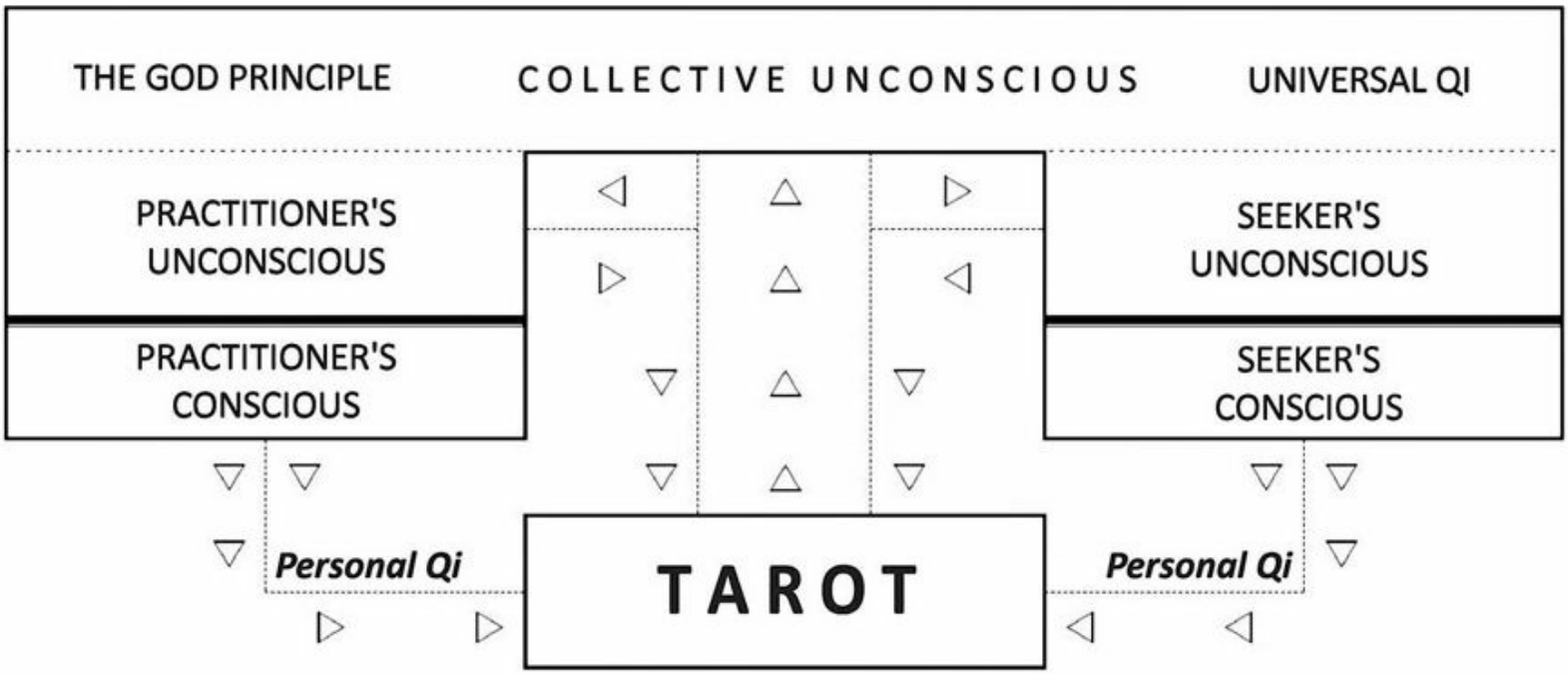
The human mind and the energies that comprise the soul are omnipotent. Thus, many believe it is the individual who affects the cards. By activating both personal and cosmic qi, we are the ones compelling the accuracy of a tarot reading. When a Seeker shuffles the cards, he or she is infusing personal energies into them, an unconscious instinctive-intuitive power in each of us that draws out the cards that will best allow our conscious power to make use of the information that is latent within. A tarot practitioner who is attuned to his or her tarot deck will integrate his or her energies into the cards so that the deck can draw out the appropriate spread that the practitioner can best interpret for the Seeker.

As the Seeker physically handles the tarot cards, he or she is infusing them with their energies. Some believe that remote tarot readings work because practitioners who have developed powerful intuitive abilities can channel into a Seeker's energies without needing the Seeker to be present. In such instances, the tarot is a mere extension, a tool, for the innate gifts of the practitioner who has developed an incredible ability to harness his or her qi for others. In Western occult cultures, these gifts are often called psychic powers, though that is a vague and often misunderstood term. An ideologically Eastern translation of the concept of a psychic would be someone with a strong affinity with the cosmic qi that connects all living beings.

While qi, which can also be thought of as the personal unconscious, is the vital energy flowing through us, cosmic qi refers to the unifying connection of all our vital energies into one universal energy force, or the collective unconscious. When a tarot practitioner is able to tap into the collective unconscious, he or she can perform remote readings. To do so, the practitioner uses techniques to pull out data from the client's subconscious and unconscious, to then channel into the cards. Since the gift of tapping into the collective unconscious is a rarity, the majority of practitioners cannot rely on remote tarot readings. It is therefore best to conduct tarot readings in person, with physical interactions among the trinity of practitioner, tarot deck, and Seeker.



The belief in vital energies stems from the Eastern concept of qi (氣), a life force that flows through all living beings and cosmically connects us with one another. Traditional Chinese medicine, martial arts, Daoism (or Taoism), and the practice of feng shui base their efficacy on the theory of qi. The concept is similar to chakras, the energy principle of Hindu and Buddhist tantric doctrine. Kundalini, a yogic belief that a latent spiritual energy rests within us and can be awakened through certain practices, is a form of personal energy that can reconcile our consciousness with our subconscious and the collective unconscious.



The tarot is a tool, much like a calculator. A person does not need a tool to calculate the square root of a number; it can be done in the head. However, human ingenuity invented the calculator. One is now at our disposal. Why not use it? We all have the capability of calculating square roots in our heads, but not all of us are skilled enough at math to do so competently. That does not change the condition that the innate capability is still there. So, sure, when we use the calculator, the tool is doing the actual calculation function, but the human is still in control of the operation and input. The tarot is also a tool that calculates a most probable future based on the decisions we are making in the present and our current attitudes and outlook. These are inputted into the tarot through personal qi. The subconscious knows already the effects of the causes we've created; the collective unconscious knows why we are going through what we are going through. Meditation, deep reflection, prayer, philosophical analysis, and other kinds of divinatory tools are all capable of extracting the data from the deep ravines of our minds. We do not need the tarot like we do not need the calculator. And yet it is a very effective, efficient, and accurate tool for tapping those ravines.

It is the personal energies, an esoteric spiritual qi or kundalini, that draws out accurate tarot readings. If either the practitioner or the Seeker has not activated that qi during a tarot reading, then the cards are nothing more than just cards and the readings the result of apophenia and the Forer Effect. Similarly, for a calculator to work, you need to first push the power button. Under the theory of qi, the practitioner and Seeker must activate their qi for the tarot reading.

Projective Psychological Testing

A modern theory for why tarot works likens it to projective psychological testing, psychoanalytical assessments intended to bridge the gap between our consciousness and unconscious.[12] When we speak logically or emotionally about our lives, we are expressing in the language of the conscious, but when we use signs and symbols we begin to attune to the expression of our unconscious. It is believed that the unconscious is revealed to the conscious through signs and symbols. Through these signs and symbols, we are able to renounce our preconceived notions that govern the conscious plane

of thought and touch upon something closer to our truth.

Pain and mental or spiritual maladjustments are the result of discrepancies between the conscious and unconscious. Projective psychological tools like tarot try to attune one with the other, with the goal of bringing balance to the Seeker. You can learn tarot for yourself and use it as a self-assessment tool directly, or you can seek out the assistance of a skilled practitioner to serve as an interpreter.

Tarot analytics works in the same vein as psychoanalysis. A person's development is determined heavily by his or her childhood and past events. How a Seeker reads into the cards of a tarot spread that signifies the Seeker's past will offer insight into how that Seeker perceives the past, in particular what events the Seeker hasn't let go of yet. That allows the Seeker to confront his or her own ghosts and begin to move beyond that past.

While we would all insist that we behave rationally, the truth is our motivations are largely governed by our unconscious. We get impulses to do certain things and we can't readily explain why we do what we do. We love with agonizing intensity and yet we cannot explain why we love who we love. "Why do you love me?" is an impossible question for many because the answer is in our unconscious. Using the archetypal narratives, numbers, colors, and symbols of tarot, we can compel our consciousness to connect with our unconscious and can better understand our own motivations. Rather than explore answers in just the conscious or rational parts of our brains, we venture into the deeper layers of impulse. Tarot helps because it brings to our awareness the otherwise repressed impulses in our unconscious that are having an inexplicable effect on our consciousness. Understanding these drives help us find peace.

Chapter 4

Choosing Your Deck

Which Deck to Use?

THE SHORT ANSWER TOthat title question is "any deck you want to use." There are many well regarded tarot decks for your choosing. Do not let other people's opinions affect which deck you choose. Each individual will relate differently to the various tarot decks. I started on the Rider Waite version printed in 1971. Friends of mine are loyal to Aleister Crowley's Thoth tarot.

Some purists may opt for the Tarot of Marseille or one of the fifteenth-century decks: the Cary-Yale Visconti tarot, or the more popular Visconti-Sforza, the Sola Busca Tarot (circa 1491), or the later ones from the nineteenth century: Tarot of Lombardy by Ferdinado Gumppenberg (circa 1810), Soprafi by Carlo Della Rocca (circa 1835), or the Vacchetta Tarot by Giovanni Vacchetta (circa 1893), an Italian deck later republished by Lo Scarabeo in 2002 as Tarot of the Master. Etteilla decks, while hard to come by, are also highly preferred by the purists, such as the Grand Etteilla by Jean-Baptiste Alleitte (circa 1788).

If you want to stay with the Rider-Waite-Smith interpretive system, consider the Universal Waite deck by Mary Hanson-Roberts that came out in 1990, the Albano-Waite by Frankie Albano in 1991, Golden Rider (AGM Müller, 1996), the Original Rider Waite, a facsimile of the original deck by Waite and Smith, printed in 1999, or the Radiant Rider-Waite by Virginijus Poshkus in 2003, among others. This book relies on the Rider-Waite-Smith, as do most introductory works, which is why it is the deck and system most frequently recommended to beginners.

There are still countless other tarot decks you may consider: the Morgan Greer tarot, the Witches tarot; African tarot; African-American tarot; China tarot; Ancient Egypt tarot; Buddha tarot; Sun and Moon tarot; Angel tarot; Avalon or the Arthurian tarot; Fairy Tale tarot; the Robin Wood tarot; the list goes on. Many of these modern decks are based on the iconic images from the Rider-Waite-Smith, which is why that is still a great deck to begin on. I believe that your intuition will draw you to the deck that is most suitable for you.

Note that some of these variation decks may not have seventy-eight cards. The I Ching tarot fusion decks, for example, only have sixty-four cards (corresponding to the sixty-four hexagrams). These non-seventy-eight decks are known as oracle cards and should not be confused with the traditional seventy-eight-card tarot.

Generally there are three prevailing tarot interpretive systems, which this book will explain in subsequent chapters: the Tarot de Marseille, the Rider-Waite-Smith, and the Thoth. In addition to the many different deck systems, interpretation of tarot symbolism also varies widely, though the prevailing approach is that subscribed by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has long been the leading school of tarot studies. The Golden Dawn is said to be a secret society that started in England in the nineteenth century. Doctrines of the Golden Dawn are steeped in ritualistic magic and the occult or metaphysical arts, such as theurgy, alchemy, and astrology. The Golden Dawn merged their practices with the tarot to create an

approach that has, for all intents and purposes, become the standardized majority approach to tarot studies.[1] Many of the tarot decks we recognize today were designed and illustrated by members from the Golden Dawn, and the classical texts on tarot that we still cite are works authored by these Golden Dawn adherents.

In recent years, many other distinct tarot systems (as opposed to a deck variation or a combination of the three existing standards) have emerged and gained a strong minority following, though they haven't risen to the same level of prominence as the Marseille, Rider-Waite-Smith, and Thoth. When acquiring a new tarot deck, research all the possibilities diligently and be sure to find out in advance of acquisition whether the deck is a variation based on the Rider-Waite-Smith, the Marseille, the Thoth, or a hybrid of those systems, or is espousing an entirely new system of interpretation altogether.

My tutelage approach is to start with the Rider-Waite-Smith, and there are three main reasons for that. First, most of the classical texts on tarot studies use the Rider-Waite-Smith. Bystarting with that system, you will have multiple reference texts at your disposal. Once fluent with the Rider-Waite-Smith, you will have the necessary foundation for learning any interpretive system. Second, I would argue that, for the beginner, it is easier to read the Rider-Waite-Smith than both the Marseille and the Thoth. The Marseille system has minimal imagery and symbolism contained in the Minor Arcana, so it would be a challenge to read without prior knowledge of Western numerology, elemental dignities, and to a certain extent astrology, which are all studies that the tarot student will naturally pick up on through the beginner Rider-Waite-Smith system. And third, with the dozens of close facsimile variations of the Rider-Waite-Smith available, it is probably the easiest deck for the beginner tarot practitioner to acquire. Thus, I suggest a Rider-Waite-Smith–based deck as the starter tarot.

Please be clear that I am not suggesting that practitioners use the Rider-Waite-Smith. Rather, I am suggesting that beginners start their tarot studies with the Rider-Waite-Smith. By the intermediate level, most practitioners will have graduated from the Rider-Waite-Smith to use a deck that they are more intuitively attached to for their regular readings. There is no better text on the chronology of tarot than Stuart R. Kaplan's *The Encyclopedia of Tarot*, volumes one through four.[2] The many volumes cover all the tarot decks and systems since the earliest known decks, and the books are a good place to start researching which decks might resonate most with the practitioner.

Connecting to and Caring for a Tarot Deck

To connect to a new deck of tarot cards, place it in a part of your home that is dearly personal to you. Note that doing so is more for your benefit than for the tarot cards. Connecting to a tarot deck is about adjusting your frame of mind and preparing yourself for intuitive work. Some people will only keep their cards in a place they hold sacred, such as an altar or their special place for holy books. A desk drawer or chest cabinet filled with personal mementos and important keepsakes will work well. The theory behind this is simple: such a space will have the most intense vibrations of your personal spiritual energies.

Once you have identified the perfect space, leave your new tarot deck there for a while. Doing so allows for the tempering between the prefixed energies of the deck with your personal energies. I had a Robin Wood tarot deck that I really liked but just wasn't connecting to in readings for one reason or another. Then, after keeping it tucked under my pillow every night for about a week, I started to

receive better readings with it. Does that make intellectual, scientific sense? No. Could I be drawing connections where there are none? Probably, but it worked for me and that's what matters.

When an object holds personal sentimental value to you, you take it more seriously. Violinists who are serious about their music treat their violins with respect, veneration, and near-superstitious observations. Athletes have similar rituals. What these musicians and athletes do, their personal rituals leading up to a performance or game, may seem superstitious to onlookers, but it is about the mindset. Likewise, tarot readings rely on the mindset. By taking tarot study seriously, like the musician does his instrument and the athlete does her performance, you open yourself up enough to receive the messages and perspective the tarot has to offer. So take time to incorporate personalized rituals that will connect you to your new tarot deck.

Some individuals will opt to purify a tarot deck, especially a used one, of foreign energies before starting. Some will place the deck in a tightly enclosed space, such as a box, with quartz crystals, or bury it in salt, which is believed to contain purifying properties. Others will pass it over the smoke of burning sage, an herb that is also believed to be purifying. Still others will take into consideration the phases of the moon. Do what feels right intuitively for you. After the deck has been cleansed of foreign energies, proceed to place it in your personal or sacred space.

To further connect to a deck, for three to five consecutive days, try having the first action you take of the day and the last action of the night before you sleep be shuffling and ordering your tarot deck. Take out the deck, focus on the cards, and concentrate your energies into them while you shuffle. Then turn them right side up to put in order from Major Arcana to Minor Arcana (or vice versa), either the ordering the cards came in or the ordering that feels right to you. While you place them back in order, take the time to study each card individually and absorb the images into your mind. This process helps you attune to the new deck and formulate your understanding of the signs and symbols of tarot. On a more mundane level, it helps you familiarize yourself with the deck's imagery.

With regard to storage of tarot cards, any method will work. You can certainly store your cards in their original packaging. A drawstring bag will do nicely, as will a box. Traditionally, it was believed that tarot cards should be stored by wrapping them in black silk. My personal reading deck, which is also my most prized tarot deck, is wrapped in white silk. The significance of wrapping tarot in silk is unknown, but for me, it resonates with my cultural heritage. Silk cultivation began in China as early as 27 BC (at least according to legend, though the acknowledgment that it originated from China seems to be well-established), and the Silk Road represents one of the earliest forms of East to West globalization. Like playing cards, silk traveled from East to West, and each new culture it came in contact with adapted and stylized it to reflect that particular culture. If a box is the preferred method of storage, then the tradition is to use a wooden box. A box made of cedar is believed to keep the contents within the box untainted by external energies. One made of cypress, hazel, holly, spruce, or willow is considered ideal for divination and spiritual purposes. Both oak and maple will empower and amplify the energies of the tarot.

No matter how you choose to store your tarot deck, what is more important is how you connect to the deck. Through frequent and prolonged use of it, you will create a strong connection between you and that deck. Connecting to your tarot deck isn't about superstition. It's about opening up your mind to be as receptive as possible to what the tarot has to offer. I don't think my violin holds any mystical properties, but I most certainly treat it like it has feelings. Sure, that could be in part due to my own irrationality, but it also demonstrates my deep reverence for music and creating music. So treat your

tarot deck with care and you will perform your readings with care.

CHAPTER 5

Anatomy of the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot

A TRADITIONAL TAROT DECK[1] consists of seventy-eight cards. The seventy-eight cards are subdivided into the Major Arcana, which consists of twenty-two fully illustrated cards that are numbered Key 0 to Key 21, and the Minor Arcana, which consists of fifty-six pip (numbered) and court cards.

The twenty-two Major Arcana cards represent universal archetypal forces that govern life. In the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot, the imagery on the Major Arcana is based predominantly on its predecessor, the Tarot de Marseille.[2] Judeo-Christian mythos and Neo-Platonism are the primary iconology used. The Major Arcana are said to indicate the greater natural forces affecting a Seeker's situation. They often depict the ingrained personality traits of the Seeker, or external conditions influencing the matter at hand that may be out of the Seeker's actual control; thus, counsel from the cards will address the mental changes the Seeker must make.

These twenty-two cards are keyed, or numbered, from 0 to 21. Each Major Arcanum, the singular form of the term, is titled with its corresponding archetype.

	Key #	*Card #*	*Card Name*	*Key #*	*Card #*	*Card Name*
THE MAJOR ARCANA	0	0	The Fool	11	XI	Justice
	1	I	The Magician	12	XII	The Hanged Man
	2	II	The High Priestess	13	XIII	Death
	3	III	The Empress	14	XIV	Temperance
	4	IV	The Emperor	15	XV	The Devil
	5	V	The Hierophant	16	XVI	The Tower
	6	VI	The Lovers	17	XVII	The Star
	7	VII	The Chariot	18	XVIII	The Moon
	8	VIII	Strength	19	XIX	The Sun
	9	IX	The Hermit	20	XX	Judgement
	10	X	Wheel of Fortune	21	XXI	The World

After the Major Arcana, the fifty-six Minor Arcana cards represent facets of the human condition.

Whereas the Major Arcana cards represent the inner realm, the Minor Arcana cards represent the outer. The Minor Arcana counsel the Seeker on what actual, physical changes the Seeker must make. There are four suits in the Minor Arcana, which go by many names, but in the Rider-Waite-Smith are

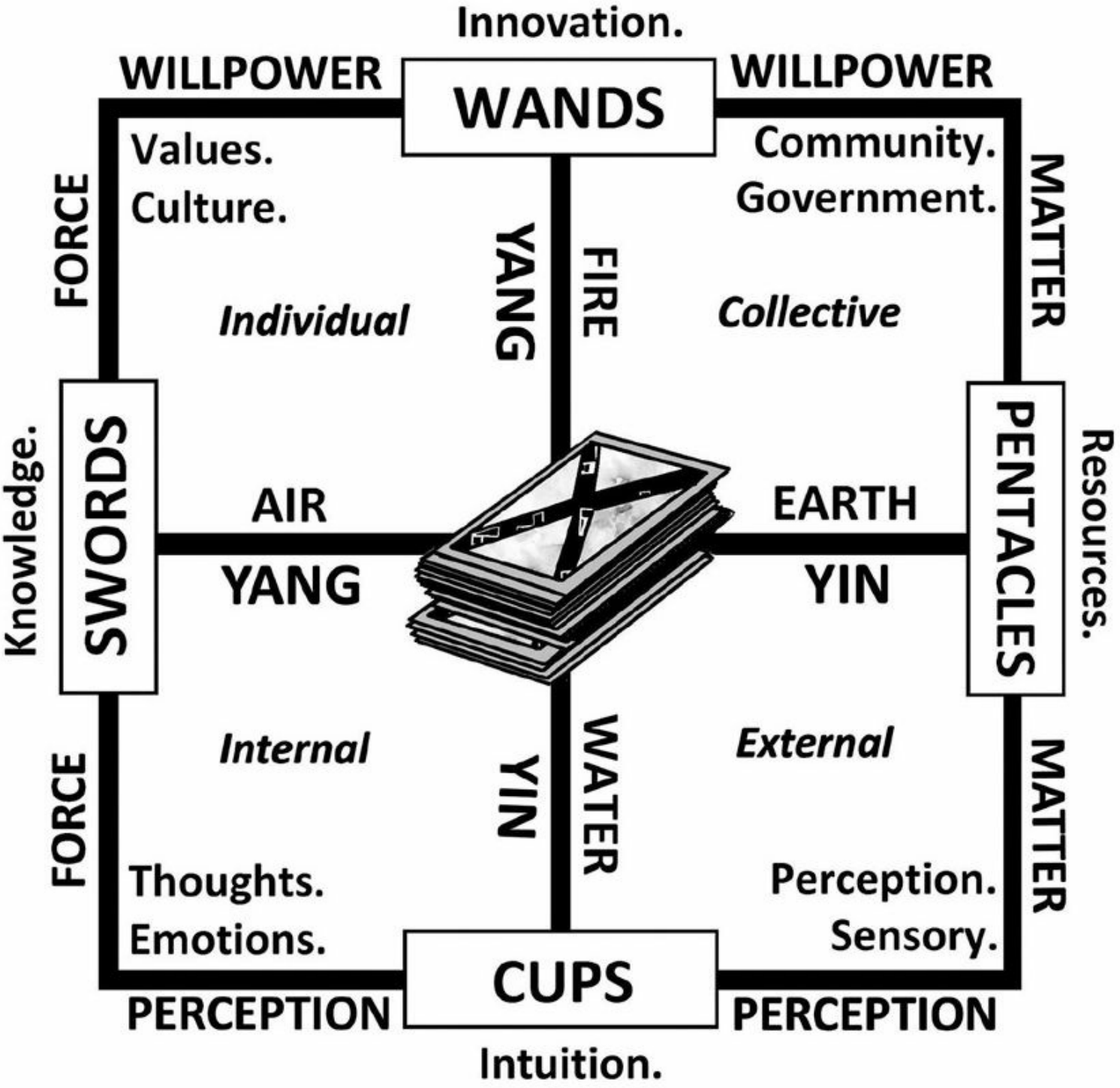
the Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles.[3] They correspond with the black clubs, red hearts, black spades, and red diamonds in the four suits of regular playing cards, respectively. Think of the red as indicating active energies and the black as passive. The table on the subsequent page provides the general correspondences of the four tarot suits. The attributions are based in part on the Golden Dawn interpretive system and in part on the author's own theory. Note that even within the Golden Dawn, there are often discrepancies and disagreements over the attributions.

THE MINOR ARCANA

SUIT OF WANDS FIRE / Creative Development, Career			SUIT OF SWORDS AIR / Ideas, Logos, Ambitions		
PIP CARDS	Ace	of Wands	PIP CARDS	Ace	of Swords
	2	of Wands		2	of Swords
	3	of Wands		3	of Swords
	4	of Wands		4	of Swords
	5	of Wands		5	of Swords
	6	of Wands		6	of Swords
	7	of Wands		7	of Swords
	8	of Wands		8	of Swords
	9	of Wands		9	of Swords
	10	of Wands		10	of Swords
COURT CARDS	Page	of Wands	COURT CARDS	Page	of Swords
	Knight	of Wands		Knight	of Swords
	Queen	of Wands		Queen	of Swords
	King	of Wands		King	of Swords
SUIT OF CUPS WATER / Emotions, Relationships			**SUIT OF PENTACLES** EARTH / Material Wealth, Finance		
PIP CARDS	Ace	of Cups	PIP CARDS	Ace	of Pentacles
	2	of Cups		2	of Pentacles
	3	of Cups		3	of Pentacles
	4	of Cups		4	of Pentacles
	5	of Cups		5	of Pentacles
	6	of Cups		6	of Pentacles
	7	of Cups		7	of Pentacles
	8	of Cups		8	of Pentacles
	9	of Cups		9	of Pentacles
	10	of Cups		10	of Pentacles
COURT CARDS	Page	of Cups	COURT CARDS	Page	of Pentacles
	Knight	of Cups		Knight	of Pentacles
	Queen	of Cups		Queen	of Pentacles
	King	of Cups		King	of Pentacles

	Correspondence	*Element*	*Energy*	*Season*	*Cardinal Direction*	*Moon Phase*	*Social Class*	*Armament*
WANDS	Creation Development Motivation Creativity Passion	Fire	Active (Yang)	Spring	South	New Moon	Proletariat	Cavalry
CUPS	Emotions Relationships Empathy Transformation Intuition	Water	Passive (Yin)	Summer	West	Waxing Crescent	Clergy	Naval
SWORDS	Ambition Intellect Knowledge Controversy Destruction	Air	Active (Yang)	Fall	East	Full Moon	Nobility	Artillery
PENTACLES	Materiality Possessions Commerce Industry Pragmatism	Earth	Passive (Yin)	Winter	North	Waning Crescent	Artisans / Merchants	Infantry

Active energy corresponds with the Eastern philosophical concept of yang, which is the dominant, masculine, light, hard, and dry elements of the universe. Passive energy corresponds with the concept of yin, which is the recessive, feminine, shadow, soft, and wet elements of the universe. The discussion on Elemental Dignities in Chapter 15 provides further instruction on how yin and yang, a foundational concept of the I Ching, and the four classical elements of Greek Philosophy synthesize in the tarot.[4] As set forth in the correspondence table on the previous page, the suits of Wands and Swords are yang while the suits of Cups and Pentacles are yin. That organization is based on a reconciliation of both Western and Eastern astrology and alchemy, which will be explained in further detail in this book.



The Western approach espoused herein is based in large part on the Golden Dawn system. For instance, the quaternary of positive science—willpower, perception, force, and matter—corresponding with Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles respectively, is derived from the works of Papus.[5] Note, however, that there are vehement debates over the suits and what they represent. Not all tarot practitioners agree with the aforementioned correspondences. The best approach is to connect with a tarot deck yourself and, after research and study of multiple interpretive methods, formulate your own based on your personal connection with the tarot. What I set forth in my book is by no means being espoused as the right approach; it is simply my approach, but there is sound reasoning to why I do what I do.

Active Principle of YANG ENERGY		Passive Principle of YIN ENERGY	
Element of FIRE	Element of AIR	Element of WATER	Element of EARTH
Associated Traits:	*Associated Traits:*	*Associated Traits:*	*Associated Traits:*
Creativity Innovation Passion Enthusiasm Ardor Determination Vivacity Leadership	Idealism Intellectualism Rationality Deliberation Ambition Controversy Dialectic Communication	Alliances Attraction Compassion Persuasion Intuition Prophecy Relationships Sentimentality	Stability Conservatism Dogma Conviction Potency Generosity Metamorphosis Resourcefulness
Major Arcana:	*Major Arcana:*	*Major Arcana:*	*Major Arcana:*
• The Emperor • Strength • Wheel of Fortune • Temperance • The Tower • The Sun • Judgement*	• The Fool • The Lovers • Justice • The Star	• The High Priestess • The Chariot • The Hanged Man • Death • The Moon • Judgement*	• The Magician • The Empress • The Hierophant • The Hermit • The Devil • The World
Minor Arcana:	*Minor Arcana:*	*Minor Arcana:*	*Minor Arcana:*
Suit of WANDS	Suit of SWORDS	Suit of CUPS	Suit of PENTACLES

Note: There are two somewhat contradicting approaches to elemental interpretation for Key 20: Judgement. The first follows Paul Foster Case[14] and attributes it to Pluto and Vulcan, Vulcan being the Roman god of fire. Therefore Case's approach was to attribute Key 20 to the element of Fire. The second approach follows the astrological association of Pluto with Scorpio, a water sign. Therefore, a second school of thought attributes Key 20 to the element of Water. The practitioner should consider both approaches and adopt the one that best reflects the practitioner's own paradigm.

Note Also: There is a divide among practitioners on the elemental attribution for Key 1: The Magician. Due to the card's planetary association with Mercury ascribed by the Golden Dawn, practitioners look to the two zodiac signs in astrology governed by Mercury: Gemini and Virgo. Gemini being Air and its clear resonance with the mental plane is why the majority of practitioners associate Key 1 with Air. However, a minority of practitioners, including the author, associates the card with Earth because Key 1 is interpreted as physical manifestations, which requires Earth. Archetypally, Key 1 is also associated with Hermes of Greek mythology, who is not only the messenger of the gods (hence the Air attribute), but also the god of commercial gain and promoter of commerce (Earth).

Chapter 6

The Personal Journal

KEEPING A PERSONAL JOURNAL that is devoted entirely to the tarot is essential to the development of your practice. By diligently keeping a journal, you are in effect creating your own treatise on tarot studies, which will prove invaluable to you as your practice advances. The journal can be a blank notebook or a three-ring binder with index tabs or file folders to separate the categories of information; or you can track it electronically on a personal computer.

A personal tarot journal should consist of the following topics:

Personal Glossary of Card Meanings

Keep your own written interpretation of each card's meanings. Consult books and other references to begin. However, through your personal study of each tarot card, and as your education advances, you should amend the meanings to reflect your personal understanding. Thus, rather than transcribe what others have written about the card meanings, you will be formulating your own. When a three-ring binder is used for the personal journal, the Card Meanings section can be easily edited or rearranged as your understanding of the meanings deepen. Also, if you use multiple decks simultaneously (i.e., you vary your readings between the Rider-Waite, the Thoth tarot, and the Tarot de Marseille, for example), then this section should be subdivided by deck (or clearly label which deck each entry refers to).

Log of Readings and Client Notes

Record significant tarot readings and write follow-up notes to give yourself feedback after each reading. For each reading's entry, be sure to note the date of the reading, location of the reading, the tarot deck used (if you use more than one type), the spread used, the actual spread result, and notes on how it was interpreted by you. You may want to include the Seeker's responses or your own afterthoughts on the reading. Psychologists and many other professionals keep copious personal notes on their clients. The tarot practitioner should be no different. These notes will enrich your own study of humanity, which in turn will help in your tarot studies. Also, if you consult the tarot and do readings for yourself from time to time, a record of those readings should be kept in this section.

Card Reflections

As your study advances, you should devote time to individual study of each card, especially the Major Arcana. Keep written records noting your card reflections. Note the date, the card, and your thoughts. When new insight is gained into the symbolism or meaning of a card, add that to its Card Meanings section. Some more extroverted practitioners may enjoy discussing particular cards with others. Notes on these discussions should be logged in this section as well. Through your card reflections, you will eventually adopt your own personal approach to card interpretation and will cease to rely on the published guides of others. Again, if multiple decks are used, consider subdividing this section or clarifying each entry with a note on which tarot

deck the reflections pertain to.

Practice Development
This section should be filled with notes on your personal philosophy or approach to the tarot, tarot spreads that you have adopted or developed, your observations on the study and practice, and your personal code of ethics. You may also consider keeping a diary of dated entries logging your practice development. Include any free-writes, tarot deck reviews, critiques, etc., with the objective that these works and ruminations will advance your practice. Also, some practitioners synthesize their tarot studies with other esoteric studies, such as the I Ching, Taoism, the Kabbalah, astrology, numerology, gemology, etc. This section is a good place to compile that information to further your practice development.

Reference Library
Continuing your education of the tarot is important. Read as much as you can about the tarot. Include information about spreads that you learn, specific guides about the tarot, copies of your favorite articles, or simply inspirational works. This is the section where you consolidate your research. It will become a collage of other people's ideas that you would like to integrate into your own practice. Eventually you will be able to build a personal reference library from this section that you can consult when you encounter difficulty. Also, a responsible tarot practitioner who frequently conducts readings for the public should compile a list of referrals, in the event that a client or Seeker is ever in need of specialized professional assistance. That referral list should include contacts of medical professionals, counselors, licensed therapists, financial advisers, attorneys, abuse hotlines, and others, in the event that a Seeker comes for a tarot reading but is really in need of more specialized professional care.

If using a bound notebook, be sure to title each entry with the category name, i.e., Log of Reading, Card Reflection, etc. Whether you choose a binder or notebook journal, be sure to date each entry. Dated entries will help you track the progress of your studies accurately.

The information contained in this section should be used as a starting point only. There is no sense in following the suggestions here sentence by sentence. Absorb the elements that make sense to you into your practice, and discard the rest. Consult other references. Read, read, read. Exercise rational judgment. Consider your own subjective points of view and align your journal to yourself, rather than to how others practice the tarot.

Reading Session Notes

Create a template to use for your reading session notes. At the top of the first page, the template should include the following information:

- Seeker's Name
- Seeker's Contact Information
- Seeker's Date of Birth (optional: Time of Birth)
- Date of Reading
- Tarot Deck Used

- Nature of Seeker's Inquiry
- Summary of Past Readings (if you have read for this Seeker before)
- Methodology of Reading Used
- Spread(s) Used
- Cards Drawn for the Reading Session

If you use certain spreads with great frequency, consider creating a template diagram of the spread so that you can easily fill in the names of the cards drawn.

Appendix H provides sample logs and templates that can be used in organizing a personal tarot journal or for maintaining client files.

Chapter 7

Beginner Rote Learning

THERE IS NO SHORTCUT around the beginner step of memorizing the card meanings. Like memorizing the multiplication table, or learning a new alphabet, anatomy in medical studies, the periodic table, or the elements of basic laws in legal studies, tarot study requires the beginner step of rote learning. Repetition is the most effective way to memorization. Some students will have an easier time remembering keywords. Others will prefer phrases that tell a story. The novice may consider using the meanings given in the little white booklets that are typically provided with each tarot deck. Books and encyclopedias on the tarot, beyond this one, should also be consulted to study basic meanings.

To start learning tarot, read Chapters 8 and 9, the Keywords and Cyclopedia, once through with your tarot deck in hand. Do not worry yourself about how to shuffle a deck, what sort of candles to light, the Celtic Cross, or any other such nonsense. Acclimate yourself with the general card meanings and begin the learning process by establishing some rapport with the imagery of the cards.

Once you have a basic understanding of the card meanings, you can begin learning how to read spreads. Chapter 10 discusses signifier cards, which represent the anchor of every tarot reading. Whether you adopt the use of signifier cards in your tarot practice is up to you, but you should still be familiar with what signifier cards are. Same goes for the First Operation, per the Case Method in Chapter 11. An entire chapter is devoted to court cards, which tend to be troublesome to practitioners. Then learn how to shuffle and cut your deck, and the traditional way to draw cards.

Chapter 14 begins the spread immersion. Try all of them at least once, open-book, referring back to the Cyclopedia for interpretation assistance. Then parse through them, to commit to memory the ones that work best for you. An active practitioner should have at least a dozen spreads available in his or her repertoire. Chapter 15 synthesizes all the information provided in the preceding chapters and teaches the practitioner how to consider the entire spread landscape in a reading. Once you are familiar with the content of these chapters, you can begin the hands-on stage of your study.

To practice reading spreads, start with fiction. Do not start on actual people. Sit your teddy bear across the table from you and conduct the reading aloud as if Teddy is the Seeker. Draw cards into a spread with the understanding that you are doing so for practice. Pretend that the spread is for a character. Narrate aloud to that character, Mr. Teddy, the story told by the cards. Practice linking the card meanings together and learning to see patterns. Repeat the exercise until you are accustomed to using the spread and reading the card meanings. Endeavor to become fluent at reading a few simple spreads (such as a three-card spread, the Dyadic Cross, and the Celtic Cross) and more in-depth ones (seven-card spreads, eighteen-card spreads, the Lemniscate, the Grand Tableau, etc.).

The recommendation to start by reading the tarot for your teddy bear is in part tongue-in-cheek, but there is a serious component as well. The beginner tarot reader does not know how to appropriately communicate the tarot's messages yet. The responsibility of the messenger is a heavy one. That is why not any person can be a practitioner. The role that the practitioner plays as a liaison between the tarot cards and the Seeker is powerful. The tarot reading is a trinity that pivots on the practitioner.

Therefore, the beginner must practice readings out loud to no one. At first the beginner will express things that could potentially be harmful if spoken to an actual Seeker. At these early stages, the beginner can realize the mistake immediately, correct him- or herself, and learn to express truths in ways that are empowering rather than injurious. An analogy can be drawn to the medical student practicing surgery on cadavers before moving on to live patients, not that I wish to compare your teddy bear to a cadaver.

Cards may also come up that the typical Seeker will consider ominous. The beginner can train him- or herself to promptly assuage the Seeker's fears of the actual meanings of the cards. (e.g., "Key 13–Death does not represent death or dying, but indicates a transformational period. You will be going through some significant changes in your life, and over the course of this reading, the tarot will offer insight and tips on how to handle those changes.") By practicing how to say these statements seamlessly when the so-called ominous cards appear, the beginner is developing skill and experience for actual readings. It is best to train oneself with Mr. Teddy than on people who would absorb the practice reading—even if the would-be Seeker knows it is just for practice, it may have an adverse effect on them.

Repeat the rote practice readings in private until readings become second nature to you. Before you move on to live people, you should have prepared how you will address the ominous-looking cards, how to assess the overall landscape of a spread, how to lay down a spread without hesitation or second-guessing each card's meaning, and how to convey truths in phrases that empower, not harm. Only then will the ethical novice move on to live Seekers.

While rote learning is a necessary beginner step, memorization and robotic execution of readings are no substitute for an understanding of the tarot. In fact, tarot readings are far from regurgitations of memorized card meanings or prepared statements. Tarot is an art, and the tarot practitioner is an artist. Each reading is therefore a creative, original work, one with a spiritually uplifting message. This cannot be accomplished through rote learning.

Chapter 8

Keywords

THE MEANING OF EACH tarot card is nuanced, layered, and like people's personalities, can project different points of view at different times. Reducing any card to a keyword means running the risk of overlooking subtleties and secondary messages, limiting your scope of understanding of the cards. More often than not, those secondary messages are crucial for an accurate reading.

Yet beginner tarot practitioners are often asked to digest the cards by keywords. That makes sense, since one, it is a feasible starting point, and two, the keyword does provide a fair first acquaintance with the cards. Out of respect for that traditional pedagogy, this chapter will provide a few suggested keywords for each card, upright and reversed. The practitioner is then encouraged to do the same: to generate his or her own set of keywords.

While understanding of the tarot requires an analysis beyond mere nouns and adjectives, what *is* interesting is that the advanced tarot practitioner, after exploring the countless possible narratives of each card, will find him- or herself returning full circle to keywords. The practice is not unlike some approaches to the I Ching hexagrams, where one keyword is attributed to each hexagram, yet the meanings are far more nuanced than any one keyword could realistically cover.

There is no universal agreement for the keywords of the tarot. The well-informed reader will see immediately that there are differences in every tarot practitioner's keyword articulations. Do not be surprised if there are contradictions. In some instances, my keyword selection may agree with the majority interpretation; in other instances, it does not and I am in the minority.

The reader is encouraged to consult multiple references and not commit to any one author's set of keywords. Eventually every practitioner should be generating his or her own work and will cease to rely on other practitioners' publications.

After you have read this book and other books, and have become practiced with your tarot deck, revisit this chapter. Where you disagree with my keywords, I encourage you to cross them out and write in your own. Your set of keywords will serve as the foundation of your personal interpretive method for tarot. Thus, take care in formulating them exactly to your own specifications.

The tarot deck being used will also affect keyword interpretations. This book follows the Rider-Waite-Smith, so beginners using this book should start with the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck. Once foundational knowledge using this deck has been attained, the practitioner can move on to study with the many other decks available.

Once you have your own Rider-Waite-Smith deck, the first order of study is to go through the following keywords with the deck in hand. Start with the Major Arcana, Key 0 to Key 21. Then move on to the Minor Arcana: Wands, Cups, Swords, and finally Pentacles, the pip cards, which are the aces through tens, and then the court cards, the pages, knights, queens, and kings.

Compare the image of each card with the given keyword in this chapter. Do you agree with the given keyword? If yes, note it and move on. If no, then study the image of the card and arrive at your own keyword interpretation for the card. Note your own keyword assignment.

In the foregoing way, generate your first draft of keywords and log it in your journal. As you

progress through your tarot studies, you will from time to time revisit the list of keywords and make adjustments. That is normal and highly encouraged. Be sure to date the drafts, however, and the changes you make, so that you can chart your own progression of learning.

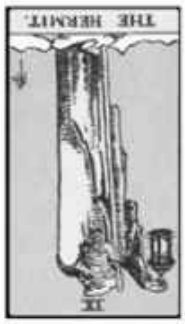
This book instructs on the four suits of the Minor Arcana in the order of Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles for the elements Fire, Water, Air, and Earth respectively, based on contemporary tarot pedagogy.[1] Discussions herein on the Minor Arcana will thus be presented in that order. However, note that a significant school of tarot scholars prefer to order the Minor Arcana after the ancient Western teaching that the universe was created from these four elements in the following order: Fire, Air, Water, and Earth.[2] Thus, a popular ordering of the four suits is Wands, Swords, then Cups, and Pentacles. The practitioner should adopt the order that resonates with him or her.

Major Arcana

	0 - Fool Beginnings; Innocence Clear Conscience		**1 - Magician** Power; Adroitness Construction
	2 - High Priestess Intuition; Clairvoyance Premonition; Perceptivity		**3 - Empress** Fertility; Creativity Maternity
	4 - Emperor Authority; Government Paternity		**5 - Hierophant** Tradition; Conventionalism Institutionalism
	6 - Lovers Passion; Partnership The Primordial Choice		**7 - Chariot** Victory; Control Jurisdiction
	8 - Strength Compassion; Force Fortitude; Security		**9 - Hermit** Wisdom; Erudition Mentorship
	10 - Wheel of Fortune Kismet; Destiny Luck; Serendipity		**11 - Justice** Equilibrium; Equity Fairness; Legality

	12 - Hanged Man Self-Sacrifice; Suspension Prophesy; Grace		**13 - Death** Transformation Mortality; Suffering
	14 - Temperance Balance; Forbearance Attune; Harmonize		**15 - Devil** Bondage; Temptation Seduction
	16 - Tower Hubris; Sudden Fall Ego; Catastrophe		**17 - Star** Hope; Optimism Inspiration; Visionary
	18 - Moon Reflection; Changes Imagination; Speculation		**19 - Sun** Attainment; Glory Majesty; Celebrity; Eminence
	20 - Judgement Awakening; Epiphany Spiritual Realization		**21 - World** Fulfillment; Completion Masterpiece; Consummation

Major Arcana, Reversed

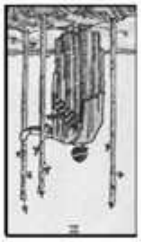
	0 - Fool, ***Rev.***		**1 - Magician,** ***Rev.***
	Vanity; Foolishness Indiscretion; Inanity		Destruction; Bane Untapped Potential
	2 - High Priestess, ***Rev.***		**3 - Empress,** ***Rev.***
	Deceit; Duplicity Hypocrisy; Secrets		Barren; Lacuna Cavity; Omission
	4 - Emperor, ***Rev.***		**5 - Hierophant,** ***Rev.***
	Passivity; Overthrow Coup d'état		Non-conformity; Unorthodox Bohemian; Existentialist
	6 - Lovers, ***Rev.***		**7 - Chariot,** ***Rev.***
	Temptation; Interference Discord; Moral Quandary		Riot; Turbulence Wrong Direction
	8 - Strength, ***Rev.***		**9 - Hermit,** ***Rev.***
	Brute; Carnal Physical; Obdurate		Ignorance; Immaturity Petulant; Unreasonable
	10 - Wheel of Fortune, ***Rev.***		**11 - Justice,** ***Rev.***
	Flux; Unrest Mischance; Misfortune		Prejudice; Bias Chauvinism; Injustice

	12 - Hanged Man, ***Rev.***		**13 - Death,** ***Rev.***
	Selfishness Martyrdom; Persecution		Conclusion; Cessation Denouement; Windup
	14 - Temperance, ***Rev.***		**15 - Devil,** ***Rev.***
	Excess; Overflow		Defeat; Release Severance
	16 - Tower, ***Rev.***		**17 - Star,** ***Rev.***
	Oppression; Cataclysm		Pessimism; Negativity Maladies
	18 - Moon, ***Rev.***		**19 - Sun,** ***Rev.***
	Inconstancy; Risky Confusion; Uncertainty		Disorientation Quiescence
	20 - Judgement, ***Rev.***		**21 - World,** ***Rev.***
	Misinterpretation Misreckoning		Hiatus; Agnosticism Skeptic; Chagrin Lacking Fulfillment

Minor Arcana, Wands

	Ace of Wands Venture; Opportunity		**Two of Wands** Accomplishment Aspiration
	Three of Wands Validation; Effort Productivity		**Four of Wands** Prosperity; Concord Familial Bliss
	Five of Wands Competition; Rivalry Contention		**Six of Wands** Success; Victory Exalt; Tribute
	Seven of Wands Resistance; Opposition Tenacity		**Eight of Wands** Action; Vigor; Alacrity Acceleration
	Nine of Wands Defensive; Protective		**Ten of Wands** Burdened; Travail Exhaustion; Labor
	Page of Wands Motivated; Energetic Receipt of Project News		**Knight of Wands** Impetuous; Competitive Hot-Headed
	Queen of Wands Self-Assured; Naturalist Down-to-Earth		**King of Wands** Authoritarian; Demanding Noble; Honest

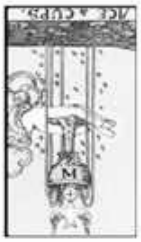
Minor Arcana, Wands, Reversed

	Ace of Wands, *Rev.*		**Two of Wands, *Rev.***
	Indolence Procrastination		Impatience Haste; Rush
	**Three of Wands, *Rev.***		**Four of Wands, *Rev.***
	Negligence; Careless Setbacks; Mistakes		Attunement; Harmony Rite of Passage
	Five of Wands, *Rev.*		**Six of Wands, *Rev.***
	Opportunity; Reconciliation		Postponement Pending Advancement
	Seven of Wands, *Rev.*		**Eight of Wands, *Rev.***
	Indecision; Vulnerability Lacking Confidence		Altercation Regression; Rashness
	Nine of Wands, *Rev.*		**Ten of Wands, *Rev.***
	Exhaustion; Battle Depletion		Accountability Reassessment
	Page of Wands, *Rev.*		**Knight of Wands, *Rev.***
	Passivity; Inarticulate		Insecurity; Hesitation
	Queen of Wands, *Rev.*		**King of Wands, *Rev.***
	Capitulation; Yielding Lacking Virtue		Tyranny; Despotic Disciplinarian; Doctrinaire

Minor Arcana, Cups

	Ace of Cups Abundance; Affirmation Fountainhead		**Two of Cups** Friendship; Affinity Cooperation
	Three of Cups Celebration; Jubilee Merriment		**Four of Cups** Introspection Reflection; Contemplation
	Five of Cups Loss; Mourning; Regrets		**Six of Cups** Nostalgia; Childhood Reminiscence; Memories
	Seven of Cups Temptation; Superficiality Enticement; Decoys		**Eight of Cups** Abandonment; Detachment Spiritual Journey
	Nine of Cups Wishful; Wish Granted Comfort; Material Success		**Ten of Cups** Happiness; Joy; Felicity
	Page of Cups Dreamer; Sensitive; Poetic Receipt of Personal News		**Knight of Cups** Charming; Affable Equanimity
	Queen of Cups Nurturing; Warm Tender; Empathic		**King of Cups** Diplomatic; Caring Fatherhood

Minor Arcana, Cups, Reversed

	**Ace of Cups, *Rev.***		**Two of Cups, *Rev.***
	Superficiality Rejection; Promiscuity		Imbalance; Quarreling Misunderstandings
	Three of Cups, *Rev.*		**Four of Cups, *Rev.***
	Hedonism; Indulgence Sensualist		Regeneration; Emergence
	Five of Cups, *Rev.*		**Six of Cups, *Rev.***
	Restoration; Acceptance		Clinging; Attachment; Puerility Naiveté; Childishness
	Seven of Cups, *Rev.*		**Eight of Cups, *Rev.***
	Determination Decision; Purpose Revealed		Epicurean; Peripatetic Drifting; Aimless
	Nine of Cups, *Rev.*		**Ten of Cups, *Rev.***
	Overindulgence; Greed		Discord; Broken Family Shattered Values
	Page of Cups, *Rev.*		**Knight of Cups, *Rev.***
	Quixotic; Dreamer		Discouragement; Ennui Unmotivated; Discomfiture
	Queen of Cups, *Rev.*		**King of Cups, *Rev.***
	Manipulation; Jealousy		Overwrought; Distracted

Minor Arcana, Swords

	Ace of Swords Conquest; Valiance		**Two of Swords** Stalemate; Catch-22 Difficult Choice
	Three of Swords Strife; Loss Heartbreak		**Four of Swords** Repose; Recovery Illness
	Five of Swords Corruption; Profiteering Cunning; Machiavellian		**Six of Swords** Journey; Pilgrimage Baggage
	Seven of Swords Impulsiveness Spontaneity; Deception		**Eight of Swords** Imprisonment; Confinement Captivity; Constraints
	Nine of Swords Haunted; Grieving Insomnia; Troubled		**Ten of Swords** Retaliation; Reprisals Revenge; Treachery
	Page of Swords Ambitions; Judicious Communication		**Knight of Swords** Aggressive; Charge Warrior
	Queen of Swords Astute; High-Achieving Executive; Striking		**King of Swords** Intellectual; Analytical; Stern; Orderly

Minor Arcana, Swords, Reversed

	Ace of Swords, *Rev.* Disruption; Entropy; Chaos Complications; Anarchy		**Two of Swords, *Rev.*** Settlement; Decision Arbitration
	Three of Swords, *Rev.* Disorder; Hurt		**Four of Swords, *Rev.*** Caution; Social Unrest
	Five of Swords, *Rev.* Recompense; Contrition Penance		**Six of Swords, *Rev.*** Afflicted; Trapped Yearning Escape
	Seven of Swords, *Rev.* Reparation; Forfeiture Requital		**Eight of Swords, *Rev.*** Emancipation Release; Clemency
	Nine of Swords, *Rev.* Recuperation Healing; Infidelity		**Ten of Swords, *Rev.*** Endurance; Comeback
	Page of Swords, *Rev.* Inhibition; Self-Conscious		**Knight of Swords, *Rev.*** Warpath Aggression; Hostility
	Queen of Swords, *Rev.* Spite; Snobbery Elitism		**King of Swords, *Rev.*** Malice; Unyielding

Minor Arcana, Pentacles

	Ace of Pentacles Offer; Investment Small Financial Gain		**Two of Pentacles** Multitasking; Juggling Prospects; Possibilities
	Three of Pentacles Endorsement; Recognition Fraternity		**Four of Pentacles** Miser; Frugality
	Five of Pentacles Destitution; Privation Hardships		**Six of Pentacles** Charity; Benevolence Alms; Philanthropy
	Seven of Pentacles Promotion; Harvest Fiscal Responsibility		**Eight of Pentacles** Aspiration; Apprenticeship Natural Gifts in Craft
	Nine of Pentacles Prosperity; Refinement Independence		**Ten of Pentacles** Stability; Prestige Aristocracy; Urbanity
	Page of Pentacles Practical; Stylish; Scholarly Receipt of Financial News		**Knight of Pentacles** Methodical; Rational Stable; Reliable
	Queen of Pentacles Charitable; Noble Opulence		**King of Pentacles** Powerful; Enterprising Established

Minor Arcana, Pentacles, Reversed

	Ace of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Two of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Disillusionment Financial Disappointment		Overwhelmed Must Prioritize
	Three of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Four of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Mediocrity Displacement		Recession; Obstacles
	Five of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Six of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Rehabilitation Refurbish; Improvement		Ungracious; Indigence Financial Hardship
	Seven of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Eight of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Anxiety; Denial Non-Confrontation		Squandering; Trifle; Idle
	Nine of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Ten of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Dissatisfaction Depression		Disengagement; Ostracism Familial Disunion
	Page of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**Knight of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Materialism; Superficiality Receipt of Financial News		Inertia; Timidity
	Queen of Pentacles, *Rev.*		**King of Pentacles, *Rev.***
	Dependence; Indebtedness Self-Preservation		Sophomoric; Stoic

Chapter 9

Cyclopedia of Card Meanings

TAROT CARDS REFLECT WHO we are, and we are anything but one-dimensional. Thus, what will become apparent immediately from the following cyclopedia of card meanings is that one card can assume multiple meanings. One person can be both the teacher and the student. Whether the teacher or the student side is relevant in a given situation will depend on other factors. Likewise, the question presented, who the Seeker is, and where the card falls in a spread will affect the exact meaning that a card takes on. How spreads are used to read the tarot will be explained in Chapter 14: The Fundamentals of Reading Spreads. To begin the immersion into tarot studies, examine and understand each card one by one with this cyclopedia.

Generally, the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana represent higher spiritual, psychological, or ideological concepts and universal life forces. The fifty-six cards of the Minor Arcana represent immediate human concerns, persons, places, or the material world. Oftentimes the Major Arcana reveal what is innate, perhaps even immutable, or at the very least difficult to change. The Minor Arcana[1] represent that which we are in control over. If the Major Arcana cards convey our nature, then the Minor Arcana convey our nurture.

Note how symbolism and allegory are dense in tarot. The card descriptions provided herein attempt to point out the most relevant imagery in the Rider-Waite-Smith. In your studies, consider the significance of these details and how they relate to the particular archetype that the card represents. What is the symbolic representation of a single white rose? What do the birds in the sky indicate? What can be suggested from the details on a tarot character's tunic? Through intensive study, you will come to understand the relevance of these symbols, so when you perform a reading and certain symbols on the card stand out more prominently to you during that reading, your intuition can readily guide you to understand the symbol's application to the Seeker's issue at hand.

Tarot card interpretation is not unlike Jungian dream analysis, where the signs and symbols are treated in a two-level process.[2] First, an objective analytical approach is taken, whereby the card meanings relate directly to a Seeker's external situations and memory. The second level is subjective, and the Seeker is pressed to answer for him- or herself why certain archetypal symbols appear before the Seeker and what spiritual or intuitive message is being conveyed from the unconscious to the conscious to aid the Seeker in achieving a higher plane.

The following cyclopedia is a synthesis of multiple sources, including the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century writings of Eliphas Levi, MacGregor Mathers, A. E. Waite, Papus, Aleister Crowley, Paul Foster Case, and Israel Regardie, and the later-twentieth-century works of Eden Gray, Joseph D'Agostino, and Robert Wang. From those early sources, the author has expanded (and diverged) from the traditional card meaning attributions to formulate her own, as set forth in this chapter.

The interpretive allegories, mythological or historic references, and symbolic narratives covered in this chapter to explain the card meanings are not intended or claimed to be the authentic heritage of the tarot or to correlate in any conclusive, demonstrable way on a physical space-time continuum with

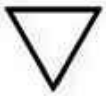
the history of tarot. However, the references raised do correlate on a metaphysical continuum as archetypes that express universal facets of the collective unconscious, and thus every allegory, myth, historic reference, and symbolic narrative covered for each card meaning is relevant on that archetypal plane.

While the following cyclopedia treats each card as having a specific meaning assigned to it when reversed, which differs substantially from its meaning upright, the "Card Reversals" section in Chapter 15 provides a simple yet effective way to recall card reversals without having to commit to memory the meanings of cards both upright and reversed.

Major Arcana

An "arcanum" is a secret that is a key to a greater mystery, a cloak-and-dagger form of knowledge that is known only to the few. Its plural form is "arcana." It is believed that Jean Baptiste Pitois, a nineteenth-century aspiring priest turned occult enthusiast (who wrote under the pen name Paul Christian), first coined the terms Major Arcana and Minor Arcana.[3] The twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana were originally known as the "trionfi" or "trump" cards in the game of tarot, because in the game they trumped the suit cards.

There is much speculation over what the Major Arcana or trump cards represent, and no unanimous agreement. Do they represent our journey through life, the Fool's journey,[4] from innocence, through trials and tribulations, learning of particular hard lessons, to the final awakening of divine fulfillment? Do they represent Jungian archetypes of consciousness? Do they correspond to the twenty-two metaphysical elements that make up the cosmos? Are they related to the Eastern metaphysical concept of the Akashic records?[5] Can they be read as a story in progression, from zero to twenty-two? Do they represent twenty-two astral planes for pathworking[6] and therefore represent the twenty-two keys to unlocking the meaning of life? Perhaps they tell the narrative of the Knights Templar and the Crusades. Could the imagery on the cards have been a subversive response to Rome's persecution of the Cathars, encrypting the cards with their doctrines, doctrines that the Church deemed heretical?[7] Perhaps occultist A. E. Waite used them to hide the secrets of the Golden Dawn in plain sight, so that the knowledge of the secret order could be made available to all, without Waite having to break his oath of secrecy.[8] Are the twenty-two cards meant to be accumulative? Are they mutually exclusive? Are they just twenty-two picture cards an artist or artists conceived for entertainment purposes a long time ago? Have they been given greater credence to purported theosophical secrets than they deserve? These are the questions to ask and answer as you study tarot.[9]

ENERGY	ELEMENT	MAJOR ARCANUM	ELEMENTAL INTERPRETATION
YANG	**Fire**	4 – The Emperor 8 – Strength 10 – Wheel of Fortune 14 – Temperance 16 – The Tower 19 – The Sun 20 – Judgement*	The force at play here is symbolically represented by the Lion. Seeker must be more authoritative, assertive, and show his or her strengths to overcome the present obstacles. Personality traits that are critical for Seeker to adopt for the matter at hand are passion, energy, and dynamism.
YIN	 **Water**	2 – The High Priestess 7 – The Chariot 12 – The Hanged Man 13 – Death 18 – The Moon 20 – Judgement*	The force at play here is symbolically represented by the Water Bearer. (Modern interpretation: Dolphin). Seeker must be more assertive about voicing his or her point of view. Show greater control of emotions. Utilize intuition. The foregoing traits are crucial if Seeker is to be successful.
YANG	**Air**	0 – The Fool 6 – The Lovers 11 – Justice 17 – The Star	The force at play here is symbolically represented by the Eagle. Seeker must take swifter action, be resourceful, and stay focused. Drive and determination are critical for the matter at hand. Be analytical and assertive to overcome the obstacles relevant to Seeker's situation.
YIN	**Earth**	1 – The Magician 3 – The Empress 5 – The Hierophant 9 – The Hermit 15 – The Devil 21 – The World	The force at play here is symbolically represented by the Bull. Seeker needs stability and strength. To succeed in the matter at hand, Seeker must stand his or her ground. Being receptive and committed are critical here. Reliability and loyalty are key.

* There are two somewhat contradicting approaches to elemental interpretation for Key 20 - Judgement. The first followsPaul Foster Case and attributes it to Pluto and Vulcan, Vulcan being the Roman god of fire. Therefore Case's approach was to attribute Key 20 to the element of Fire. The second approach follows the astrological association of Pluto with Scorpio, a water sign. Therefore a second school of thought attributes Key 20 to the element of Water. The practitioner should consider both approaches and adopt the one that best reflects the practitioner's own paradigm.

AIR

Uranus

Beginnings
Innocence
Clear Conscience

REV:
Vanity
Foolishness
Indiscretion
Inanity

Red feather in cap, not a worry written across his face, and fancy dress,[10] *the Fool walks chin in air to the edge of the cliff. A white dog laps by his feet. Behind him are snow-capped mountains, a bright yellow sky, and white sun. Slung over one shoulder is a bundle of all his earthly possessions. In the other hand, between two fingertips he holds a single white rose.*

KEY 0—THE FOOL

The Fool is the harbinger of new beginnings. When this card appears, the forthcoming life path is one of unbound potential and beginnings that come with a deeper spiritual meaning. The white sun represents power and a strong, vibrant aura emanating from the Seeker, but the Seeker's power has not yet created worldly substances of value. It is about power, but no product. *Compare:* Key 1, The Magician, a figure who can harness power constructively (or destructively, when in reverse). When The Fool appears in a reading, it is about a point in the Seeker's life when the next step could either send the Seeker flying into the air over that cliff with impressive accomplishment or falling down hard from naïveté.

The temperament of The Fool is one pure in spirit, openhearted, and like a child, innocent and naive. There is a Peter Pan mentality—boastful, careless, a bit arrogant, and possessing a willful refusal to take responsibility or be mature. Yet the Seeker is a beautiful, creative soul—perhaps someone with the foolish belief in the attainment of impossibly beautiful goals. There is a trace of swagger and flamboyance in The Fool. He is a swashbuckler. The fanciful style of the Fool's clothing

suggests one who is attached to superficiality, a Seeker with great pride in his or her attractiveness.

The Fool card can also mean that a choice is being offered, one of great significance. The choice before the Seeker may seem minor, but it is a choice that could affect a lifetime, so tread with caution (otherwise the Seeker might fall off the edge of the cliff). *Compare:* There are cards in the Minor Arcana that also indicate presentations of choice before the Seeker, such as the Seven of Cups or Two of Swords. The Minor Arcana choice cards indicate matters of immediate concern, from day-to-day life. When The Fool is drawn and represents a choice being offered, that choice will have a profound impact on the entirety of Seeker's life or the progression of his or her spirituality. *Compare:* Key 6: The Lovers, which can also suggest a choice being offered, though in The Lovers card, the choice often has ethical undertones. With The Fool, the choice is not over ethics or morality; it is a choice between two forks in the path. One fork will lead to attainment (flying, transcending the cliff) and the other will lead to likely demise (falling off the cliff).

The Fool or Trickster is a universal archetype found across many cultures, such as Robin Hood, a skilled archer with a heart of gold, but who is vain, naive, and indiscreet; or Puck, the spirited woodland creature of English folklore; Kitsune, the clever fox of Japanese and Chinese myth, a mistress in the art of deception, yet she loves deeply and demonstrates unwavering loyalty; or the Chinese legend of Sun Wukong, the tender-footed Monkey King with supernatural abilities who defies the laws of heaven and hell. When The Fool card appears in a reading, the Seeker is embodying the characteristics of Peter Pan, Robin Hood, Puck, Kitsune, or Sun Wukong. The Seeker displays a naive disregard for rules, but because of his or her extraordinary innate abilities, can get away with such defiance.

Traditionally The Fool card is unnumbered. Some systems, such as the Rider-Waite-Smith, assign "0" to it. Other systems assign "22" to the card and place it behind Key 21: The World, or, without numbering it, simply order it at the end of the Major Arcana. The Marseille-based Trumps shown in Appendix I provide an example of an unnumbered Fool placed at the end.

The element of Air governs The Fool, so the attributions associated with Air will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. In The Fool, yang energy is dominant. The number eight may be relevant.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker has been contemplating a new start or release from the past, but must be cautious, as this decision may not be the best choice. The Fool in reverse could also indicate that the Seeker has been acting in reckless disregard of consequences. If in a relationship, it is a spontaneous one. If the inquiry is a work-related issue, then there is uncertainty as to whether it will be a huge success or a huge failure. However, the Seeker's attitude or behavior has been foolish or naive, and thus, at the rate the Seeker is going, chances of a failure are high. Seeker must exercise greater wisdom and maturity if he or she wants to change course and ensure success. When The Fool appears in reverse, the Seeker has not fallen to his or her demise yet, but is on that fork, and so it would behoove the Seeker to turn back and take the other fork.

When The Fool appears in reverse, Psalm 14:1 comes to mind: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' " In reverse, Key 0: The Fool indicates a turning away from wisdom and indulgence in vanity, superficiality, and materialism. There may be a tendency to be selfish or lazy and thus an inability to progress positively. The concept "There is no God" as applied here is not literal atheism;

it is a reference to the Seeker's carefree, reckless attitude toward consequences or toward the understanding of a greater divinity. It is about not coming to terms with one's personal karma. The Seeker is acting foolishly, disregarding the consequences of his or her actions.

OR

EARTH AIR

☿

Mercury

Power
Adroitness
Construction

REV:
Destruction
Bane
Untapped Potential

Wearing a white robe for purity and red sash for power, the magician points his baton toward heaven and with his other hand, points to the earth. The gesture is said to be a representation of the philosophy "As Above, So Below,"[11] *which means at its essence that every plane of consciousness and every level of existence is interconnected. A snake is coiled as a belt around the magician's waist, an ouroboros, or "tail swallower." On the table before him are a wand, a cup, a sword, and a pentacle, representing his command over the four elements. Red roses and white lilies grow around him. Behind him is the solid glow of yellow, symbolic of heightened consciousness. The lemniscate, or infinity symbol hovers above his head, symbolic of divinity.*[12]

KEY 1—THE MAGICIAN

The theme of The Magician is power, specifically power of the mind. The card upright indicates the use of power, often creative mental power for constructive purposes. It is a powerful, positive omen. The Magician implies the limitless capabilities of the mind when it is concentrated. To wield the intensity of concentration needed for omnipotent power, one must be strong in both spirituality and character. Thus, the Magician card often appears in spreads for those who are strong in spirituality and character. It is the card of individuality.

The Magician is worldly, knowledgeable, and self-aware. He manifests self-mastery. The infinity symbol represents spiritual enlightenment. He possesses a strong bridge between the conscious and

the unconscious. He holds his power at the behest of the divine powers that be. The Magician is humanity at its best, executing divine motives. The imagery of the four suits on the magician's workbench suggests someone who creates from what already exists, not someone who is creating from nothing. Key 1: The Magician represents the prophetic theological concept of unity, or the alliance of reason and faith.[13]

This is a card about personal greatness, about mastery over the physical, mental, and spiritual. The ouroboros or serpent snake coiled around the Magician's waist symbolizes his affinity to the soul of the world, the universal unconscious. In traditional alchemy, the ouroboros is associated with mercury. Curiously, Chinese alchemy associates mercury with the dragon, a close cousin to the snake, and correlates it with intelligence and intellectualism. The Magician is highly disciplined and has accomplished much or is capable of accomplishing much in both the physical and spiritual realms. This is an individual who can grasp the knowledge of the universe. *Contrast:* Key 0: The Fool could potentially be constructive or destructive, but at the juncture that the fool appears in, it is still unclear which fork the fool will choose. Key 1: The Magician has chosen and is acting constructively when the card appears upright, and destructively when in reverse.

The clothes worn by the magi or magician depicted on the card are of particular note. It is believed that both the Knights Templar and the Assassins wore white robes with red sashes.[14] The Knights Templar was a Christian military order founded after the First Crusade. The Assassins, a misnomer for the Nizari Ismailis or Order of the Nizari Seveners, a fringe Islamic order of fighters who gained a reputation for political assassinations.[15] While there may not be historic documentation of relevance between the tarot card and the Crusades, at the archetypal and symbolic level the synchronicity most certainly bears relevance to the practitioner.

The element of Earth governs this card;[16] attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. The number one or four may be relevant. Although The Magician may seem intuitively like an active force and dominant with yang energy, the card is dominant with yin. The Magician's correspondence to the planet Mercury,[17] which, per Western astrological attributions, is governed by the element Earth, is what grounds the card in yin. Moreover, per Eastern astrological attributions, Mercury is associated with the element Water, which is yin.

There is a sharp divide among practitioners as to whether The Magician is attributed to yang (active energy) or yin (recessive). The approach herein is to attribute The Magician with yin. Traditionally the magician character is shrouded in darkness and mystery. If indeed Key 1: The Magician represents the discovery of divine secrets by the Knights Templar, then by its nature the card also represents the Templars' concealment of those secrets, which would suggest the yin principle. The deceptive appearance of brightness, light, active and open energy depicted on the face of the card (when in practice the magician works in darkness and concealment) further suggests the true yin nature of The Magician. The card itself depicts the magician working under the roses, or sub rosa. The phrase "sub rosa" has been used historically to denote secrecy and that which is covert. Thus, arguably, the imagery on The Magician emphasizes yin.

Key 1: The Magician can also be likened to Newton's first law of motion: An object at rest will stay at rest until an external force is applied, and likewise, an object in motion will stay in motion until an external force is applied to stop it. The Magician upright suggests someone with incredible power and force, advancing forward in a single direction in constant motion. In reverse, The Magician suggests an external force that has been applied to stop that advancing movement.

The red roses in the card, if considered in the context of Rosicrucian symbolism, denote a secret order, secrecy, and unseen forces over the material and sensory world. Also, throughout history the red rose has been associated with goddess energies, denoting beauty, grace, the reason and virtue of the divine feminine. *Compare:* Key 8: Strength bears a striking resemblance in color patterns and the rose symbolism. Both figures are depicted with a lemniscate over their heads; both are surrounded by golden light; both express a sense of power and control; both wear white robes; and both are surrounded by red roses, though in The Magician, it is his environment that is surrounded by the roses, while in Strength the roses adorn the woman's person.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is using power for destructive purposes. The Magician card is a case study contrasting the right-hand path and the left-hand path in spiritual development and energetic practices. When the Magician card is upright, the magician points rightward, indicating his communion with the right-hand path. His wand, which is channeling supernatural power, is closer to heaven, indicating his source. The right-hand path is about acting for the greater good, for harnessing the powers of creation—building, expanding, and bringing forth the light. There is a strong belief in a higher authority, in upholding moral obligation. When the card appears in reverse, the magician points left and his baton is closer to the earth, the material world. The reversed magus follows the left-hand path. The left-hand path is the individual quest, the quest of self-fulfillment and personal honor. In reverse, the card is also about harnessing the powers of destruction, though that is not necessarily "evil" or negative. Destruction means rebirth and transformation, progress, revolution, change, uprisings. Destruction is also the vanquishing of evil and overthrowing the status quo. The Magician card in reverse is about breaking taboo, personal anarchism, and a focus on self-power.

WATER

Moon

Intuition
Clairvoyance
Premonition
Perceptivity

Rev:
Deceit
Duplicity
Hypocrisy
Secrets

The priestess, who wears a blue veil, sits between two pillars,[18] *one dark and one light. The letters B and Jon the pillars are reminiscent of Solomon's temple: the J on the right for Jachin, which means "He shall establish," and the B on the left for Boaz, for "In it is strength." There is a Latin cross fixed on her chest and her head is adorned with a crown containing three phases of the moon: waxing, full, and waning, representing the maiden, the mother, and the crone. Behind her is a curtain printed with pomegranates.*[19] *At her feet is a waxing crescent moon wading in the priestess's gown, which seems to have transformed to water. She holds a scroll with the word "TORA." Behind the priestess is a body of calm water.*

Key 2—The High Priestess

In many cards of the Major Arcana, a pool of water is depicted—e.g., Key 14: Temperance, Key 17: The Star, Key 18: The Moon, and Key 20: Judgement—which represents the submergence of o emergence from varying levels of consciousness. The pool can also denote the unconscious and connection to the collective unconscious. In the High Priestess, the priestess's gown transforms seamlessly into a pool, indicating an unbroken link and interchange with the unconscious.

The High Priestess is the card of spirituality, psychic energy, and intuition. The priestess calls to mind Isis, patroness of nature and magic, the keeper of science, wisdom, and knowledge. She conveys to the Seeker that the Seeker is one with powerful unconscious knowledge and that the Seeker must

activate intuition to retrieve that knowledge. *Contrast:* Key 1: The Magician is creation in the outer sphere. Key 2: The High Priestess is creation in the inner sphere, intuition, psyche. The word "TORA" written on her scroll indicates the body of law that governs the spiritual and physical universe, not unlike the concept of dharma depicted in Key 10: The Wheel of Fortune. In a psychological method of attribution, The High Priestess is associated with memory, the maintaining and processing of information within.[20] She represents how we encode, store, and retrieve our experiences.

Key 2 is also about duality. There is flux to the matter at hand. There are potent recessive, unseen, or feminine forces at play. The Seeker is cautioned to keep sensitive information secret for now. Do not tell others yet. Secrecy abounds. The High Priestess brings spiritual feminine energy with slight sexual overtones. The duality is seen in a synchronous meaning to "TORA," which in Japanese means "tiger." The word "TORA" can be used as a coded message indicating "attack." There is a crouching tiger essence to The High Priestess: while she appears sitting, calm, and serene, she is in fact prepared to advance if needed at any moment.

If Key 1 is the theological unity, then Key 2 represents the theological binary, the number of woman, the mother of society.[21] If the card appears in a woman's reading, she is most likely a physically attractive woman, the breathtaking, exotic, unique, or striking kind of beauty. *Compare:* Key 3: The Empress indicates down-to-earth beauty. The waxing moon of the High Priestess symbolizes attraction, potency, and development. Note that both Key 2: The High Priestess and Key 3: The Empress feature pomegranates, which was believed to be first cultivated by the Phoenicians and has come to represent fertility, love, and marriage. Pomegranates were also considered a sacred fruit to the ancient Israelites and represented wisdom. In Christian mythos, pomegranates represent the passion of Christ.

Some contend that the High Priestess is based on Pope Joan, a female pope who purportedly reigned during the Middle Ages. The legend of Pope Joan first appeared in thirteenth-century chronicles calling her a highly educated and spiritual woman who disguised herself as a man and rose up the church hierarchy to become a pope.[22] Thus, a modern interpretation of Key 2: The High Priestess is of an accomplished woman who strives to excel in a male-dominated institution. In a reading for a female or for any individual who identifies more strongly with yin energy, The High Priestess might represent the command of personal femininity over the Seeker's yang or male-dominant setting.

Compare: Key 5: The Hierophant is about the pedagogy of wisdom and divine knowledge, while Key 2: The High Priestess is associated with the mystical or metaphysical possession of wisdom and divine knowledge. The Hierophant denotes ecclesiastical authority. The High Priestess suggests an authority of natural, universal, or cosmic law.

Compare: The two pillars of contrasting colors seem connected to the two sphinxes of contrasting colors in Key 7: The Chariot. Some connect that recurring theme between the two cards to suggest a relationship: Key 2 is the secret, the divine knowledge, and Key 7 is the carrier of that secret, manifesting divine knowledge through action. In practical application in a reading, the dark-light pillars of the High Priestess represent the use of the Seeker's abilities of intuition and premonition to become the architect of the Seeker's own destiny, while The Chariot's dark-light sphinxes represent the use of discipline and audacity to become the commander general of the Seeker's destiny.

Compare: The High Priestess suggests secrets that a person is withholding; Key 18: The Moon

represents secrets of the natural world. The High Priestess represents personal mystery; The Moon represents physical or even physiological mystery. The High Priestess denotes personal concealment, concealed personal power, or concealed knowledge, while The Moon denotes concealed environmental forces at play in a situation that controls the tides in a dramatic, significant way, though its power remains unseen, unnoticed.

The element of Water governs this card; attributions associated with Water will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. In The High Priestess, yin energy is dominant. The number two may be relevant.

Note that the High Priestess card is considered by many to be one of the more difficult cards to interpret. The card itself is shrouded in mystery and therefore its meaning will vary widely from practitioner to practitioner. Intensive study of this card is recommended to the serious practitioner so that a personal bond and understanding can be formed.

Reversed Meaning

Deceit. Duplicity. Secrets are present that could be detrimental to the Seeker if the truth continues to be suppressed. Disguises and concealment relevant to the matter at hand may work against the Seeker. Again, note the contrast and comparison to Key 18: The Moon. Depending on the other cards in the spread, The High Priestess in reverse could indicate either untapped potential for psychic intuition or sexual attraction, or negative exploitation of one's psychic or sexual powers. When the card is reversed, the moon is a waning crescent, and suggests a detachment from the collective unconscious. The link and interchange between the Seeker's external sensory world and internal intuitive is broken, disconnected. There is a sense of banishing of one's own strong psychic energies, intuition, or spirituality.

EARTH

♀

Venus

Fertility
Creativity
Maternity

REV:
Barren
Lacuna
Omission

The empress is crowned with a laurel wreath and stars; her robe depicts a pattern of pomegranates. By her side and on a pillow behind her appears the Venus symbol for femininity. The fields in front and the forest behind her grow abundantly. A stream winds out from the forest and spills into a waterfall by her feet. She holds up her baton of sovereignty.

KEY 3—THE EMPRESS

The theme of The Empress is creativity and creative energy. In a reading, it suggests the realization of creative projects. Three, the Ternary, is the number of creation. Also, the number three represents the number of spatial dimensions that form physical reality. The Empress is the supreme card of love, fertility, and family. The pomegranates on the empress's robe represent fertility, love, marriage, and passion. This is the card of fruition. The wreath on her crown denotes victory.

The Empress suggests an incredible gift for harnessing interpersonal relationships to yield success and harmony. In particular spreads it may suggest marriage. She can harness the laws of nature in her favor. She produces. She makes things happen. In any reading about a personal project or creative endeavor, The Empress is a harbinger of fruition. The Empress brings with her material abundance and wealth. The pillows that the Empress rests on denote comfort.

When The Empress appears in a reading for a female, it could indicate an au naturel kind of beauty, one with incredible feminine power. *Compare:* Key 2: The High Priestess indicates striking beauty and intrigue. The Empress denotes the success of bearing offspring or innovation. It is the card of

creation. The winding waterfall in the background nourishes the land. There is a sense of balance and stability between all four elements in the card's imagery. When The Empress card appears, she is a positive affirmation of the Seeker's hopes and goals.

There are speculations that The Empress is inspired by the historic figure Saint Adelaide of Italy the second wife of the Roman Emperor, Otto the Great. In Catholicism, St. Adelaide[23] is considered the patron saint of empresses, princesses, brides, parenthood, second marriages, widows, women in large families, and also of abuse victims, prisoners, and exiles. Thus, in practical application the Empress card is often associated with parenthood, marriage, or even social work performed by a woman.

Just as speculative as the Saint Adelaide inspiration is the notion that The Empress is inspired by Joan I of Navarre, who was the Queen of France by marriage to King Philip IV. King Philip IV ha been remembered in history as the king who subjugated the Knights Templar. Joan I was also the mother of three subsequent kings—Louis X, Philip V, and Charles IV,[24] though history holds that all three kings were allegedly cuckolded. The Tour de Nesle Affair was a royal scandal in which the three women married to the three respective kings were accused of adultery by King Philip IV's only daughter, Isabella; the three women were subsequently imprisoned and the three alleged lovers tortured and executed.[25] Thus, in a reading, The Empress card indicates great fruition for the Seeker (i.e., the birth of three kings), but might also be a foreshadowing of unintended or unanticipated consequences affecting that fruition.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. This is due to the card's association with Venus, which rules over the Earth signs, Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. In The Empress, yin energy is dominant. The number three or six may be relevant.

Reversed Meaning

Efforts of creation and innovation won't yield results. There is a sense of emptiness and no production after much work and effort. The Seeker's actions are preventing contentment and fruition. The Seeker is the cause of delays in fruition. The Empress reversed may indicate barrenness or experiencing difficulties with conception or childbirth. The card could also suggest weakened maternal energies, detachment or severance from the Mother Earth archetype. The Empress in reverse can at times serve as reference to relations with a mother or mother figure that is strained, experiencing conflict, or in need of the Seeker's attention. Generally, the card in reverse is a message to the Seeker that he or she must commit to harnessing Earth qualities to succeed. The element of Earth is missing and is the cause of imbalance, barrenness, or lack of results.

△
FIRE

♂ ♈
Mars ARIES

Authority
Government
Paternity

Rev:
Passivity
Overthrow
Coup d'état

The emperor wears armor and a cloak of deep red. The armor beneath his robes suggests a warrior king. A jeweled crown sits on his head. In one hand he wields a scepter, one that is reminiscent of an ankh; in the other hand, a golden orb. The scepter or crux ansata is his sovereignty; the orb is his dominion. Ram heads are sculpted into his throne. Behind him, the sky is cast orange; dry, jagged rocks are sprawled into the horizon, perhaps a canyon. A small stream runs at the foot of the canyon.

Key 4—The Emperor

The Emperor represents authority and government. The Seeker possesses an iron will. Key 4 symbolizes the theological quaternary, the number of force and sovereignty.[26] All is in order, under control. The landscape behind the Emperor indicates a stern, severe nature.

Traditionally, if the card appears in a man's reading, it indicates self-mastery and virile power, and in a woman's, a father figure. The modern, more gender-neutral approach is to interpret it as dominance and superiority in the work, career, and business realms. When the Emperor card appears, themes of order, authority, and jurisdiction will be at play.

If the Seeker is engaged in a present situation of conflict, then the Emperor card is a positive omen of jus ad bellum—the Seeker is justified in his or her fight. Authority is on the side of Seeker, his or her cause is just, and the card portends to a high likelihood of success for the Seeker. Although there is authority, just cause, and glory in war and battle, as indicated by the armor underneath the

emperor's red robes, what is the Seeker's dominion? What has the Seeker conquered? The kingdom is parched. The dryness of the imagery indicates thirst, a thirst for a different kind of sovereignty than the one the Seeker has attained.

The golden orb that the emperor holds calls to mind the story of King Midas of Greek mythology, who could turn all that he touched to gold. However, ironically, Midas died of hunger, because all that he touched turned to gold and gold cannot nourish. More tragic yet, the king turned his beloved daughter to gold. The Midas theme resonates with the parched kingdom behind the emperor. The Midas allegory will resonate in particular with a Seeker if a tarot spread is dominated by the suit of Pentacles. If a tarot spread is dominated by the suit of Wands and The Emperor appears, then the Seeker's approach to the matter at hand is too belligerent. There is also a sense of scorching the earth in a desperate effort to wield control.

The card represents active yang force. The Emperor is the domination of the mind over the heart. Structure and regulation are pertinent themes. The element of Fire governs this card; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Key 4: The Emperor could also relate to the sign Aries and, timing-wise, denote the period March 21–April 19.

Reversed Meaning

It is very crucial in the Seeker's life right now to be assertive, domineering, and wield authority. Put mind over heart. To solve the problem, the Seeker must exercise more assertiveness. Activate Fire energies and traits to resolve the matter. Be proactive. The card reversed could also indicate the overthrow of authority or an authoritarian figure in the Seeker's life. Could suggest someone who was patronizing to the Seeker and now there has been a coup d'état. The Emperor in reverse is about dominating the domineering. It rings with the idea of a new world order.

There is also speculation that The Emperor is inspired in part by King Philip IV of France, who reigned during the Crusades, and that Key 3: The Empress is his queen, Joan I of Navarre. In light of King Philip IV's narrative, in a tarot reading the card in reverse could suggest strong prejudices that cause the Seeker to reach unjust or inequitable rulings on others. There is a harshness and bias to the Seeker's leadership. The Seeker must learn to lead with more compassion and kindness, and less severity.

EARTH

Venus TAURUS

Tradition
Conventionalism
Institutionalism

REV:
Non-conformity
Unorthodox
Bohemian
Existentialist

The hierophant, a holy man, sits between two stone pillars of Hermes and Solomon.[27] *Before him are two friars, one cloaked in red roses and another in white lilies. At the hierophant's feet are two crossed keys, each bearing the cross of the four elements. The hierophant is in a red robe and carries the triple-barred papal cross.*

KEY 5—THE HIEROPHANT

The Hierophant card suggests conformity as a prevailing impulse. To conform, one must repress certain aspects of oneself that are different from others'. Hence, The Hierophant card is also about concealment. It can represent deception, the concealment or distortion of truths. It can suggest a good intention to protect, but a negative result from those good intentions, because a person should never assume he or she knows better than another and therefore try to "protect" or shield someone else from knowledge. We are not the keeper of others. Either the Seeker, out of a good intention, is withholding the truth from someone else because the Seeker wants to protect that person, or someone is withholding the truth from the Seeker, albeit out of a good intention, to protect the Seeker. In either case, the result will be negative and will hurt the Seeker more than it helps. Knowledge should be accessible to all.

The Hierophant also reminds the Seeker that the pressure to conform may cause stigma. Individuals should be free to be their true selves. With the pressure to conform comes persecution, often unfair persecution of others who have chosen not to conform. Thus, there is a dark undertone to The

Hierophant. The theory behind the darker interpretation of The Hierophant is that the card was inspired by Pope Clement V, who persecuted the Knights Templar in the 1300s and allowed for their execution.[28] Generally, the card represents the orthodox institution in power, and the subjection or even oppression of those who stray from that orthodoxy. It is about group-think over individuality. Also note that sometimes The Hierophant can indicate that institutions are related to the matter at hand. The Seeker may be dealing with organized institutions, or be a leader in such an organized institution. If the Seeker is a leader in an organized institution, then the card is a cautionary message to the Seeker to not pressure members to conform.

The traditional meaning ascribed to The Hierophant is that of sanctum sanctorum, or that which has been ascribed as holy. If The Emperor is about having authority from government or the Father, then The Hierophant is about having authority from the Divine. Key 5 represents the theological quinary, the number of religion and faith.[29] Upright, The Hierophant represents orthodoxy: conforming to what is the present norm, membership in the majority, and having the approval of those in power. Note that in reverse, The Hierophant represents heterodoxy: to be in the minority, to go against the norm, and to be unconventional.

The Hierophant is a holy man, an important figure in his society, the interpreter of sacred mysteries. People rely on him to be a channel between heaven and earth. In a reading, the card typically indicates a desire to follow conventions and norms, a traditionalist—one who holds traditional values. Perhaps the Seeker is placing too much importance on social and societal approval. There is an inclination toward group identification. Perhaps there is bondage to societal conventions. The Seeker is trying to observe what society deems is "right."

Compare: Key 2: The High Priestess is associated with the mystical or metaphysical possession of wisdom and divine knowledge. Key 5: The Hierophant is about the pedagogy of wisdom and divine knowledge. The Hierophant denotes ecclesiastical authority. If Key 5 represents the orthodox, then Key 2: The High Priestess represents the heterodox. The High Priestess is connected to The Hierophant in a way similar to the connection between The Empress and The Emperor.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yin energy is dominant. Key 5: The Hierophant could also relate to the sign Taurus and, timing-wise, denote the period April 20–May 20.

Reversed Meaning

In reverse, The Hierophant indicates nonconformity. The card in reverse is about seeking freedom and liberation from conformity. The Seeker takes the unconventional path through life. The Seeker will often find him- or herself in the minority rather than the majority. Yet The Hierophant in reverse is considered a good omen card. It indicates an existentialist personality, someone who operates staunchly by self-determination. All the greats in history, especially the prophets, represent The Hierophant in reverse: spirits who dared to be unconventional. When The Hierophant appears in reverse, this could indicate that part of the solution for the Seeker is to stop going along with the conventions of society. Do not try to gain societal approval. What is "right" or "righteous" should be defined and guided by the Seeker only, not others and not society. The Hierophant in reverse could also suggest that the Seeker has had a nontraditional education or upbringing. Overall there is a sharp divergence from traditionalism and conformity when The Hierophant appears in reverse. Upright, The Hierophant speaks of a Seeker who relies on another, a figure of authority or an institution, to define

for the Seeker what is right and wrong, and the Seeker is attempting to conform to that definition. In reverse, The Hierophant speaks of a Seeker who defines right and wrong by self-determination.

AIR

Mercury GEMINI

Passion
Partnership
Ethics
Primordial Choice

REV:
Temptation
Interference
Discord
Moral Quandary

A red-winged angel with flaming hair appears in the clouds over the primordial man and primordial woman. Behind the pair is a single mountain peak. A snake is coiled around an apple tree by the woman. Behind the man is a tree in flames. A radiant sun shines behind them. The man looks to the woman and the woman looks up to the angel above.

KEY 6—THE LOVERS

Many contemporary tarot practitioners assign a romantic indication to The Lovers card. However, ir every traditional interpretation of The Lovers, the card is about a moral choice, about choosing the right path. Yet if the Seeker is asking about love, then The Lovers card can be a great omen, indicating the beginnings of romance and, simultaneously, the beginnings of temptation. The card represents partnership with one other person. In readings about love, the card indicates passion. Lust may even be present. Overall, there is a strong feeling of paradise, at least in the beginning. In readings about work or career, the card indicates a partnership that the Seeker is initially excited about, a sense that the match is "made in heaven." However, not all is as it seems, and the feeling of paradise may be evanescent if caution is not observed.

The philosophical component of the card centers around choice: there is duality or a decision to be made, and it is a choice between vice and virtue, an ethical quandary. The burning tree behind the man, with twelve glowing flames, is considered to be the Tree of Life, while the fruit-bearing tree behind the female is the Tree of Knowledge.[30] Its fruits represent sexuality—fornication, desire, and

temptation of the physical senses, which lead to human suffering.[31] The Tree of Knowledge symbolizes the desire for sensation. Thus, the Tree of Knowledge represents the primordial choice: to eat of the fruit and know sexuality, thus knowing suffering, or to ascend up the Tree of Life toward God.

The male figure in the card is the mind and rationality. The female figure is the heart and emotion. In a reading, The Lovers hint at a choice that the Seeker must make between the mind and the heart, a choice that may have ethical implications. The female figure looking up at the angel may suggest that the Seeker is predisposed to choose what will comply with his or her ethical standards (in reverse, the card hints that the Seeker might be tempted to stray from those standards). In one sense, Key 6 is about love versus lust, immaculate sexuality or fornication. There is an underlying theme of indecision.

The Lovers card may also be understood alongside key ideas from the philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard: we face an existential choice between two life paths, either one willfully hedonistic or one grounded in our sense of ethical duty. The Lovers card suggests a primordial responsibility to choose ethically. *Compare:* Three cards in the deck feature serpent imagery—Key 6: The Lovers, Key 10: Wheel of Fortune, and the Seven of Cups (appearing in one of the chalices) The serpents here call to mind the notion "under every flower a serpent coiled,"[32] warning the Seeker of dangerous temptations and an unanticipated turn of events. It warns of how quickly bliss can become tragedy.

Key 6 is associated with the theological senary, the hieroglyph of the knowledge of good and evil.[33] The element of Air governs this card; attributions associated with Air will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yang energy is dominant. Key 6: The Lovers could also relate to the sign Gemini and, timing-wise, denote the period May 21–June 20.

Reversed Meaning

There may be interference with the Seeker's affairs from a meddling third party. In a romantic relationship, The Lovers reversed could suggest meddling from an in-law, relative, or someone who is jealous of the relationship. The card could also symbolize interference from lifestyle circumstances. A third party is tampering with the Seeker's relationship or situation. When The Lovers card is in reverse, the symbol of relevance is the serpent. There is a serpent in the Seeker's kingdom. In a reading for love, the card reversal indicates uncertainty or confusion in a relationship: the Seeker's heart and mind do not align about his or her lover, and that uncertainty has been brought on by the meddling of a third party who is planting seeds of doubt in the Seeker. The Lovers card upright and reversed can both indicate the choice between vice and virtue and an ethical or moral quandary that the Seeker faces. Upright may suggest that the Seeker chooses what is ethical or moral to him or her. In reverse it suggests a temptation to veer from the Seeker's own standard of ethics or morality.

WATER

Moon CANCER

Victory
Control
Willpower
Jurisdiction

REV:
Riot
Turbulence
Wrong Direction

An armored man with golden locks stands in his chariot holding a baton. In front of him are two sphinxes, one dark and one light. The curtains on his chariot are blue, printed with six-pointed stars, like the six-pointed star on his crown. He also wears the laurel wreaths of victory. His breastplate represents Urim and Thummim,[34] *which is the divination used by high priests to communicate with heaven. The castle walls and moat behind him represent the domain that he protects. The symbols on his belt and tunic are reminiscent of alchemy and astrology.*

KEY 7—THE CHARIOT

The theme of The Chariot is conquest and triumph over obstacles in the Seeker's life. It suggests ful control of the Seeker's emotional faculties. The card affirms movement in the right direction. The Seeker's current movement will lead to victory. The Seeker is controlled—a master of self-control and self-assertion. When The Chariot card appears in a spread, it indicates great control over one's willpower.

There is also a sense that the Seeker's willpower comes from the divine. Strong positive external forces, spiritual in nature and inexplicable, have put the momentum in the Seeker. The Chariot is about putting into action body and mind, knowledge and intuition. The Chariot represents the Seeker's personality and tenacity in movement toward accomplishing a goal. In a multi-card spread, The Chariot card in a past position represents acquisition of bounty that the Seeker will be using to enjoy

or invest in the future ahead, or in Seeker's progression forward; in a present or future position it represents an important personal journey where the Seeker is looking for bounty; Seeker is on a quest; or there will be travel not for the sake of travel, but for the sake of acquisition.

Key 7 might be likened to Newton's second law of motion: force is mass times acceleration. The rate of progress the Seeker can achieve on the matter at hand is related to the gravity or significance of the situation and the amount of effort devoted to it by the Seeker. The Chariot affirms that the Seeker has what it takes to put in the force to accelerate the mass, which represents the problem that the Seeker has been presented with.

The Chariot reminds the Seeker of the mechanics, the movement, and the motion of conquest. The element of Water governs this card; attributions associated with Water will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. The card's association with the sign Cancer may also indicate a Seeker who appears tough on the outside, but deep down is quite vulnerable and sensitive. That theme is further repeated in the imagery of the charioteer's armor: a hard encasing over vulnerable human flesh. The Seeker likes to appear in control, but has a tendency to run from his or her problems (or attack the problems with such aggression as to subdue it and therefore avoid true, mature confrontation).

The chariot depicts a badge with the Indian lingam and yoni representing the Hindu deities Shiva and Shakti respectively. The traditional implication is that of the union of the external sphere of rulership by man and the internal sphere of rulership by woman.[35] The symbology seems to be a continuation of certain themes that ran through Key 6: The Lovers. It is also believed that the sphinxes in The Chariot card are female while the charioteer pictured on the card is male, presenting the question of who exactly is in control, the sphinxes or the charioteer? *Compare:* The two pillars of contrasting colors in Key 2: The High Priestess seem connected to the two sphinxes of contrasting colors in The Chariot. While the dark-lightpillars of The High Priestess represent the use of the Seeker's abilities of intuition and premonition to become the architect of the Seeker's own destiny, here The Chariot's dark-light sphinxes represent the use of discipline and audacity to become the commander general. The High Priestess suggests a sense of creation while The Chariot suggests a military prowess with the Seeker's exercise of willpower.

The card's imagery might also call to mind the Knights Templar returning from the East, bearing the Holy Grail and other divine secret or mystical knowledge. Conquest was a success. The charioteer is now adorned with the eight-pointed star on his head, directly over the third eye. In Babylonian times, Ishtar, the goddess of love, war, and fertility, was represented by the eight-pointed star.[36] In Judeo-Christian mythos, the number eight is associated with salvation, a new spiritual beginning.[37] Within the eight corners of an octagram, the letters for YHWH and ADNI (Yahweh and Adonai) could be inscribed to call upon the divinity. The eight-pointed star is also reminiscent of the eight-spoke wheel in Buddhism, representing the Eightfold Path.[38] Here depicted on the crown of the charioteer, the eight-pointed star could represent the acquisition of divine knowledge from where the charioteer is returning, or could represent the charioteer's salvation. It could also represent the divine knowledge the charioteer carries forward, advancing toward his destination. Either way, in a reading it indicates triumph, control, and conquest in the Seeker.

As with The Magician, yin energy is dominant, even though outwardly the message of the card seems to be active rather than recessive. However, as with The Magician, there is a sense of reception of powers or knowledge from the divine; thus it is the receipt of powers from the heavens

that renders the card intrinsically yin. Timing-wise, The Chariot could denote the period June 21–July 22, associated with Cancer.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker must reconsider direction. Victory is not certain in the current path chosen. In reverse, The Chariot card is a warning to make better choices. The Chariot reversed indicates that the Seeker is supposed to enjoy conquest and success, but current choices have put the Seeker in the wrong direction. Be careful of movements. Make sure movement is in the right direction. The card in reverse could also indicate a lack of willpower. Water is in its passive state rather than being the formidable natural force that it is capable of being. When The Chariot card, a card governed by water energy, is upright, the water energy flows in alignment with the physical laws of nature, with its environment, and therefore flows quickly forward, with great force. In reverse, there is blockage and water energy flows against the physical laws of nature. Therefore, in reverse, The Chariot card is about water energy being stuck or dammed up.

FIRE

Sun LEO

Compassion
Force
Fortitude
Security

REV:
Brute
Carnal
Obdurate
Obstinate

A woman in white, adorned with a garland of red roses, gently closes the mouth of a lion. She has tamed the beast. A lemniscate hovers above her head. Around her is green earth, a single blue mountain peak, and yellow sky. Woman and earth are calm, serene, and assured.

KEY 8—STRENGTH

Triumph of love over hate. Compassion is strength. Beneficent fortitude.[39] There is strength in virtue. Virtue is strength. Triumph of one's higher nature over material desires. The Strength card is about domination over the Seeker's fears. It is a reminder that the Seeker cannot use brute force to exercise will over others; the Seeker must use gentle, subtle influence. *Compare:* Key 7: The Chariot is another card denoting strength and triumph. However, Key 7 is typically associated with the strength to master the world, the Seeker's environment. Key 8: Strength is associated with strength to master the self. Key 8 is about inner strength and courage.

The lemniscate above her head suggests that she possesses divine knowledge, like the Magician in Key 1. While the red roses around The Magician's environment denote divine knowledge of the world around him, in Strength the red roses around the woman's body denote divine knowledge of the self. If Key 7: The Chariot represents the acquisition of such knowledge, Key 8 here suggests the application of that knowledge with inner wisdom and virtue. That inner wisdom and virtue manifests as strength and fortitude. In the progression of the Major Arcana, Strength is a foreshadowing of what it will take for a Seeker to reach Judgement and The World, Keys 20 and 21 respectively.

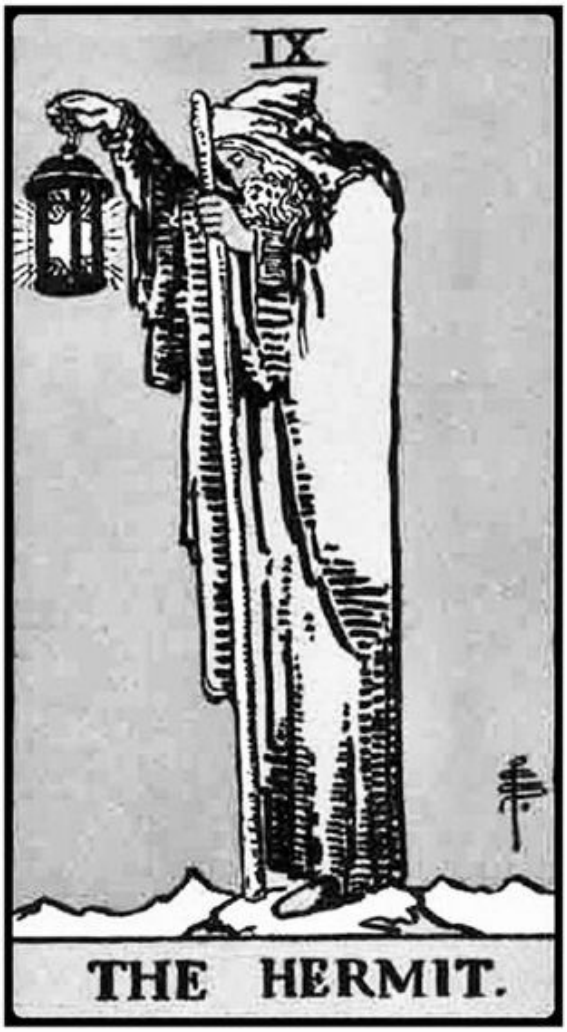
The lion depicted in the card calls to mind a reference to 1 Peter 5:8 from the Bible: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."[40] In a reading, the lion symbolizes a fierce and ferocious foe that the Seeker has to face, a person or a challenge that is being openly hostile toward the Seeker. The card's imagery provides the key to how that adversary or foe may be tamed: through kindness and compassion. The meek lamb will prevail over the open-mouthed lion.

The element of Fire governs this card; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yang energy is dominant. The Strength card is optimal for meditations and reflection on a Seeker's personal health and wellness concerns. Key 8: Strength could also relate to the sign Leo and, timing-wise, denote the period July 23–August 22.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker must be cautious that brute force is not used. The card in reverse could suggest overreliance on the physical faculties rather than mental, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual. However, depending on the other cards in the spread or the issue at hand could also indicate a waning of physical strength. Look to other cards to identify what is causing the waning of physical strength in the Seeker. Key 8 can be a card that reflects health or wellness. The card could also indicate that the Seeker is using his or her strength in the wrong way; being too stubborn and obstinate in response to a particular situation. The card in reverse is a reminder of what true strength is.

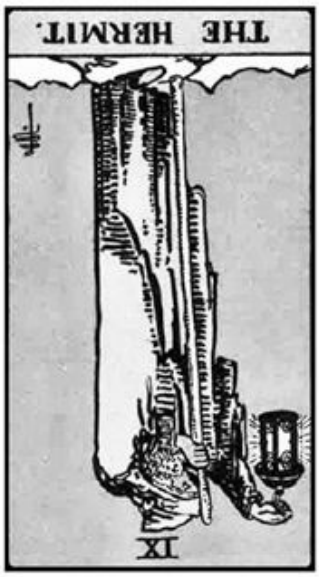
When Strength appears upright, meekness and compassion will prevail. When Strength appears in reverse, it could be an indication that the Seeker's conduct is too passive and that which represents the lion, that fierce foe, is overwhelming the Seeker. Another reading of Strength when it is reversed is a sense of holding back. The Seeker is holding back, and as a result is unable to achieve his or her objective. The Seeker must exercise full force of strength to prevail. Harness the energies of Fire to overcome obstacles.



EARTH

Mercury VIRGO

Wisdom
Erudition
Mentorship



REV:
Ignorance
Immaturity
Petulant

A wise man holds up his lantern as he stands on snowy peaks. In his other hand he carries a walking stick. He has been on a long journey and has learned much from his spiritual travels. Cloaked in gray, with gray sky behind him, the hermit's expression is one of wisdom and placidity. He is neutral in the war between good and evil. He has transcended that war and has found peace.

KEY 9—THE HERMIT

Wisdom is offered. In practical application, the theme of the card is guidance and mentorship. The Hermit is the card of both neophyte initiates and prophets.[41] Someone wiser than the Seeker is offering good counsel. That counsel is correct. The Seeker should accept the advice. Be open to advice from those who are wiser. The staff that the Hermit holds in his left hand symbolizes a supernal command that transcends the physical realm and the five physical senses.

The Hermit is also about introspection. Key 9 can indicate an introvert or someone who is embracing solitude. The Seeker is turning attention and focus inward. *Compare:* Four of Cups, which indicates the need, start, or attempt to turn attention inward, but external distractions are preventing the Seeker from doing so. Here, The Hermit is filled with wisdom and indicates a meditative philosophical turn of attention inward. Where a Seeker is turning inward in the Four of Cups out of past disappointment, the Seeker is turning inward in The Hermit in order to seek enlightenment or spiritual ascension.

The Hermit is a guardian of higher thoughts and contemplation. In the Four of Cups, the Seeker may be licking wounds. In The Hermit, the Seeker is either the mentor or beacon of wisdom for others, or the Seeker is the one who should accept the wisdom of his or her mentor. To determine which applies to the Seeker, look to the neighboring cards in the spread.

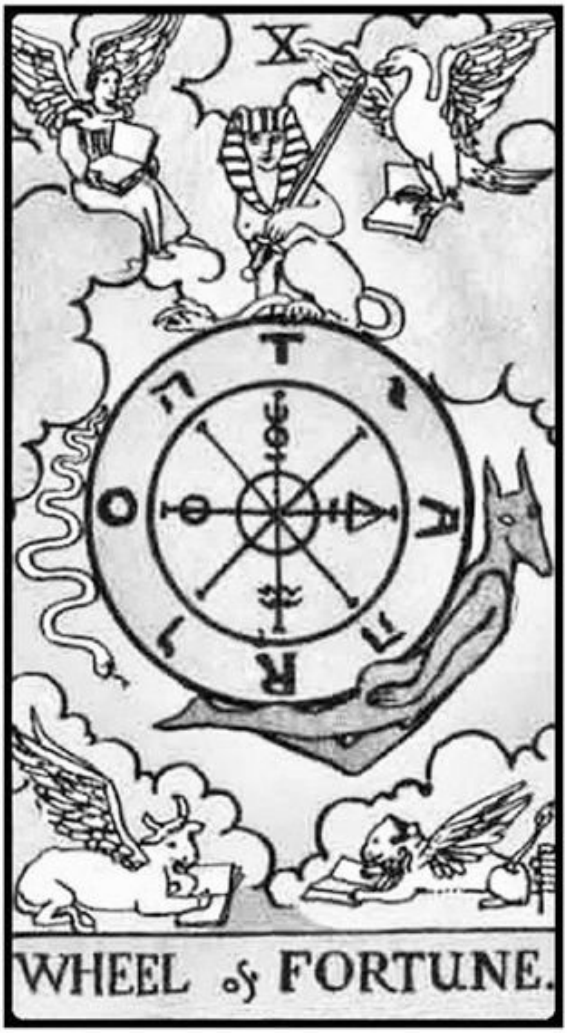
There are two ways of interpreting the lighted lantern. Some suggest that it represents wisdom and the shining of light in the darkness for others. Another is to interpret the lighted lantern as representing someone who sees the world through his or her own light. The Hermit walks in the direction of his own thoughts only; he is not a traditionalist; the Seeker is unorthodox in the path taken, usually one of solitude.

There is also speculation that Key 9 is inspired by Peter the Hermit, a key figure during the First Crusades.[42] *Compare:* Key 5: The Hierophant is about orthodox wisdom; Key 9 is the unorthodox solitary path to wisdom. Another reference associated with Key 9: The Hermit is Saint Francis of Paola and the Hermits of Saint Francis (an order of mendicant friars later known as the Minim Friars a namesake that describes their vows of humility). In drawing an interpretive connection between The Hermit card and Saint Francis, The Hermit indicates the path of nonviolence and compassion, with the lighted lantern affirming to the Seeker that such a path is the way to respond to the Seeker's present situation. It also suggests a gift of prophecy, as was associated with Saint Francis. The lighted lantern is pointing the way to what is to come. Look to any neighboring cards in a spread that the lantern seems to draw attention to, as these cards may suggest a prophetic matter that will bear great relevance to the Seeker.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yin energy is dominant. Key 9: The Hermit could also relate to the sign Virgo and, timing-wise, denote the period August 23–September 22.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker was given wise counsel but is not heeding it. The current situation is affected or caused by failure to heed that wise counsel. The Hermit in reverse could suggest foolishness or the need for more spiritual development before the Seeker will gain the wisdom necessary to prevail. The Hermit appearing in reverse could be an indication to the Seeker that greater introspection and wisdom is needed before a decision should be made or action taken. The Seeker has not sought out counsel or mentorship, and should. The Seeker tends to be someone who thinks he or she knows best, and can be petulant to elders, those with seniority in status, or those with more experience. The Seeker prefers to rely on his or her own mistakes and experience than to learn from others and thus avoid error.



FIRE

♃

Jupiter

Kismet
Destiny
Luck
Serendipity

Rev:
Flux
Unrest
Mischance
Misfortune

A wheel appears in the heavens, reminiscent of a mandala[43] *or seal.*[44] *The outer circle displays the Hebrew letters transliterated to "YHWH" (or "IHVH"), for Yahweh, and th letters clockwise read "ROTA," Latin for "wheel," or is that "TARO?" Or "TORA," if th letters are read counter-clockwise?*[45] *The center circle is quartered into quadrants. The top shows the alchemical symbol for mercury, the right is the symbol for sulfur, the bottom is the symbol for water, and the left is the symbol for salt.*[46] *At the center point is the wheel of life, symbolizing dharma.*[47] *A demon creature with a human body and jackal's head, reminiscent of Anubis, god of the afterlife, supports the wheel. A yellow snake slithers to its side. At the crown of the wheel is a sphinx with a sword.*

Key 10—Wheel of Fortune

Key 10: Wheel of Fortune is the karma card. It can represent a turning point in the Seeker's life Movement is coming. What goes up will come down. What hits bottom will bounce up. Forces are ir motion. There may be a turn of luck. The card could represent a force majeure coming in the Seeker's life. An "act of god," chance occurrence, unavoidable accident, or matter beyond the Seeker's control may happen and affect the outcome of events.

Many interpret the Wheel of Fortune card to represent fate, destiny, and kismet. Generally, upright the card suggests that the Seeker's life is going with the flow of the wheel; in reverse, it suggests that the Seeker is going against it. Upright the card confirms that the Seeker is aligned with the dharma. Ir

reverse, there is misalignment.

The wheel depicted in the card is also reminiscent of the mathematical concept of the unit circle. The unit circle can further be expressed with periodic functions (e.g., sine or cosine), revealing the philosophy of oscillations between zeniths and nadirs, highs and lows. The wheel here is the mandala of the tarot, encompassing the whole of the teachings in the Major Arcana. It repeats the key "TORA" from Key 2: The High Priestess, when the letters are read counter-clockwise. Consider the significance of left-right symbolism here.[48]

Key 10: Wheel of Fortune can also be a foreshadowing that history will repeat itself. The serpent depicted on the card lends credence to this interpretation, suggesting the moral choice humanity faces time and time again, not unlike the primordial choice. The wheel symbolism also suggests samsara, the Buddhist and Hindu concept of the endless cycle of birth and death, the existential suffering that can only be ended by divine knowledge or spiritual ascension. In practical application for a reading, the card may indicate to the Seeker that the past will become the future and there could be a sense of déjà vu.

The element of Fire governs Key 10; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yang energy is dominant.

Reversed Meaning

The Wheel of Fortune in reverse indicates a Seeker who operates against the current of karma, destiny, or even chance; misalignment with the dharma. It usually suggests a person who cannot rely on predetermined or external forces to sweep in and help support him or her. The Wheel in reverse is a message to the Seeker to exert greater willpower for the matter at hand, because he or she is moving against the turn of the wheel. However, take care to note that the Wheel in reverse does not indicate failure or lack of success; there is no suggestion at all that the Seeker won't succeed; in fact, the Seeker very well could, so long as greater personal willpower is invested. The Wheel of Fortune in reverse indicates movement against the current; that is all. The Seeker should know that he or she is working against the flow. The swim upstream is always harder, but not impossible. The Wheel of Fortune in reverse calls to mind the Chinese and Japanese myth of a koi fish that persevered and swam up a waterfall against the odds. When the fish reached the top, Heaven awarded the fish and turned it into a celestial dragon. That story now represents the Seeker's struggle. Generally, in reverse the card will indicate setbacks, but the Seeker could very well overcome those setbacks if greater Fire energy is exerted.

AIR

Venus LIBRA

Equilibrium
Equity
Fairness
Legality

REV:
Prejudice
Bias
Chauvinism
Injustice

She sits between two stone pillars, a curtain behind her. In a red robe, she wields an erect sword in one hand and balancing scales in the other. Just visible behind the dark curtain is a sky of bright yellow.

KEY 11—JUSTICE

The theme of Justice is external balance. The Justice card can suggest that balance will be restored in the Seeker's life or that there *is* balance to the conditions in his or her life, but it is hard for Seeker to see that at the moment. The outcome that will best bring balance to the Seeker's life is the one that should occur. Consider the theme of equilibrium or judgment and how it applies to the situation at hand. *Compare:* Key 14: Temperance indicates internal balance. Justice may indicate that justice, fairness, and a detached impartiality are critical influences or factors in the current situation. The curtains symbolize a separation of states of consciousness.

A traditional interpretation of the Justice card is the presentation of a decision that needs to be made by the Seeker. The Seeker is urged to make that decision fairly, with impartiality, and with integrity. Like Key 6: The Lovers card, ethics is relevant to the matter at hand. *Compare:* Key 6: The Lovers is about making an ethical decision that involves the Seeker. Key 11: Justice is about making an ethical decision that involves an external condition, others who matter to the Seeker, or a situation outside of the Seeker. The Justice card could indicate that lawsuits will be won or disputes resolved. Upright, the verdict that is rendered will be fair to the Seeker. In reverse, the verdict that is rendered

will seem unfair but is in fact the objective, fair decision.

Consider Newton's third law of motion: to every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction; or the forces of two bodies on each other are always equal and are directed in opposite directions. When the Seeker has exerted a particular force, there will be another force exerted against it, one equal in magnitude and opposite in direction. That will create the external equilibrium in the Seeker's life that is needed in the given situation. *Compare:* Key 10: Wheel of Fortune, which suggests the karmic turns of life, the balance or equilibrium beyond the Seeker's immediate control. The Wheel of Fortune is about the universe's adherence to the laws of motion; Justice is about the personal adherence within the confined scope of the Seeker's life. Key 11: Justice is about human-made balance and equilibrium. It is about human-made justice. Thus, it could indicate court or legal proceedings in certain instances. It can also indicate the consequences of our decisions and actions. What is fair will feel fair.

Note further what the nature of the justice is: it is human-created justice, not divine justice. The laws of man are at play, not the laws of nature or the laws of the divine. *Compare:* Key 10: Wheel of Fortune, which suggests a greater divine justice affecting the Seeker's situation. The concept of a human-made justice system is symbolized in the curtain that has been hung up behind the sitting figure, as if covering or shielding the yellow light of the natural world. Hence, many tarot practitioners interpret the Justice card to suggest influences of the legal system, of the literal application of laws.

The element of Air governs this card; attributions associated with Air will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yang energy is dominant. Key 11: Justice could also relate to the sign Libra and, timing-wise, denote the period September 23–October 22.

Reversed Meaning

What is fair will not *feel* fair to the Seeker. *Compare:* When the Justice card appears upright, it suggests that what is fair will feel fair. In reverse, what is fair will *not* feel fair. When the Justice card appears in reverse, there are two layers of meaning. First, the Seeker feels that life is unfair toward him or her, but the card affirms that it is actually not. The outcome was objectively the fair outcome, even if it was disappointing to the Seeker. Look at karma, the past, and the Seeker's own attitudes and actions to make sense of why the outcome was fair. The key to the Seeker's progress is to understand why it felt unfair and how to make peace with that. If the Seeker is being honest with him- or herself, then the Seeker will see that what has happened is in fact Justice. The second layer of meaning for the Justice card in reverse may indicate chauvinism, aggression, blind enthusiasm in a particular cause that may bring more harm than good, or actions that may be unjust rather than just. These actions were prompted by the Seeker's feeling that what happened was not fair, when in objectivity it was fair. In reverse the card may suggest malfeasance. Prejudice and bias may be at play in the matter at hand. Note the progression from Key 11: Justice in reverse, i.e., feeling unjustly wronged when in fact no wrong has been done to the Seeker, to Key 12: The Hanged Man in reverse, i.e., martyrdom.

WATER

Neptune

Self-Sacrifice
Suspension
Prophesy
Grace

REV:
Selfishness
Martyrdom
Persecution

A man is hung on a tau crossed gallows, leaves still on the wood, indicating life and regeneration. He is suspended from one foot, hands behind his back. His legs form another cross. The man wears the red pants of fearlessness and the blue shirt of intuition. A golden nimbus is encircling his head for prophesy. His face is calm and serene. The hanged man knew what was going to happen to him before it happened.

KEY 12—THE HANGED MAN

The traditional theme of The Hanged Man is that of self-sacrifice. The mob has metaphorically hung the Seeker because they do not approve of the Seeker's beliefs or what the Seeker has done. However, the message of the card is that the Seeker is right. The Seeker must trust him- or herself. He or she has wisdom. The nimbus represents enlightenment, possessing knowledge that resonates with the divine, with the right, and with the good.

The Hanged Man is also about seeing the same issues as others, but through a different perspective. *Compare:* Key 5: The Hierophant is about an orthodox, conventional, institutionalized approach; in reverse, The Hierophant is about the unorthodox, unconventional approach, which will lead to the Seeker's success and final glory. Key 9: The Hermit is also about an unorthodox, unconventional approach, but one led in solitude. Here, Key 12: The Hanged Man is about an approach by the Seeker that offends (albeit unjustly and without good cause) the masses, and therefore the masses are persecuting the Seeker.

Yet the nimbus reminds the Seeker that the mob's approval is not needed. Furthermore, the tau cross formed by the legs of the hanged man indicates the balance between dominion and slavery. Note the tau cross in the legs reemerging in Key 21: The World, suggesting that it is the hanged man who shall attain the fulfillment of the World card, not the mob. Thus, the appearance of The Hanged Man card in a reading is also an encouraging message to the Seeker to "hang in there." It is the Seeker, not the mob, who is in the right.

The Hanged Man may also indicate spiritual growth or an innate ability to prophesy. An end message here: although the mob has hung the Seeker and condemned him or her, ultimately the Seeker must forgive. There is a component of grace to the card. The Seeker must show grace to his or her condemners. The hanged man's hands are hidden: his ultimate offering to the world has yet to be seen. The archetype here is the wounded healer.[49]

Another reading of The Hanged Man is that of the unsettling calm before a storm, before the difficult and painful transitions indicated in Key 13: Death. The Hanged Man is a feeling of suspension, similar to the question that The Fool presents: will the Seeker fall or fly? Sacrifice, though, is the final message. There is a greater good at stake and it is the Seeker who will make the sacrifice for that greater good. The element of Water governs this card; attributions associated with Water represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yin energy is dominant.

Reversed Meaning

Seeker is being too self-righteous. The Seeker thinks of him- or herself as a martyr, but is cautioned not to confuse martyrdom with selfishness. False idols. False prophet. False spirituality. The Seeker is preoccupied with appearing holy, but the material and superficial are governing. The Hanged Man in reverse could also indicate that the Seeker is too preoccupied with material issues; that he or she is neglecting his or her spiritual development. The Seeker has been persecuted by others in some way, but is so focused on that persecution that the Seeker is not approaching the matter with wisdom and grace. The Seeker must perceive and accept that persecution as his or her opportunity for spiritual ascension, rather than allow that persecution to force the Seeker into a state of self-pity. The Hanged Man in reverse could be a message to the Seeker to forgive those who have unjustly wronged the Seeker. It is not for the Seeker to administer judgment, vengeance, or penance. Let the Wheel of Fortune turn on its own accord.

WATER

Mars Pluto

SCORPIO

Transformation
Mortality, Suffering

REV:
Conclusion
Cessation
Denouement
Windup

An armored skeleton waves a black flag bearing the Rosicrucian Rose. He rides a white steed, whose eyes glow red. The reins depict the skull and crossbones. Beneath the horse's hooves is the dead king, his crown and scepter trampled on. A woman and child are on their knees, ill, dying. A bishop in glowing yellow cloak prays before the horse. A single ship sails on the river. Is it the River Styx? Along the horizon line are the two pillars from Key 18: The Moon, and a yellow radiant sun rising in between.

KEY 13—DEATH

The contemporary indication for Key 13: Death is that of transformation and metamorphosis. "The veil and mask of life is perpetuated in change, transformation and passage from lower to higher."[50] The card depicts the end of a phase or stage in the Seeker's life and the beginning of a new one. The Death card is about change. It assuages the tendency in human nature to resist change. Change is generally uncomfortable. Key 13 appears in readings for Seekers who are about to embark on a dramatically new phase in their lives. The transformation process will be painful for the Seeker. It will be one of the harder moments of the Seeker's life, but endure and persevere: a bright new era will be up ahead.

It can also indicate the overthrow of a former authoritarian regime and the natural cycle of revolution. It can suggest the waning of power of one authority and the growing, ascending power of a new. It is the card of revolutions.

Traditionally, Key 13 is related to death and birth, property and inheritance, society and family, war and treaties.[51] The Death card also calls to mind plague, in particular the Bubonic Plague of 1347 or the Black Death. In the card imagery, many have interpreted a literal plague being depicted, one that reduces king and peasant alike to their mortality. When the card appears in a spread for someone privileged or of high status, it is a reminder that no one is above suffering. King and peasant alike deal with pain and affliction.

Alternatively, there is speculation that Key 13 is inspired by Friday the 13th in October, 1307, when the Knights Templar were summarily charged with offenses such as heresy, idolatry, apostasy, and homosexuality, and subsequently tortured and killed.[52] The card follows Key 12: The Hanged Man, which represents the unjust persecution and wrongful convictions of the Templars.

Generally, the Death card indicates personal calamity in the Seeker's life that is beyond his or her control. The Death card is reminiscent of the darker aspects of Key 10: The Wheel of Fortune. Acknowledge that these are difficult times that will try the soul, but they are necessary experiences that the Seeker must endure to find the greatness that is promised to the Seeker. This is also a card about feeling afflicted over and resistant to change. The Seeker is being pushed or pressured to transform out of the current state of affliction to a brighter status, but he or she is resisting it. The card's appearance in a reading is a call to let go of the present and move on.

Note in the backdrop of the card a sun rising from the waters. The imagery is said to have Rosicrucian implications,[53] indicating reformation, an epiphany, clarity that will be offered, or the first light of the divine coming through. Sun symbolism throughout the tarot can be seen to represent the "Great Work," a Seeker's magnum opus. Here, in the Death card, the rider and horse are marching in the direction of the rising sun, though that sun is still far in the distance. The pain and suffering that the Seeker experiences now, this transitioning or transmutation period, is important for the Seeker's development toward his or her magnum opus.

The element of Water governs this card, indicating fluidity; attributions associated with Water will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. This is due to the Death card's association with Scorpio, a Water sign. Yin energy is dominant. Due to the card's association with Scorpio, timing-wise it could denote the period October 23–November 21.

Reversed Meaning

Seeker feels stuck or inert. There is a strong sense of inertia. The Seeker feels like nothing has been accomplished. There is disappointment due to the inability to let go and move on. Plateau. The Seeker feels that there should be a transition now from a previous stage into a new one, but the Seeker is not progressing. There is blockage. The Seeker must remove the blockage to transition into the next phase. The transition may be painful. The Seeker's resistance to change is the source of the pain. The card is an indication that the Seeker must let go and move on. The Seeker must harness the receptive yin energy of Water and be fluid like water.

FIRE

Jupiter

SAGITTARIUS

Balance
Forbearance
Attunement

Rev:
Excess
Overflow
Overindulgence

A red-winged angel with halo stands, nearly floating, with one foot dipped in water and the other on land, pouring water between two goblets. An orange alchemical symbol for Fire is patched onto the angel's chest. The symbol also affirms the angel's divinity, a symbol of the Holy Trinity. A path forms at the edge of the water and runs through rolling hills and mountain to the sun. Two yellow lilies, symbolic of innocence, virtue, and joy, bloom in the field.

Key 14—Temperance

Some call Temperance the "healing card." It denotes greater external or universal forces entering into our individual lives to right what is wrong, restore what was lost, cool what was too hot, heat up what was too cold, and temper our lives for balanced, harmonious health. The card is about internal balance. *Compare:* Key 11: Justice indicates external balance. Temperance is the fusion of two contrasting elements and bringing them into harmony within the mind or the spirit.

The Temperance card could also indicate that tempering is an important factor in dealing with the Seeker's current situation. The Seeker needs to reconcile two contrasting elements and bring them tc harmony. Temperance and balance are the keys to resolving the matter at hand. If the Seeker is single and asking about love, Temperance urges the Seeker to examine his or her own behavior as the source of romantic complications. There is internal imbalance within the Seeker, causing difficulties in love. If the Seeker is in a relationship and asking about love, Temperance suggests a greater need for

cooperation and tempering of extreme emotions, such as anger, resentment, hostility, or sexuality. If asking about a current career situation, Temperance suggests that the Seeker's skill set is not directly pertinent to the task or project that the Seeker must complete in his or her profession, but that Seeker can temper that skill set into the task or project for balanced success. Temperance suggests the fusion of the Seeker's current skills with the skills that are expected. Thus it isn't that new skills need to be learned, but rather that the Seeker need only reconcile his or her existing skills with the task at hand.

The two goblets that the angel holds represent the higher-level unconscious and lower-level consciousness. The water poured between the two symbolizes reconciliation or temperance of the two. There is also an issue of whether the water flows from the higher cup to the lower cup, with gravity, or from the lower cup to the higher cup, against gravity, against the laws of physics. Tempering the unconscious with the conscious will resolve our anxieties and depression. *Compare:* Key 18: The Moon suggests a repressed unconscious, whereas Key 14: Temperance refers to the temperance between the Seeker's known conscious and repressed unconscious; reconciling the two.

Key 14: Temperance calls to mind Freudian and Jungian concepts. The mountain peaks in the background are reminiscent of the psychoanalytic concept of the ego. The sun is the superego. Beneath it is the id, the rough terrain leading to the foreground water pool. The pool is the unconscious. The angel represents the conscious, with one foot dipped in the unconscious and the other on a part of the terrain that represents the preconscious. In the Temperance card, the angel expresses the balancing of the many tiers of awareness in the human mind. Note further the winding path from the water to the rising sun, suggesting a path toward epiphany or sighting of the first light of the divine.

While the triangle symbol on the angel's chest denotes the element Fire, it can also represent the primary Trinitarian force, which in Christian ideology is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; in Judaism: Kether, Chokmah, and Binah; and in Hinduism: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. A triangle with a single point upward symbolizes the male energy, as depicted here on the angel, while a triangle with the single point downward would symbolize female energy. (Combined, such two triangles form the hexagram, which is significant across many Far Eastern and Abrahamic faiths.)

In notable twentieth-century texts, Temperance is also referred to as the Time card.[54] "The name of the angel is Time.… One of the cups the angel holds is the past, the other is the future. The rainbow stream between the cups is the present. You see that it flows both ways."[55]

The element of Fire governs this card; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Temperance is related to Sagittarius, the Archer. Key 14: Temperance corresponds with the planet Jupiter, the element Fire, and, timing-wise, denotes the period November 22–December 21. Yang energy is dominant.

Reversed Meaning

Temperance is an important factor in the current problem, but the Seeker is not applying it. The card in reverse is a warning to do a better job tempering and bringing harmony to the contrasting elements currently in the Seeker's life. Temperance in reverse also suggests excess, overflow, and corpulence. The card in reverse could indicate either physical obesity or figurative obesity as a result of neglecting temperance. The Seeker's mind or body is out of balance as a result of excess. The Temperance card in reverse suggests the Seeker's inability (or the intent refusal) to curb cravings, usually cravings of a physical nature. When the Temperance card appears in reverse, the Seeker is urged to devote greater attention to his or her personal health and, no matter what the matter at hand

is, do not let it adversely affect Seeker's well-being. There is an emotional, mental, or spiritual imbalance within the Seeker that is quickly manifesting as a physical imbalance.

EARTH

♄ ♑

Saturn CAPRICORN

Bondage
Temptation
Seduction

REV:
Defeat
Release
Severance

The Lovers from Key 6 are chained by a horned beast with bat wings, the torso of a man, and the legs of an animal. The Lovers are shown with horns and tail. The beast carries a torch, which he points to the ground. It appears to be lighting the primordial man's tail on fire. Etched into the beast's right hand is the cross. An inverted white pentacle is at his crown. Everything behind the beast and Lovers is black.

KEY 15—THE DEVIL

Human nature prevails over spirituality. Conditions surrounding Seeker may cause limitations on capability, achievement, and personal growth. Key 15: The Devil card is about bondage to the material and superficial, preference for instant gratification over delayed gratification; and as a result, the Seeker is being bound to a less-than-ideal present physical condition. The card can indicate incarceration, hopelessness, or pessimism. It represents the temptation to choose the material over the spiritual; the Seeker's soul is in effect chained down by his or her strong materialistic desires. The Devil can also suggest addiction. It often appears in readings for alcoholics or those plagued by consumer debt.

The theme of The Devil is the worship of false idols. Thus, one reading of the card suggests that the Seeker is being subjected to evil influences or the temptation to not be the most dignified version of him- or herself. The Seeker must overcome this. The card is a warning that there are negative influences preventing the Seeker from attaining his or her goals. The Seeker must break free of the bondage.

If the Seeker is currently in a relationship, it could be an unhealthy one that is chaining him or her down. The card could also indicate perversity. The card suggests there are undesirable forces at play. The Seeker must work even harder at overcoming his or her inner demons. Note, however, that The Devil card does not necessarily mean the Seeker is entirely to blame. The Devil card tells of much greater karmic forces influencing the decisions and actions of the Seeker. While the Seeker is not entirely innocent and contributed adversely to the situation, the greater culpability rests elsewhere.

Compare: Key 6: The Lovers in reverse is about the temptation to choose what is unethical over what is ethical, to veer from the Seeker's own sense of right and wrong. Key 15: The Devil is about the temptation to indulge in that which is superficial or materialistic, to give in to addictions and seduction, to stimulate the physical senses and pleasures rather than pursue knowledge, understanding, or love. Key 6 is about one choice. Key 15 is about being led astray. Key 15 is also related to antagonism and dogma, despotism and enslavement.[56] Recall that in The Lovers card, the Tree of Life and ascension toward God are symbolized by the burning tree with the twelve glowing flames behind the male figure. Here, in The Devil, the flame imagery repeats itself, with the beast causing the male figure's tail to catch fire. The female figure's tail bears fruit. The fruit on her tail is a reminder of why the pair of lovers are now here chained to the beast. If The Lovers presents a choice between virtue and desire, The Devil presents the aftermath of having abandoned virtue and indulged in desire.

The Devil also indicates a Seeker who views his or her world with extreme negativity, distrust, and faithlessness. *Compare:* Key 17: The Star reversed also suggests pessimism, but in The Star reversed, that pessimism is a projected outlook toward the matter at hand, while here in Key 15: The Devil, the Seeker's pessimism is toward divinity and the prospects of ascension. The Star reversed is about believing that the Seeker won't experience a positive outcome, while The Devil is about believing that no positive outcome can possibly come from such a world. There is a streak of hatred and resentment in the negativity expressed in The Devil, while the negativity in The Starreversed is simply a frame of reference.

The Devil card may call to mind Mara in Buddhism, the concept of demons tempting the Buddha away from achieving enlightenment. Mara embodies sin, unwholesome impulses, desires, and temptations away from a virtuous or spiritual life. Mara through The Devil also personifies the thirst for existence, the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for power, and sensual delights.[57] The Devil is not a literal beast or demon; The Devil personifies human selfishness and indulging in that selfishness. When The Devil card appears in a reading, it indicates the temptations and vice that manifest as obstacles obstructing the attainment of our higher goals.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. It might also be significant to note that as the Buddha resisted the temptations of the Mara, the Buddha reached down his right hand to touch the earth and asked the earth to bear witness to the Buddha's defeat of the Mara, the defeat of his own inner demons.[58] Here, in The Devil card, yin energy is dominant. Key 15: The Devil could also relate to the sign Capricorn and, timing-wise, denote the period December 22–January 19. The imagery of the card is speculated to have been inspired by Baphomet, a horned idol purportedly worshipped by the Knights Templar, leading to their persecution during the Inquisition.[59]

Reversed Meaning

In reverse, The Devil symbolizes the removal of bondage. In reverse, the card represents the Buddha defying Mara. The Seeker will overcome evil, tempting forces. The card represents resistance or those unseen negative forces. The card could also indicate that the Seeker has a propensity to be tempted, that there may be some weakness in will and character that the Seeker must correct. The Devil in reverse suggests a newfound detachment from unhealthy forces that the Seeker was previously bound to. In practical application, The Devil card in reverse could indicate divorce or severance of important ties in the Seeker's life. Although the Seeker is now free of those former ties, the severance has left the Seeker feeling defeated. If The Devil card in reverse appears in a reading surrounded by negative cards or dominant yin energy, then the card might signify the simultaneous defeat of the negative forces by the Seeker and the Seeker's own feeling of defeat after that defeat; thus, a spiritual Pyrrhic victory. If The Devil in reverse appears in a reading surrounded by positive cards or dominant yang energy, then it could signify victory of that final battle before attainment of the Seeker's higher goals.

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FIRE

♂

Mars

Sudden Fall
Ego; Hubris
Catastrophe

Rev:
Oppression
Cataclysm

A bolt of lightning strikes the crown of a tower. The tower is in flames. Its occupants fall to their demise. Yellowing leaves from the Tree of Life float down from the heavens. It is a black night, shrouded in clouds.

Key 16—The Tower

Key 16 expresses downfall as a result of one's selfish, egotistical ambition. It is a sudden change, a jolting event that will shake the Seeker to his or her foundation. There will be an undermining of the Seeker's sense of security or stability. However, new revelations will come after the jolt. The aftermath is truth. The gold lightning rod suggests that there will be a sudden epiphany, realization, or significant spiritual growth through this period in the Seeker's life. The falling crown symbolizes toppling materialism; thwarted materialistic ambitions. *Compare:* Key 20: Judgement suggests an epiphany or realization that leads to Key 21: The World, or divine fulfillment, whereas Key 16: The Tower suggests an epiphany or realization that leads to rebuilding and reconstruction. In Key 16, the Seeker is still far from divine fulfillment.

Key 16: The Tower often appears in readings for the cutthroat ambitious, for those who embody the combination of ambition, ego, pride, and talent. Sure, the Seeker is talented and skilled, but if ego and pride are not kept in check, the Seeker will fall. The card may call to mind the Tower of Babel. The Seeker ascended to the top, full of hubris and through ruthlessness and cunning. However, the Seeker's ego will be struck down to humility. This is good news, actually. There will be a lesson in

humility. Wisdom will be gained in the end.

The Tower card can also appear in readings for individuals who are incredibly capable, highly intelligent, and fully aware of their capabilities and high intelligence. However, they have been cut down to a profound low point and they don't understand how they could deserve such belittlement. The Tower card often appears in readings for such Seekers because it is a warning that the ascent to the top must be paired with spiritual understanding and humility. Otherwise, the ascent will end with a crash downward.

The card could indicate sudden change or destruction of past hard work, but hard work that was the result of hubris and ego. In a reading, the card might indicate bankruptcy. Be careful of upheavals and destruction. Be prepared. Pending swift action and strong forces will affect the Seeker's stability. However, revelations are to come.

The Tower card could also indicate that there will be a sudden game-changer, one that will feel out of the Seeker's control; it may make him or her feel helpless. The sudden change will not be easy for the Seeker to deal with. There will be difficulties. What seemed stable and solid to the Seeker is not so; it is in fact destructible and will come to destruction if the Seeker does not make drastic changes. If The Tower card appears in a reading upright, it is not a time to take risks. The Seeker should be conservative and cautious.

The element of Fire governs this card; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. The old must be destroyed so that the new can be built, this time correctly and for the right reasons. Yang energy is dominant.

Reversed Meaning

The theme when The Tower card appears in reverse is oppression and cataclysm. However, the Seeker is stronger than the external forces oppressing him or her, so the Seeker can prevail. Look to other cards to identify what it will take for the Seeker to overcome the cataclysm. While upright The Tower suggests a false sense of ego and the subsequent jolting back to the "ground reality," reversed it suggests that the Seeker relied on false impressions made by others, and as a result will now feel a jolt. However, the jolt or downfall is not attributed to the Seeker's own ego, but rather is based on the Seeker's reliance on misrepresentations others have made to the Seeker. The Tower in reverse may also indicate that the Seeker has been falsely accused of something. Another interpretation: There will still be downfall, but it will be recoverable. The impact will not be as severe for the Seeker as it would be if The Tower appeared upright. Not all will be destroyed. There will be mercy and some will be saved. The Seeker will succeed at rebuilding.

Hope, Optimism
Inspiration, Visionary

Rev:
Pessimism
Negativity
Maladies
Caution: Health

A nude golden-haired woman pours water from two jugs, one jug into a pool of rippling water and another onto land, which streams into the pool in rivulets. The land is green and fertile, skies are blue and adorned with eight-pointed stars,[60] *one of them bright yellow, shining at the center. In the backdrop is a tree where a scarlet ibis perches. The ibis is the sacred animal of the Egyptian god Thoth, the ibis-headed deity of knowledge and writing. The sacred ibis is believed to be a defense against curses of the serpent.*

Key 17—The Star

The Star represents hope, inspiration, and mental health. The bird perched on the tree conveys new opportunities that will restore hope in the Seeker. The card exemplifies the abundance of happiness, harmony, beauty, hope, and peace in the Seeker's life. Note that the card is not about material abundance, but rather spiritual abundance. Key 17: The Star is the good omen of contentment. If the Seeker is a writer, philosopher, researcher, or academic, then The Star card is particularly optimistic: it suggests an individual who will be contributing significantly and leaving behind a great legacy. The Seeker can be prepared for a bright, hopeful future ahead. All around are newly budding red rose bushes, suggesting the nascence of accruing esoteric knowledge.

The Star suggests renewal or restoration of hope. It can also represent spiritual guidance through self-empowerment. Guidance is not coming from others, but rather it is coming from within, even from the divine. In practical application, the card could represent someone who is a spiritual

counselor, who shares his or her spirituality with others to restore hope and inspire others. Star personalities master the balance between intelligence and love.

Compare: The eight-pointed star on the charioteer's crown in Key 7: The Chariot recurs here in full bloom in Key 17: The Star. There is a sense that The Star was the source of the charioteer's divine empowerment. Considering the numerical sequence of the cards, The Chariot almost appears to be returning from the future, giving a sense of fluidity in the space-time continuum. Yet The Chariot is about action and control. The Star is about the optimism and hope that such action and control will yield success. In practical application, if the two appear together in a spread, amazing and great success will come to the Seeker, success that will involve an extraordinary blessing of either fame or fortune.

Compare: Key 14: Temperance also depicts a figure with one foot in the water and one foot on land. The open sky and mountain peaks in the background, the green terrain between the peaks and water pool in the foreground are similar in both The Star and Temperance. Both call to mind the Freudian and Jungian concepts of superego, ego, id, the conscious and the unconscious. Here in Key 17: The Star, however, the superego is the dominant level of awareness, unlike Temperance, where the sun symbolizing the superego is smaller and in the back. Unlike Temperance, where there is a balancing between the levels of awareness, The Star card depicts a pouring out in one direction. The Star is about a release or giving of energies from the conscious to the unconscious, the superego to the ego.

It is also a card of divine charity. It affirms that the Seeker is a soul who shares generously with others, especially of the Seeker's spiritual resources and intuitive knowledge. It is about having a good heart and giving more than the Seeker receives. *Compare:* The Six of Pentacles is also a card about charity, though the Six of Pentacles pertains more to material generosity—giving one's money or time to the less privileged. The Star is about the giving of one's heart, of being deeply empathetic about how others are feeling. *Compare:* While The High Priestess is often a card associated with psychics, The Star card is often associated with empaths.[61]

The Star card appears chronologically in the Major Arcana after a great deal of pain: The Hanged Man, Death, The Devil, and The Tower. Thus, Key 17: The Star also indicates that the final low point in a situation has passed. After the downfall of The Tower, The Star is an indication of a turn upward for the Seeker. The situation will finally start to glimmer brighter after having gone through suffering and toil. The Star is about the spiritual replenishing of contentment in the Seeker's life. The card bodes well for personal rejuvenation.

The element of Air governs this card; attributions associated with Air will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. This is due to The Star's association with Aquarius, the water bearer, which is an Air sign. Thus The Star suggests a rekindling of personal motivation through intellectual awakening. Yang energy is dominant. Key 17: The Star relates to the sign Aquarius and, timing-wise, could denote the period January 20–February 18.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker's outlook is too pessimistic. Negativity may have adverse effects on the Seeker's health. Maladies present. Need to be more hopeful of the future and, at the same time, more attentive to one's own health and wellness. A negative outlook is part of the Seeker's current problem. The Star in reverse is often a sign of the beginnings of a downward spiral from boredom and ennui to impatience

and pessimism, from self-doubt to disappointment, blame, and, ultimately, depression. The Seeker must turn that pessimism around to optimism. The Seeker is urged to find inspiration in the world around him or her. Be hopeful. The Star often appears in reverse when a Seeker is dealing with a crisis and has not been able to manage the crisis due to a lack of hope. The card in reverse often appears in readings for those prone to depression, typically depression sourced from the mental, intellectual plane, not the emotional. *Compare:* The Five of Cups indicates emotional depression, whereas The Star in reverse is about depression brought on by pessimistic ideology. The Star in reverse reminds the Seeker to adopt a more positive outlook, to be more confident about the future, and to be more hopeful and enthusiastic about humanity's future. These adjustments in personality and outlook will help the Seeker navigate the inner crisis at hand. The Star card in reverse can also express a deep pain within the Seeker that erupts in an urgency to cry, pain caused by sentiments of worthlessness, victimhood, or guilt. The Star card in reverse is often associated with the shedding of tears. Many tears have been shed by Seeker over a situation. Thus, the reversed Star card's message is "There, there, don't cry." The message to the Seeker is to reclaim his or her tears and to rejuvenate with hope and optimism.

WATER

Jupiter Neptune

PISCES

Reflection, Changes
Imagination

REV:
Inconstancy
Risk, Uncertainty
Confusion

Between two pillars, a dog and a wolf howl at the moon, one on each side of a path leading from the water to the mountains. A crayfish crawls out onto land. A waxing moon is embedded in the sun. The sun-moon has a face, a side profile, stern and in deep contemplation. Leaves from the Tree of Life float down to earth.

KEY 18—THE MOON

A reflection of the inner self is emerging. The Moon represents the shadow of the self, the unconscious mind, repressed weaknesses. It suggests that the accumulated repressions are now causing the Seeker's shadow to surface and affect the self-conscious. Facets that have been repressed or are latent in the Seeker are now emerging and influencing the present consciousness. There is tension between that which has been repressed and that which is in the present consciousness, and that tension is a source of the Seeker's problems.

The theme of The Moon is constant change, duality, and dichotomy. The tame side and the wild side are at odds. Intuition is strong. There may be secrets. *Compare:* Key 2: The High Priestess represents personal mystery, while Key 18: The Moon represents physical mystery. The High Priestess suggests secrets that a person is withholding; The Moon represents secrets of the natural world, the hidden condition of the Seeker's situation that will reveal itself in time. Key 18 represents poetry and mystery. It suggests a Seeker with hidden abilities to harness both tame elements and wild elements. Key 2 suggests a mystical or metaphysical mystery. Key 18 is about latent abilities. Key 2

is about disguise. Key 18 is about revelation of the inner self.

The crayfish or lobster in the foreground symbolizes the Seeker's emotional and intuitive state—it suggests the prevailing Water energies in the Seeker's life. The crayfish is also a scavenger, suggesting a subconscious inclination in the Seeker to take from emotional leftovers, to scavenge in a sense. The Seeker is perhaps unaware of his or her own scavenger inclination, since on the card the crayfish is depicted as emerging from the pool of unconscious knowledge. There is a strong theme of conservation in the card, rather than exploration or expansion. There is also a sense of needing to feel protected, and thus forming the tough outer shell. Simultaneously, there is a profound vulnerability that the Seeker is trying to conceal from others.[62] In the Middle Ages, the crayfish was believed to have medicinal properties and was able to ward off the plague.[63] Note the recurring theme of the plague from Key 13: Death. Likewise, another symbol recurs from Key 13: the twin pillars.[64] In Key 13: Death, the twin pillars were in the background, and in between the pillars a bright sunrise. Here, in Key 18: The Moon, the twin pillar symbolism occupies the center. Now the sun has risen fully to its peak in the sky. The sun simultaneously now depicts a waxing moon, symbolizing growth, development, and ascension. There is a direct progression from the Death card to The Moon. The Seeker went through a transformative process, a personal metamorphosis, and now the Seeker possesses the intuition and premonition needed to alter his or her own fate for the better.

Also, here again there is a symbolic reference to the sun rising from the waters. A winding path, like Key 14: Temperance, leads from the water up through the mountain peaks to the sun, though here in Key 18: The Moon card, it is a sun-moon and is risen rather than rising. The development may suggest that the first light of the divine, the first clarity to be offered, comes from the moon, the reflection, rather than from the sun itself.

Compare: Key 14: Temperance suggests harmonious balance between the Seeker's known conscious and the repressed unconscious. Key 18: The Moon, however, indicates the Seeker's repressed unconscious. There is resistance in the Seeker against the surfacing of unconscious thought into the conscious, due to fear or hyperactive defense mechanisms. There is conflict between the known conscious and the repressed unconscious, which is the root cause of the Seeker's anxiety, depression, other mental disturbances, or sense of disquiet the Seeker experiences.

If the card is in the future, unforeseen perils are ahead and the Seeker must use intuition to avoid them. What those perils are will be determined by the other cards in the spread. The Moon card is advising the Seeker to maximize use of intuition. The essence of Water in the card corresponds with interpersonal relationships, so be watchful of deceptive people nearby. The Seeker must go with his or her gut instinct about people. Invisible forces are present.

Ocean tides are caused by the gravitational attraction of the moon.[65] The moon's pull may not be able to defy the earth's gravity, except when it comes to Water, which is the element that Key 18: The Moon is governed by. A Seeker with a great deal of Water energy in his or her life is going to be affected by The Moon. In practical application, when The Moon cardappears in a reading, there is an external invisible force pulling on the Seeker that is causing the changing tides in his or her life. That invisible force is what the Seeker must understand and work in harmony with in order for the Seeker's life to feel balanced again.

Compare: Key 19: The Sun is the signifier for society's warrior king and chieftain. Key 18: The Moon, then, would be the signifier for society's magi, priest, or shaman. The Moon and The High Priestess are interrelated. The High Priestess bears esoteric knowledge, while The Moon is the

beginning manifestation into consciousness of that esoteric knowledge. The Moon is the mysticism and mythos of civilization that resonates with a deeper cosmic truth. Yin energy is dominant. Key 18: The Moon could also relate to the sign Pisces and, timing-wise, denote the period February 19–March 20.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is in a state of confusion. If the Seeker is asking about his or her career, there is uncertainty. If asking about love and relationships, it is a highly volatile and emotional period. There is instability. Invisible pulls from the external are affecting the tides of the Seeker's situation, to the Seeker's detriment. There is risk of misunderstandings in the relationship. If The Moon appears in reverse and the Seeker is contemplating a high-risk move or venture, they should be advised not to take it. The Seeker should be as conservative and stable as possible right now. The Moon in reverse suggests great fluctuations, high risk of harm, confusion, and inconstancy; therefore the Seeker needs to find a way to lower the risks for the matter at hand. When The Moon appears in reverse, the moon depicted on the card is waning, which may suggest that matters will come to a closure for the Seeker. The resolution of the Seeker's state of confusion is "everything that rises must converge,"[66] suggesting that the rising tides of the Seeker's situation will soon come to a head and the significance will become apparent. Revelations will be had. The repressed latent will always surface, and any strong intention to repress will cause a violent surfacing. It is a particularly intriguing segue into Key 19: The Sun.

FIRE

Sun

Attainment
Glory
Majesty
Celebrity
Eminence

Rev:
Disorientation
Quiescence

A naked cherub child with open arms is riding a white steed, waving a red banner. In the back is a row of blooming sunflowers. The sky is blue and the sun shines. The sun has a face, somehow both stern and serene.

Key 19—The Sun

The theme of Key 19 is success and glory, attainment, and accomplishment; in particular, the Seeker will enjoy success that brings with it recognition, applause, or accolades. In readings about love and relationships, The Sun card is a great sign.[67] It indicates a radiant marriage, perhaps one to a spouse with a successful career. The card is all about success. It could suggest a power couple. In inquiries about work or career, The Sun card represents high achievement in the arts and sciences: the Seeker is capable of great intellectual and creative achievement.

The Sun card also represents liberation from a former state of toil. If the card follows a bad omen, then those negative forces will clear. The card could also indicate mastery of the ego. The blooming sunflowers represent spiritual attunement and glory under the auspices of the heavens. Not only is the Seeker successful, but that success is supported by spiritual righteousness. Furthermore, the Seeker's success is likely to gain the public's notice, as indicated by the waving red banner that calls attention to the Seeker. There could be some celebrity or fame involved. The stone wall in the background suggests a strong defense; long-lasting success. Key 19 is considered the number of light, the existence of God proven by the very idea of God.[68] It is a card of affirmations.

Key 19: The Sun often appears in readings for those in creative fields who are bound for great accomplishment and wide recognition. It is the synthesis card of creativity, prosperity, vivacity, and jubilation. It is a card about dominance and captivating the attention and respect of others.

Compare: Key 18: The Moon is the signifier for a magi, priest, or shaman. Key 19, The Sun, then signifies a warrior king and chieftain. While the Moon is the mysticism and mythos of civilization that resonates with a deeper cosmic truth, the Sun is progress, domination, administration, and sovereignty in body, heart, and mind. The element of Fire governs this card; attributions associated with Fire will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yang energy is dominant.

Reversed Meaning

There may be the loss of something valuable to the Seeker. Be careful. The traditional meaning of The Sun in reverse is a warning that an asset or property that the Seeker cherishes may be lost. There could also be marriage troubles. Achievements in the Seeker's profession will be delayed. Success will be obfuscated. There may be a sense of disorientation. To determine what forces will obfuscate, look at the surrounding cards of a spread. The Sun in reverse could also indicate untapped potential for incredible glory and accomplishment. There may be setbacks causing the Seeker to lose enthusiasm. The card is a caution that the Seeker must regain momentum and energy, and restore that enthusiasm to see his or her project through to success. The Sun card in reverse indicates a Seeker who has strong potential for Fire energies or possesses latent Fire energies that have not been fully charged or activated.

△ OR ▽

FIRE WATER

♆

Pluto

Awakening
Epiphany
Spiritual Realization

REV:
Misinterpretation
Misreckoning

An angel appears in the sky, sounding a trumpet with a flag, waving the crux immissa quadrata. People in their coffins rise and rejoice at the sight of the angel. Snow-capped mountains are in the background.

KEY 20—JUDGEMENT

Key 20 is about spiritual awakening and epiphany. It is about salvation. The Seeker's past, no matter how dark, no matter what the Seeker has done, is now behind her or him. The card's imagery relates to the Last Judgment of Christian mythos or the Day of Resurrection per Islamic eschatology, or the theology of humankind's final destiny. In practical application in a reading, Key 20 indicates a change in the Seeker's personal consciousness, an important realization that will be a game-changer for the Seeker. An important life lesson will be learned. Events currently happening in the Seeker's life will be the catalyst to a personal awakening.

There may also be a literal sense of judgment. All evidence has been made available to the Seeker and the Seeker has rendered his or her judgment. It does not end there, however. That judgment that the Seeker has made is going to compel an important realization or epiphany in the Seeker. Upright, this card indicates that the judgment is correct and will bring an awakening or epiphany in the Seeker that is spiritually fulfilling.

The people depicted on the card rising from coffins could suggest a resurrection. The Seeker may have recently transitioned from the end of one critical phase into a new one, and the experience of that

transition and transformation has brought to the Seeker a great sense of awakening and understanding. The body of water that the coffins float upon calls to mind the lake of fire referenced in both early Egyptian and Christian mythos; it appears in the Book of Revelation. Key 20 is often associated with either the element Fire or the element Water.

There are two schools of thought as to elemental dignities for Key 20: Judgement: (1) if the card's ruling celestial body, Pluto, is associated with Vulcan, the god of Fire, then the card is governed by the element Fire, and (2) if the card's ruling celestial body, Pluto, is associated with the astrological sign Scorpio, then the card is governed by the element Water. The author of this book subscribes to associating Key 20: Judgement with Water, and thus in interpreting the card, yin energy would be construed as being dominant. Again, the yin as applied in Key 20 resonates with the yin as applied in Key 1: The Magician and Key 7: The Chariot: the cards are yin in spite of the greater outer strength and activism displayed in the cards, because at the core, these cards are about divine knowledge, and the reception by the conscious of what is contained in the collective unconscious.

Reversed Meaning

In practical application, Judgement in reverse indicates that the Seeker has made the wrong judgment or opinion about a matter of great significance. The Seeker has misinterpreted the facts or evidence presented and has arrived at the wrong conclusion. *Compare:* Key 11: Justice in reverse is about prejudice and bias and, as a result, failing to bring justice. Key 20: Judgement in reverse is about misconstruing what was presented and, as a result, arriving at a false judgment. The Judgement card in reverse could also indicate that the Seeker is not interested in a spiritual life. The Seeker must devote greater focus to developing his or her spirituality. Spirituality is not a main concern in the Seeker's life right now, but should be. *Compare:* The Ace of Cups in reverse can also suggest a need for greater spirituality, as does the Four of Swords. However, the Ace of Cups in reverse suggests the seeking of glory for material or superficial reasons rather than spiritual, whereas Judgement is not about the process of seeking, but rather about the state or condition of attainment. Likewise, the Four of Swords is about the power of prayer, whereas Judgement denotes the aftermath of prayer (or lack thereof).

EARTH

Saturn

Fulfillment
Completion
Masterpiece
Consummation

Rev:
Hiatus
Agnosticism
Skeptic
Chagrin
Unfulfilled

A woman bearing two wands is floating in the skies. The wreath of victory encircles her. Guarding her are the lion, the water bearer, the eagle, and the bull, representative of the four suits of the tarot deck: Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. These, in turn, represent the balance of the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. It has also been said that the four figures represent the Four Evangelists of the Christian tradition: the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Key 21—The World

The theme of Key 21: The World card is fulfillment, completion, and triumph in all undertakings. It is considered the best card in the tarot deck because it represents the Seeker's oneness with his or her greater calling. The World card represents the final state of cosmic consciousness, the supreme balance between good and evil, a complete reconciliation of the universe's dichotomy and duality, which was a persistent theme throughout the earlier cards of the Major Arcana.[69] The World is about the command of growth energy, emotions, ambitions, and material goals—in other words, all four elemental suits. It is the card of synthesis. In a reading, the card indicates that the Seeker has the potential for great triumph and attainment of the highest level of cosmic consciousness. It suggests the Seeker's importance in the greater cosmic landscape. Rewards and greatness are to come for the Seeker.

The card can also be symbolic of the Gaia Hypothesis,[70] the notion that the world itself is a living,

evolving organism and that for a Seeker to fulfill his or her ultimate purpose, he or she must embrace the spiritual dimension of the Seeker's relationship with his or her environment. If the card appears in the Seeker's past, it suggests the state that is predetermined or outlined for the Seeker, though whether the Seeker will walk the path of manifesting that full potential is to be determined by present conditions and choices. If the card appears in the Seeker's present, it indicates contentment with the present. If the card appears in the Seeker's future, then it forebodes great success and glory to come. Something of great significance will happen to the Seeker.

The figures at the four corners of the card, as depicted on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, have been said to be a reference to the Book of Revelation 4:7, describing the throne of God: "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second like an ox, and the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like an eagle in flight."[71] There is also an astrological reference. The four figures represent the four fixed signs in Western astrology:[72] the lion symbolizes Leo, the fixed sign associated with Fire; the eagle symbolizes Scorpio, the fixed sign associated with Water; the man symbolizes Aquarius, the fixed sign associated with Air; and the bull symbolizes Taurus, the fixed sign associated with Earth.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yin energy is dominant. Key 21: The World represents the attainment of the Higher and Divine Genius, per Golden Dawn tenets.[73] Many also speculate that the woman depicted on the card was inspired by the likeness of Florence Farr (1860–1917), an English actress, member of the Golden Dawn, and friend to Pamela Colman Smith, the illustrator of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck.[74]

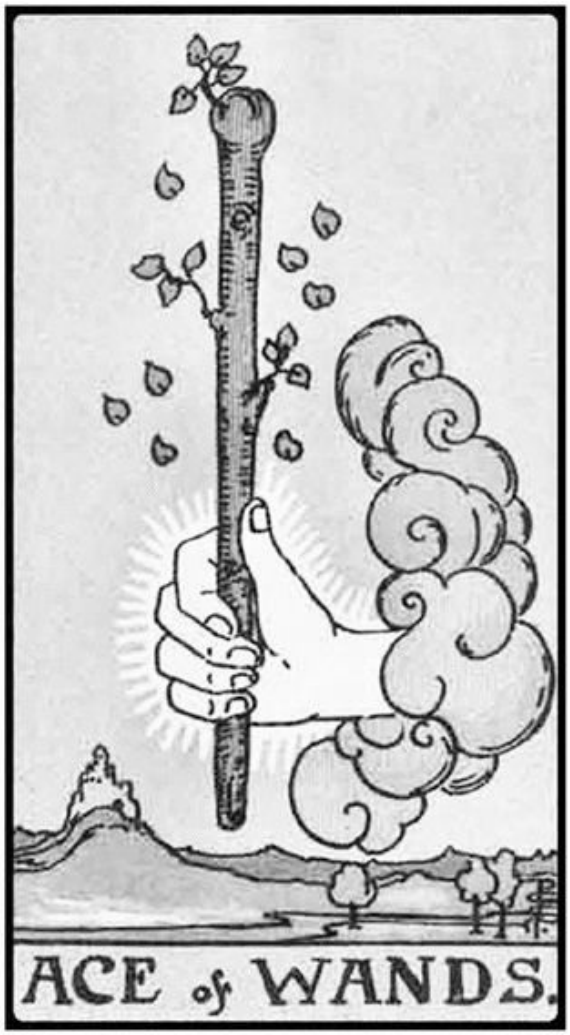
Reversed Meaning

Triumph and supreme greatness will come, but are delayed. To ensure that they come, the Seeker must tread carefully and make the correct decisions going forward. To determine what the correct decisions are, look to the other cards in the spread. The card could also indicate that there was a major change presented in the Seeker's life that could have been great for the Seeker's future, but the Seeker is afraid of change and is hesitating to take the necessary actions. The World appearing reversed in a spread could also indicate that the Seeker is consciously and knowingly in denial. The Seeker is denying the truth or significance of what is going on in his or her life and instead is remaining willfully ignorant. It could also suggest agnosticism, or the Seeker's uncertainty of the truth, or ultimate knowledge; prevalence of skepticism or doubt. Oftentimes The World card appears in reverse to the Great Skeptic, that Seeker who could potentially attain the complete spiritual fulfillment represented in The World card, but the Seeker's unusually high intelligence and curiosity causes him or her to question all, and doubt all. Key 21: The World card in reverse can indicate philosophical skepticism. Unlike the Seeker who embodies The World card upright, the Seeker who embodies The World card in reverse thrives in ambiguity and in fact finds his or her spiritual fulfillment in that existential ambiguity.

Suit of Wands

The suit of Wands tell a story about human ingenuity. It is the suit of creative endeavors. Wands reveal our personal development and growth. They answer the Seeker's questions about work and career, but since the suit also relates to the physical plane, Wands can also relate to health, body, and wellness concerns. In the four suits in the common deck of playing cards, the Wands correspond with the black suit of clubs. Wands are governed by the element of Fire. The suit appears first because wands are the symbol of divinity.[75] Both the elemental correspondence and the imagery of the wand are based on the revelation of Creation, which is based on the Divine Trinity.[76] Wands correspond with the universal and collective willpower.

Classical Element	Fire
Fundamental Energy	Active (Yang)
Astrological Signs	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Animal Symbolism	Lion, Salamander
Success Factor	Willpower, Innovation
Prevailing Character Traits	Passion, Motivation
Personal Issue Attribution	Creativity, Work, Growth; Health and Wellness
Quality	Synergy
Season	Spring
Cardinal Direction	South
Moon Phase	New Moon
Social Hierarchy	Proletariat
Armament	Cavalry
Hebrew Letter	Yod (corresponds with I)
Angel Representative	Raphael
Gospel	Mark (Thaumaturgy; Inspiration)
Activating Minerals	Carnelian, Fire Agate, Red Jasper, Ruby, Amber Sunstone, Pyrite, Red Spinel, Bloodstone
Activating Colors	Red, Orange, Yellow
Olfactory Correspondences	Bergamot, Ginger, Citrus, Basil, Angelica Root

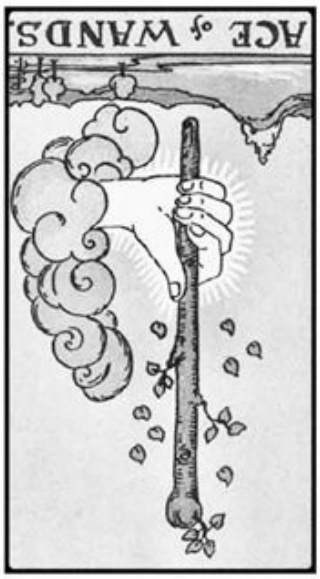


Venture
Opportunity
New Enterprise

Number 1
Beginnings
Power

Three Aces
Wealth, Success

Four Aces
Exceptional
Greatness



REV:
Indolence
Procrastination
Indefinite

From a cloud, a hand appears clutching a single wand. Green leaves are budding from the wand; some waft down, reminiscent of leaves from the Tree of Life. A white aura radiates from the hand. A castle on a hill is seen in the distance. A winding stream and blooming trees represent the essence of vitality.

ACE OF WANDS

Anticipate a new venture or enterprise. Material and spiritual progress are coming to the Seeker. The Ace of Wands represents the start of a new journey, new career or profession, or new creative project. If a reading has been centered around the domestic sphere or family life, then the card could indicate a birth in the family. If so, the child will be energetic and motivated, with strong creative or inventive talents. If the reading has been centered around work, the Ace of Wands is about the birth of a new project and its active, progressive development. *Compare:* the Ace of Pentacles would denote a new project with strong commercial viability and the opportunity of material gain, while the Ace of Wands does not necessarily portend profit. Here, in the Ace of Wands, the new project is creative and innovative. The opportunity presented by the Ace of Wands is one sourced straight from the sacred tree, or Tree of Life archetype. It is one that brings in science, religion, philosophy, the arts and humanities. The Ace of Wands represents focused creative energy that has just been put into action. Note generally that the aces of the Minor Arcana suggest opportunities and the corresponding elemental association will indicate the nature of the opportunity.[77] Here, the Ace of Wands represents

an active yang or even masculine force surrounding the matter at hand. However, the active force suggests that the Seeker will be doing rather than receiving (yin would suggest reception).

Reversed Meaning

Anticipate setbacks to a new enterprise and prepare accordingly. The Seeker may have a hard time completing goals. The card is reminding the Seeker to stay focused and persistent. The Ace of Wands in reverse is about having started a creative endeavor that has great potential for success, but now the Seeker is getting sidetracked and lacking the focus needed to follow through. Channel more determination to see the venture through to the finish. Greater willpower needs to be exercised to overcome the setbacks. The Ace of Wands in reverse indicates a lack of clarity, an indefinite response to the Seeker's inquiry. Due to the Seeker's own indolence or procrastination, the outcome is unclear and cannot be determined at this time.

Accomplishment
Aspiration

Number 2
Balance
Dualism

Three Twos
Cliques
Segregation

Four Twos
Conference
Dialogue

REV:
Impatience
Haste; Rush

A man, a wealthy aristocrat of high breeding, holds the world in his hand as he looks out into the horizon. He wears a red hat. To his left and right are two wands growing up and out from the castle walls. He wears a red cap of prosperity. All is calm and serene in his kingdom below.

TWO OF WANDS

The Two of Wands is associated with artistic or scientific success or professional success. It is about balance or gain in work and career. It could also indicate big ambitions. The Seeker has accomplished much (or possibly inherited much) but still wants more—the Seeker wants the world. The card calls to mind Alexander the Great: someone who has inherited a kingdom from his family, yet the Seeker would not be satisfied with ruling the kingdom his family built; Seeker wants to expand further and beyond. The Seeker wants to conquer on his or her own merits. In practical application, the card suggests that early stages of an enterprise are going to be fruitful, though there may be a period of waiting. The card could also indicate a worldly, aristocratic, educated individual with great creative ability for the advancement of arts and science. *Compare:* Three of Wands, which indicates business or commercial success. Two of Wands indicates innovative, artistic, or scientific success. Note that throughout the Minor Arcana, hats indicate externalized thought. A red hat represents thoughts of ambition or greatness and trying to implement action to those thoughts.

Reversed Meaning

If the Seeker is male, he has been trying to become more than his father, and if Seeker is female, she has been trying to surpass her mother. However, the card in reverse suggests falling short of such pursuits. The Seeker is pursuing transcendence with the wrong intentions and must readjust his or her intentions in order to achieve true transcendence. Generally the Two of Wands is about the aspiration to achieve more than a predecessor. In reverse, the Two of Wands might suggest a wrong approach in the Seeker's attempt to achieve that aspiration. Per practical experience, the Two of Wands in reverse often appears when there is tension between the Seeker's aspirations and those aspirations that a Seeker's parent has imposed on the Seeker. There is tension in the duality of the Seeker's own aspirations and what others expect the Seeker's aspirations to be.

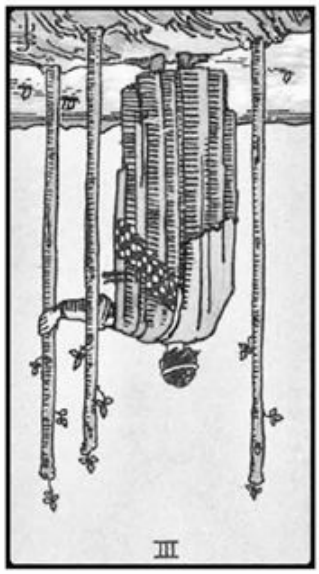
The Two of Wands in reverse could also indicate that early stages of an enterprise seem to have started off well, but may not reach fruition as the Seeker anticipated. This is attributed directly to hasty planning on the Seeker's part, or striking too early. Timing is off. Be more patient. Do not rush things. Watch the details. The card warns the Seeker to not be rash. The card in reverse could also indicate that others may usurp the fruits of the Seeker's labor. That meaning relates back to the sense that the Seeker has one particular intention for him or herself, while others are trying to impose different intentions on that Seeker. However, here the card does not indicate any hostility or malice from others. Everyone means well. There is merely a difference or dichotomy of opinion.

Validation
Productivity

Number 3
Fruition
Expansion
Amplify

Three Threes
Deceit

Four Threes
Strategic Plan
in Place



REV:
Negligence
Careless, Mistakes
Setbacks

A merchant man stands atop a knob, surrounded by three wands. He looks out into the distance at his ships, which carry his goods out for commerce. He grasps one of the wands for support. His red robes suggest ambition; his green robes, commerce.

THREE OF WANDS

The Three of Wands denotes business and entrepreneurial success. That success comes after hard work or hardship, perhaps even after a period of waiting. The fruition the Seeker will now enjoy is well deserved. The Seeker will feel validated. *Compare:* Two of Wands, which indicates arts or sciences success. Moreover, the Two of Wands is about beginning one's steps to further great ambitions. The Three of Wands shows that some steps have already been taken, and now the Seeker is waiting for what may come of those steps. Start-up companies and entrepreneurs or those actively working on developing their creations or innovations into commercial enterprises will often pull the Three of Wands, especially if they are on the track to success. The Three of Wands is a positive omen for small businesses.

The card could also indicate that aid, support, or reinforcement is coming to assist the Seeker toward his or her venture goals. *Compare:* The Three of Pentacles is another card with strong themes of validation. However, the Three of Pentacles is about receiving accolades from the peers and colleagues of one's profession, or recognition from superiors. The Three of Wands is about validation through productivity: actual goods, products, sales, profit, and measurable

accomplishment. However, note that another interpretation of the Three of Wands is that of being one step short of complete success: the Seeker has one last task to complete and then success will be assured. The Three of Wands suggests that the first stage of a venture project has been completed successfully, but the Seeker is not only waiting for the results of that project to bear physical fruit, he or she is also trying to identify what kind of project to take on next. New ideas are being formulated in the horizon, as suggested by the boats in the background of the card. The man in the image grasps onto one of the wands for support. At this time, the Seeker is still leaning on others. The Seeker or Seeker's business has not yet reached a point of independence. The outcome of the project is not just based on the Seeker's efforts, but is also going to be determined by the work of others. Therefore, success is not entirely within the Seeker's control. Cooperation is needed to further business or commercial success. The card may suggest looking for investments or other forms of support for the Seeker's project. At this stage the Seeker cannot go at it alone.

Reversed Meaning

Like the Two of Wands in reverse, the Three of Wands in reverse also suggests mistakes made through carelessness, oversight, or acting too hastily. However, the Three of Wands would indicate that the matter is commerce-, business-, or employment-related. The card could be a red flag to the Seeker to review the details of a project before submitting it out. The Seeker has missed something significant. Not doing so may cause greater difficulties and complications to the project. Commercial or business projects may have setbacks and disappointments and, despite a lot of effort, may not come out as planned. The Three of Wands in reverse suggests that there have been disappointments in the project or matter at hand, mostly because ripe opportunities were missed ("missed the boat," a thought suggested by the imagery of the card). Thus, the Seeker has not had the support and cooperation from others that he or she needs for success.

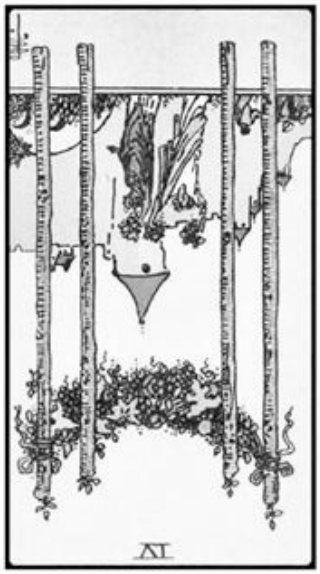
The Three of Wands in reverse also suggests that the Seeker is in a competitive field, thus strong external professional and economic forces are against him or her. *Compare:* The Five of Wands is about direct competition within a particular workplace or enclosed environment, most likely with colleagues or acquaintances the Seeker knows. The Three of Wands in reverse is suggestive of greater competition in the marketplace: the field the Seeker has chosen to pursue is highly competitive in nature and that aspect of the field is part of why the Seeker has experienced obstacles in success.

Prosperity
Concord
Familial Bliss

Number 4
Rationality
Stability

Three Fours
Abundance
Industry
Diligence

Four Fours
Order, Peace
Rule of Law



REV:
Attunement
Harmony
Rite of Passage

Four wands and a garland in full bloom form a wedding arch reminiscent of a chuppah. Two females hold up nosegays, or small flower bouquets,[78] *and celebrate by the castle. To their right is a bridge over a moat. Yellow is the dominant color, for joy and contentment.*

FOUR OF WANDS

The Four of Wands denotes harvest, a warm hearth, and peace in the domestic sphere. The two figures depicted in the card are often interpreted by contemporary practitioners as a happy married couple.[79] However, note that in A. E. Waite's seminal work *Pictorial Key*, he explains that the two figures are both women.[80] If the Seeker is in a romantic relationship, it may end in marriage. The card also suggests happiness within one's community. Generally it is a card of balanced, harmonious success. May indicate work and career success accomplished through teamwork. Overall, the Four of Wands is a great card that suggests work–life balance. There is harmony between the internal and external spheres. *Compare:* Here in the Four of Wands, a young or nuclear family will enjoy prosperity, productivity, and concord, whereas in the Ten of Pentacles, there is a sense that the prosperity is multigenerational and also perhaps more material in nature. The Four of Wands is a stronger reference to well-balanced inner happiness.

Reversed Meaning

The Four of Wands is one of the few cards in the deck that is a positive omen both upright and in

reverse. In reverse, the card still suggests peace and harmony. Another reading of the Four of Wands in reverse is that of a rite of passage. Socially, the Seeker will be transitioning from one status to another. The Seeker will experience productivity and happiness. The card in reverse could also indicate that the Seeker already possesses prosperity, peace, and happiness, but fails to appreciate what he or she has. It suggests a sense of not knowing or not valuing the warm hearth that one possesses already. It could indicate neglect of the domestic sphere and compromising the home for the career. In such an interpretation of the card, the Seeker still has a prosperous domestic sphere, but the Seeker is not appreciating it and devoting too much focus on the external social or professional sphere. In essence, the card in reverse is reminding the Seeker to appreciate the home and hearth, or these blessings might one day disappear.

Competition
Rivalry
Contention

Number 5
Uncertainty
Adversity
Changing Tide

Three Fives
Competition

Four Fives
Unexpected
Advantage

REV:
Opportunity
Reconciliation

Five men use the five wands as weapons and fight amongst themselves. They wear an array of red and green pants.

FIVE OF WANDS

There is strong competition in the Seeker's field of activity. The red and green pants symbolize a clash of ambitions, competition for promotions, or more profit. Rather than work together in unity on a creative project, the team is fighting internally over materialistic squabbles. Contrast the Five of Wands with the Four of Wands, which showed success through teamwork. The Five of Wands is about in-fighting. The Seeker is advised to be cautious of those around him or her, especially those on a team, at the workplace, or people who should otherwise be working collaboratively with the Seeker. Are these colleagues truly the Seeker's allies? Or are they competitors? Others may envy what the Seeker has, which leads to quarrels. There is a clashing of egos, most likely related to the work, job, or school environment. Note that some have interpreted the five individuals in the card to represent five clashing facets of the self. Thus, rather than depicting literal clashing, it represents internal clashing within the Seeker. The Seeker is in contention with him- or herself over what goals to pursue or whether to pursue those goals. Either way, the Five of Wands is about in-fighting and stagnation in productivity resulting from that in-fighting.

Reversed Meaning

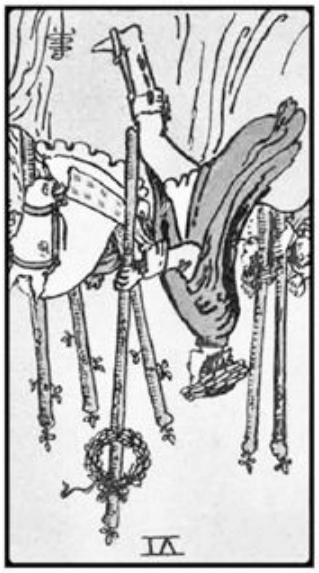
There is reconciliation in the Seeker's field of activity. The Five of Wands in reverse is positive: it presents new opportunities. After a period of stagnation due to in-fighting, the Seeker is back on track for progress. The Seeker has proven him- or herself in the field and has prevailed over the competition. The Five of Wands in reverse suggests that the Seeker dominates over others after cutthroat competition. It could also suggest that previous competition at the work sphere has waned or subsided. The fight is over.

Success
Victory
Exalt
Tribute

Number 6
Harmony in
Body, Mind,
and Spirit

Three Sixes
Success

Four Sixes
Full Control
Happiness



REV:
Postponement
Pending Advancement

A man wears the laurel wreaths of victory and rides on a horse garbed in green. He is cloaked in red, with yellow garments underneath. Admirers and supporters follow him. A wreath of victory also hangs from his wand. The skies are clear blue. What we do not see, though, is his expression. How does he feel about his victory?

SIX OF WANDS

The Six of Wands is the card of victory. Good news is coming to the Seeker. There will be advancement and progress in work or career, or artistic or scientific advancement due to one's leading innovation. The card is also about the Seeker leading others to victory. A creative project yields commercial fruition. The red robe that the man wears indicates ambition; the green robe on the horse indicates profit and commercial gain; yellow undergarments peeking out from beneath the red robe indicate personal contentment. Note that laurel wreaths throughout the Minor Arcana represent victory. However, the remaining questions to ask are: How does the Seeker feel about the victory? Does the validation bring fulfillment? What exactly has been won here, a battle or the war? While the Seeker has enjoyed victory to a certain extent, the end message of the card suggests that there are still "miles to go" before the Seeker may sleep.[81] There is more glory ahead in the Seeker's potential. This is not the end of the Seeker's accomplishments. The Six of Wands indicates victory, but not necessarily a sense of satisfaction.

Reversed Meaning

A positive omen, in reverse the Six of Wands means essentially the same as it would upright. However, there may be delays and challenges in the Seeker's way that need to be overcome. In reverse, the forecast of victory is still strong, but it may take longer than the Seeker expects or there may be minor hiccups. The card could also indicate strong untapped potential in the Seeker for advancement in creative or innovative fields, particularly as a profession or career. If the Six of Wands appears in reverse for a young Seeker, it could suggest the future potential to advance significantly in career aspirations, creativity, or innovation. The card could indicate advancement in the Seeker's studies, or the materialization of tangible financial gain or reputation in the Seeker's professional field, after attaining a high level of education. Again, like the card upright, there may be victory to be had, but not necessarily a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction.

Resistance
Opposition
Tenacity

Number 7
Wisdom
Spirituality
Turning Point

Three Sevens
Alliances

Four Sevens
Disappointment

REV:
Indecision
Vulnerability
Lacking
Confidence

He holds his wand in a defensive fighting position. The remaining six wands are pointed at him, hostile. His expression is fierce, one of a man ready for battle. He seems to be backed into a ledge, yet his stance is staunch, steady, and stable. The sky behind him is blue, symbolizing his clarity of consciousness and conscience.

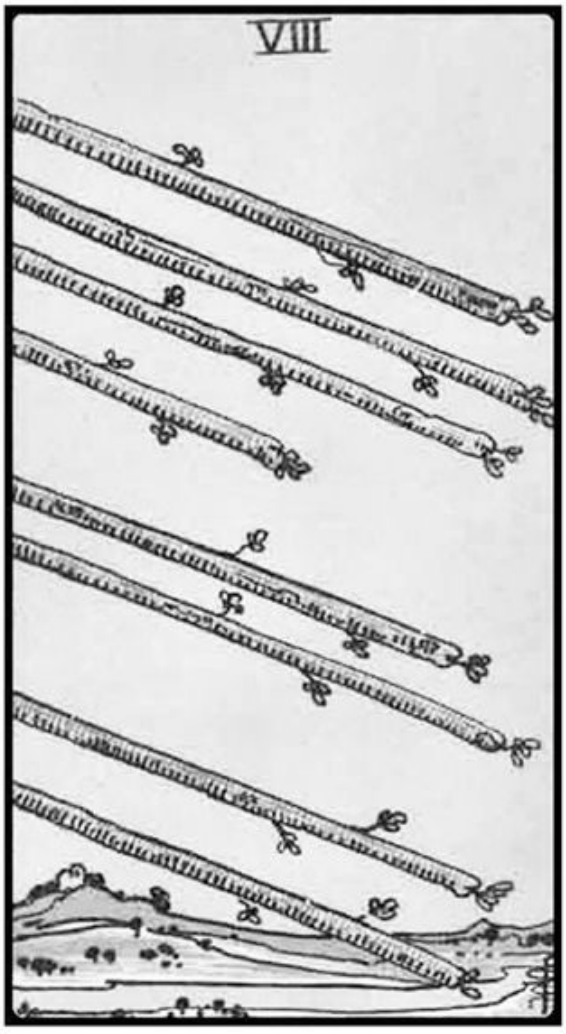
SEVEN OF WANDS

Strong will. Defiance. The Seeker is in a position of resistance. The Seeker is fierce and fearless with the ability to hold and stand his or her ground against multiple adversaries. However, the Seeker feels backed into a corner. There could be hostilities in the work environment, where Seeker feels outnumbered. Yet the Seeker possesses a courageous character. The Seven of Wands reveals an important facet of the Seeker's nature: when faced with fight or flight, this Seeker will fight. If the card is in the past position, then the Seeker has already won the fight. If in the present, a great deal of fighting and defiance defines the current situation; or the Seeker has been backed into a corner and must now be ready to fight back. If in the future, then the Seeker will need to show great resistance soon. The card is also a warning to not let others back the Seeker into a corner. Don't delay and wait until the last possible minute to fight. The Seeker must stand his or her ground now. *Compare:* In The Fool card, the figure is depicted with chin in air, walking toward the edge of the cliff of his own accord. Here, in the Seven of Wands, the figure is forced toward the edge of the cliff, pushed there by others. In neither of the cards do the figures depicted seem to be cognizant of the cliff they're headed

for.

Reversed Meaning

Strike now. Indecision plagues the Seeker. The Seeker must have more confidence in his or her own strength. The Seeker has the ability to fend off his or her adversaries, but has not been doing so to the fullest potential. Do not wait for a "perfect moment." Strike now. Threats will grow more serious if the Seeker doesn't act now. The Seeker must exude more confidence. Do not be so vulnerable. The Seeker must get back on his or her feet and stand his or her ground. In the fight or flight situation, the Seeker is tempted to choose flight, but the card here may suggest that fleeing is the imprudent option: the Seeker should fight. The Seeker has what it takes here to prevail, so should give it his or her best try.

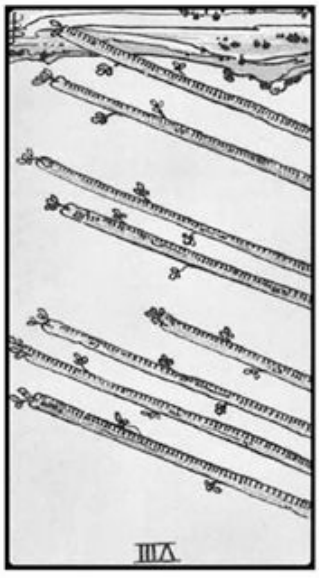


Action
Vigor, Alacrity
Acceleration

Number 8
Fortuity
Due Process
Wealth

Three Eights
Short Journey
to Come

Four Eights
Gossip, Rumors



REV:
Altercation
Regression
Rashness

Eight wands shoot down from the sky. Green hills and a stream appear below. The skies of consciousness are clear and blue.

EIGHT OF WANDS

This is a card about aiming and shooting. There is progressive action. The Seeker is fast approaching his or her goals. A project is arriving fast to a conclusion. Generally, the forthcoming conclusion pertains to work and career or personal creative projects, but if a spread shows many Cups and court cards, then the Eight of Wands could suggest a forthcoming conclusion involving a relationship. The Eight of Wands is the action card. It stands for clarity of thought, and resoluteness in action. It also suggests that here is a great deal of buzz and activity to come. New ideas will be highly promising. The card could also indicate the arrows of love fast approaching, or a message or communication coming soon that will bring good news. Air meets Fire here: the realm of thoughts materializes into the realm of physical action. *Compare:* The pages in the courts can also take on the figurative meaning of receipt of news, similar to the Eight of Wands, in that upright it could indicate good news and in reverse could indicate bad news. The distinction between the Eight of Wands when it represents a message from the pages is that the pages represent news relating to the subject matter that the suit corresponds with, e.g., the Page of Wands represents receipt of project or work/career news. The positioning of the Seeker when the Page represents news is passive. In contrast, the Eight of Wands indicates receipt of instruction that is going to propel or advance the Seeker forward; it

represents news that the Seeker needs to move ahead, as related to the matter at hand. This information will push the Seeker's momentum onward, whereas the information the pages represent, the Seeker will have to absorb or take in.

Reversed Meaning

There are several possible interpretations to the Eight of Wands in reverse, and they are quite different from one another; the one that applies will depend on the context of the reading and the spread. It could indicate inaction or an altercation/obstruction that prevents progressive action. The Seeker is procrastinating. The Eight of Wands in reverse warns us of procrastination. It could also indicate a hasty rush into an endeavor, before the Seeker is fully prepared for the outcome. While the Eight of Wands shows eight wands, representative of arrows, aimed for their target with the strong likelihood of hitting it, the Eight of Wands in reverse suggests that the arrows were shot into the air before the archer, i.e., the Seeker, was ready. Thus, it is now uncertain whether the Seeker will hit the target. If the card is bringing a message, then the message will be bad news. Quarrels or conflicts may ensue due to rash actions. The Seeker is advised to be more cautious and exercise patience. Do not rush in. The card in reverse could also be a warning that someone in the Seeker's life is extremely jealous of him or her and the Seeker must be careful not to let that person's jealousy harm the Seeker. The card may also indicate that the Seeker is acting too hastily or rashly; take it slower. When the Eight of Wands is in reverse, Air stops Fire: the realm of thoughts is hindering the realm of physical action; therefore, when the Eight of Wands is in reverse, the most likely meaning is that of procrastination on a project or endeavor. The Seeker's procrastination is the primary hindrance.

Defensive
Protective

Number 9
Change is Coming
for the Better

Three Nines
One Last Hitch
in the Plan Before
Success is Had

Four Nines
Unexpected
Burdens

Rev:
Exhaustion
Battle
Depletion

A bandaged man stands defensively before his fortress, his battle stick in hand. He looks out cautiously, suspiciously even, prepared to fight and protect his territory.

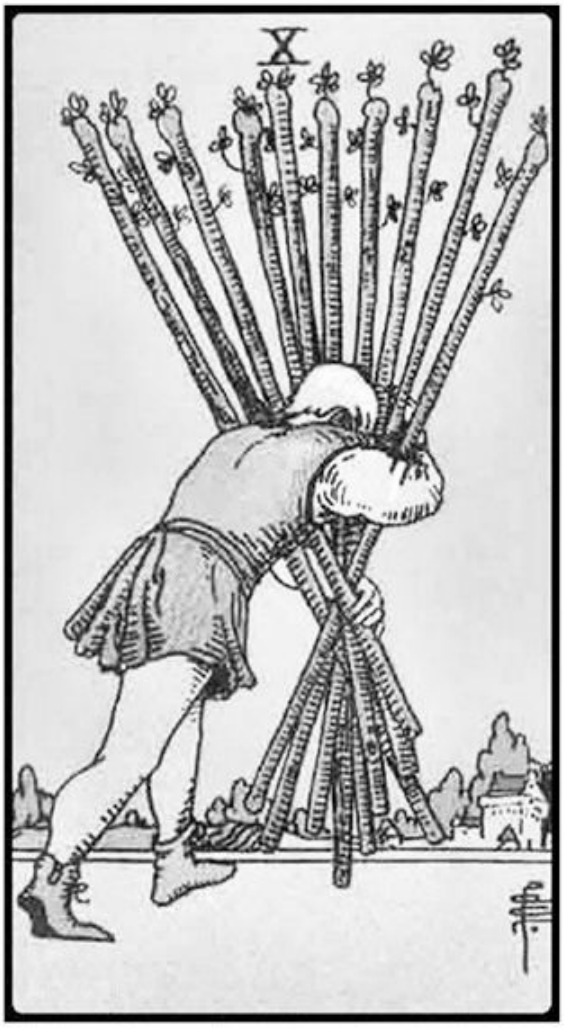
Nine of Wands

The Seeker is up in arms, prepared for battle, but in the defensive position rather than an offensive one. Despite past injury, the Seeker is still full of fire and ready to fight another day. However, the card urges that there is another way. The Seeker does not need to be so defensive and overprotective. The Seeker feels like he or she is in a defensive, protective mode; like he or she has to fight to defend his or her territory. The Seeker's physical faculties are exhausted from all the fighting, but the Seeker refuses to acknowledge that exhaustion and address it. Like the fellow depicted in the card, the Seeker refuses to ask others for help and instead is left alone to defend his or her territory, and thus is stuck in that position, unable to go elsewhere. As a result, the Seeker is in a defensive mode, alone, protecting what the Seeker has rather than exploring the beyond to gain more. There is also the suggestion of a passive stance, rather than active. The character in the card seems to be waiting for something to happen. He is not an adventurer like the character in the Two of Wands who is looking outward and beyond, or marching in victory as in the Six of Wands. This is someone who just wants to defend what is rightfully his. He is not defiant, fearless, or resistant like the character in the Seven of Wands; the man here in the Nine of Wands is a bit more resigned than the other characters, acquiescing to his circumstances, though certainly not willing to give anything up either. The Nine of

Wands depicts a character in a conservative position, one resistant to change, and as a result not able to achieve progress or expansion. It is worth noting that the Seeker's protective fortress is not quite as impenetrable as the Seeker believes. Note how far apart each of the wands is set. The Seeker might be standing guard in front of the greatest vulnerability in that fortress, but there are other vulnerable areas he is not able to guard.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker feels like he or she is battling against the world to defend what belongs to him or her, and is exhausted from that fight. There is a sense of one's energy being depleted from battle. The Seeker feels at the brink of giving up. The Seeker is losing energy and losing his or her inner fire. The card indicates the result of what happens if a Seeker has not heeded the warning of the card upright: the Seeker is now exhausted from the fighting. The Seeker must find another way to reconcile things. While the Nine of Wands upright is about a Seeker who won't acknowledge that inner exhaustion, the Nine of Wands in reverse indicates a Seeker who has collapsed from that exhaustion. The Nine of Wands in reverse also has a message for the Seeker: instead of standing on guard and being defensive of what the Seeker has attained in the past, the Seeker must let it go and progress forward, explore into the beyond, and learn to be more actively engaged; to be on the offensive in one sense, and acquire rather than merely protect.

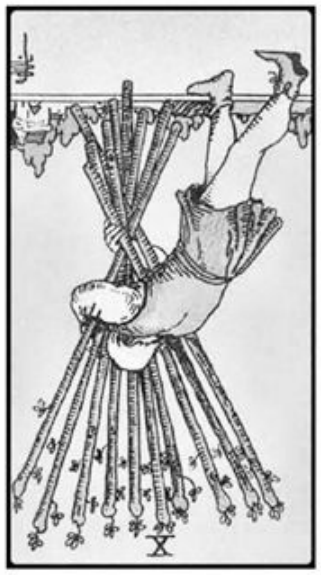


Burdened
Travail, Labor
Impositions

Number 10
Pinnacle of Success
or Pinnacle of
Tribulation

Three Tens
Good Time to
Buy or Sell

Four Tens
Exhaustion
Burnout



REV:
Accountability
Reassessment

A young boy carries an overwhelming load of ten wands as he walks into town. The burden he carries is so great that the wands block his view of the path. He walks onward and yet he does not seem to know where he is going. Yet the sky is still bright blue and the path at his feet is clear.

TEN OF WANDS

The Seeker is carrying an oppressive load, and while the Seeker is handling it well, the load is hindering him or her from seeing the path. The Seeker cannot see where he or she is going right now as a result of the oppressive load. Maybe the Seeker is indecisive about the path he or she should take in life because the Seeker is doing too much at once right now. If the inquiry is about a venture, work, or business, it is being inundated with administrative or transactional burdens, and as a result the Seeker has lost track of the venture's original mission. The load carried is preventing sight and insight into the future. That said, the outlook is still optimistic, as indicated by the blue sky. The Seeker manages the burden well, without much incident, as suggested by the clear path at his feet. In the end, the Seeker will reach his or her destination, just as the town is in sight.

Typically the ten wands represent other people's burdens, but the Seeker is one who tends to shoulder the burdens of others and make those burdens his or her own responsibility. The burdens could also represent commitments or obligations the Seeker has to others. The wands generally represent not the Seeker's own burdens carried for his or her personal benefit, but burdens the Seeker

has taken on for the sake of others. *Contrast:* The Two of Pentacles in reverse can suggest the sense of being overburdened, but the Two of Pentacles represents multiple projects or multiple focal points that the Seeker is trying to juggle for him- or herself. On the other hand, the Ten of Wands suggests someone who is carrying other people's work and feeling exhausted from the responsibilities. Perhaps the Seeker has taken on too much, is so immersed in other people's problems that he or she can no longer see his or her own path. The message here is to let go of those burdens and prioritize the self over others, at least until the Seeker reaches town; in other words, until the Seeker attains his or her own personal goals. If the Seeker is constantly working for others rather than for him- or herself, the resentment that will inevitably accumulate may move the Seeker toward imprudent actions. Thus, the Seeker is urged to focus on the self again. The blue sky suggests that the oppressive load is temporary and the Seeker is going to be just fine in the end.

Reversed Meaning

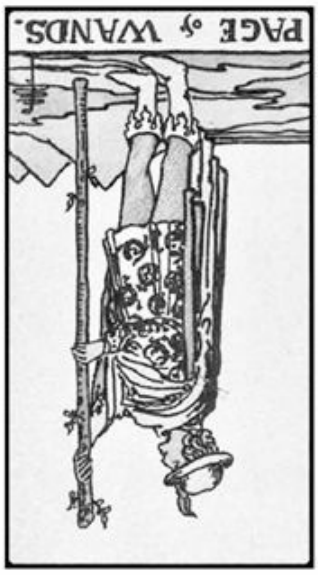
The Seeker carries too big a burden and that burden is taking its toll on the Seeker. The Seeker is losing his or her grip on the load and is probably at the brink of sanity. The Seeker bears more than can be handled right now. The Seeker must prioritize. Resolution of the matter at hand rests with the Seeker alleviating his or her burdens. It is imperative that the Seeker reassess priorities. Do not be fixated on the minutiae or the administrative work. Look up and see the horizon: learn to see the bigger picture at stake. Sit down and rank in order of importance those ten wands, and carry them in lesser loads at a time, otherwise the Seeker will not be able to reach the end goal.

EARTH FIRE

Page Wands

Motivated
Energetic

Receipt of
Project News



REV:
Passivity
Inarticulate

The page wears a yellow tunic with circling salamanders and a red feather in the cap. Orange desert and mountains beyond.

PAGE OF WANDS

The Page of Wands is someone creative, enthusiastic, who exudes confident energy, with a lot of youth. Orange is the color of creativity. The salamanders represent spirituality, opportunity, resourcefulness, great power, and resilience. The Page of Wands is a young woman who loves to explore the unknown; who is adventurous and energetic. The card may figuratively indicate the receipt of news or messages regarding the Seeker's career or creative projects. The Page is warm, ambitious, passionate, a high achiever, a dynamic personality. There may be a tendency to be a perfectionist. Details must be perfect. However, the Page of Wands is also prone to react immaturely. Much growing up is still needed. There is a tendency to act out of emotion, before the Seeker has fully thought through the consequences of those actions. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, the Page could indicate the appearance of a young woman with the foregoing qualities. Fire dominant, the Page of Wands is highly motivated, creative, dynamic, individualistic, and often demonstrates an irrepressible enthusiasm and vitality and possible tendency to exaggerate or be overly theatric. Could signify Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius.

Note that two pages in a tarot reading can indicate a social event related to the matter at hand. Three pages denote children or social cliques. All four pages appearing in a single tarot reading

could indicate a classroom setting, school, university, or other educational or academic institution.

Reversed Meaning

Fear of exploring the unknown is what holds the Seeker back. The Page of Wands in reverse indicates insecurity, blockages to creativity or innovation, or lack of progress. The Seeker needs to take greater control over his or her own life and be more articulate of his or her own needs. The Page of Wands in reverse also indicates a Seeker who has a tendency to put others first, to the point where the Seeker's own needs go entirely neglected. The Page of Wands in reverse reveals vulnerability and childlike fragility.

AIR FIRE

Knight Wands

Impetuous
Competitive
Hot-Headed

REV:
Hesitation
Insecurity

In the same orange desert with the mountains beyond as the Page of Wands, the Knight of Wands rides his brown steed gallantly. He, too, wears a yellow tunic with circling salamanders. Red feathers adorn his armor. He is in motion and ready for action.

KNIGHT OF WANDS

The Knight of Wands is a fiery, impetuous character. He likes to stir conflict and thrives on challenge. It is easy, natural almost, for this character to get into fights. The Seeker is hasty, competitive, yet also motivated and career-driven. This character has a lot of potential to become great someday. The Seeker is an extrovert and a visionary. However, he has difficulty finishing what he starts. The Seeker must control immaturity. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, the card could indicate the appearance of a young man or a yang-dominant personality with the foregoing qualities. The Knight of Wands is hot-headed and can exhibit a bad temper, often one resulting from immaturity. Figuratively, the Knight of Wands could indicate swift action or active progress in the Seeker's career or creative projects. Fire-dominant, the Knight of Wands is highly motivated, creative, dynamic, individualistic, and often demonstrates an irrepressible enthusiasm and vitality. May have a tendency to exaggerate or be overly theatric. Could signify Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius.

Note that two knights appearing in a tarot reading could indicate head-to-head conflict with another individual of equal rank as the Seeker. Three knights in a reading indicates fraternity or brotherhood; it can also suggest a sudden change, swift action that will take the Seeker by surprise. Four knights

could suggest war, combat, or matters relating to the military.

Reversed Meaning

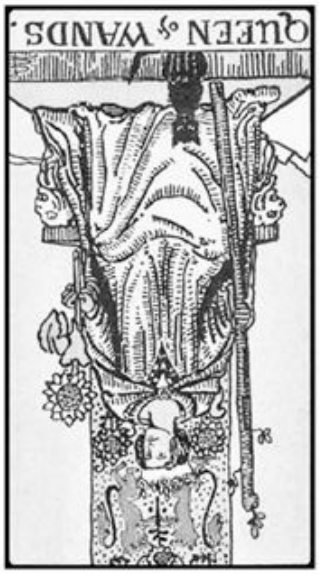
Like the Page of Wands in reverse, the Knight of Wands indicates insecurity in decision-making. The Seeker is dragging his or her feet on an important decision, and not without good reason: the hesitation comes from being aware of how daunting or risky the project before the Seeker is. Nevertheless, to get through and prevail, the Seeker must be more assertive and exude greater confidence. The Knight of Wands in reverse is about second-guessing oneself and, as a result, delaying in taking the necessary action for advancement.

▽ △

WATER FIRE

Queen Wands

Self-Assured
Naturalist
Down-to-Earth



REV:
Capitulation
Yielding
Lacking Virtue

The Queen, in a yellow robe, sits on a throne of lions and sunflowers. She holds a sunflower in one hand, and her wand in the other. A black cat stands guard at her feet.

QUEEN OF WANDS

The Queen of Wands is an energetic, self-assured, attractive woman. The black cat in front of her is a reference to an old folktale that suggests a woman who has many eligible suitors. The Queen of Wands is a woman with the power of attraction. She is also a lover of nature, or one with a great affinity to nature. She is great with animals, a great keeper of the home and hearth, well-liked and honorable, and is considered by most to be strong-willed and virtuous. She tends to be highly organized; a clear thinker. She is ambitious, confident, and a long-term planner. Has sound judgment. She is the most down-to-earth of the four queens. However, when she is riled to anger, she can become erratic and hotheaded. Note that all the court personalities in the suit of Wands, the suit of Fire, tend to be hotheaded and temperamental. Otherwise, the Queen is normally quite balanced. In other words, do not make her angry. Unlike the Page of Wands, who is a bright burst of creative energy that has not yet been harnessed, the Queen of Wands can control and channel her creative energies to yield results. Figuratively the Queen of Wands can represent strong, effective nurturing of the Seeker's career or creative projects. Fire-dominant, the Queen of Wands is highly motivated, creative, dynamic, individualistic, and often demonstrates an irrepressible enthusiasm and vitality. May have a tendency to exaggerate or be overly theatric. Could signify Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius.

Note that two queens appearing in a tarot reading for a female Seeker could indicate direct competition with another female, while two queens in a reading for a male Seeker could indicate strong female allies and support. Three queens in a reading may represent sisterhood or a female alliance, and four queens, women's interest, feminism, female authority, or feminist endeavors.

Reversed Meaning

There is capitulation. The Queen of Wands indicates a yielding disposition. The Seeker is yielding to others. The Seeker could be afraid of being confrontational, and such passivity could prevent the Seeker from achieving his or her objectives. The card could also indicate acting without honor or virtue. The card could suggest an older, motherly, nurturing figure in the Seeker's life, with whom the Seeker argues often. Quarrels with this mother figure may have an adverse impact on the situation at hand. The card in reverse could suggest the negative influence of a woman who embodies the Queen of Wands, or figuratively, could represent a yielding disposition in matters of career or creative projects.

△ △

FIRE FIRE

King Wands

Authoritarian
Demanding
Noble, Honest

REV:
Tyranny
Despotic
Disciplinarian
Doctrinaire

A red-headed fiery man, one hand clenched in a fist, the other holding his wand, sits on his golden throne. Lions, symbolic of strength, and salamanders, symbolic of intuition and psyche, emblazon his throne and cloak. The points of his crown are reminiscent of flames.

KING OF WANDS

The King of Wands represents creative male energy. He is a natural-born leader with a strong presence, an extrovert. The King of Wands is a man who thinks he is always right, a man of strong will. There is fiery male energy with authority. He is most likely married or the head of his household. The King of Wands is handsome, passionate, noble, strong, but hasty and quick to temper, quick to judgment. Whereas the Knight of Wands is often brash or temperamental because he doesn't know better, the King of Wands is brash and temperamental because he demands others to be as capable, efficient, and accomplished as him. The King of Wands is most likely a professional man with executive powers.

Figuratively, the King of Wands could indicate leadership or effective management of the Seeker's career or creative projects. From French playing card tradition, the King of Wands is said to correspond with Alexander the Great, and thus in tarot the card could call to mind the traits historically associated with Alexander. *Compare:* The Two of Wands shows a young Alexander the Great about to embark on his journey of great conquest. The King of Wands is Alexander as sovereign; the king has already conquered. Traditional interpretation of the card associates it with

honesty and nobility, a man who is friendly and conscientious. He rules over the other kings by divine mandate. The double Fire association of the King of Wands suggests that among the courts, he is the lead sovereign by the will of the heavens. Thus, the King of Wands is the king among kings. Could signify Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius.

Note that two kings appearing in a tarot reading for a male Seeker could indicate direct competition with another male, while two kings in a reading for a female Seeker could indicate a professional conference. In a reading about love, two kings can indicate two men competing for the amorous affections of one, but if the spread is Fire-dominant, then the two kings could indicate romantic relations developing from a professional conference or business trip. In a reading about career, two kings represent the significance of a professional conference in advancing the Seeker's goals, though if the Seeker is male, the two kings might denote direct competition from another male for the same promotion. Three kings in a reading symbolize a professional brotherhood, or a fraternity among men of high rank; they could also suggest nepotism at play. Four kings can represent a men's interest, issues related to masculinity, or dominant male authority.

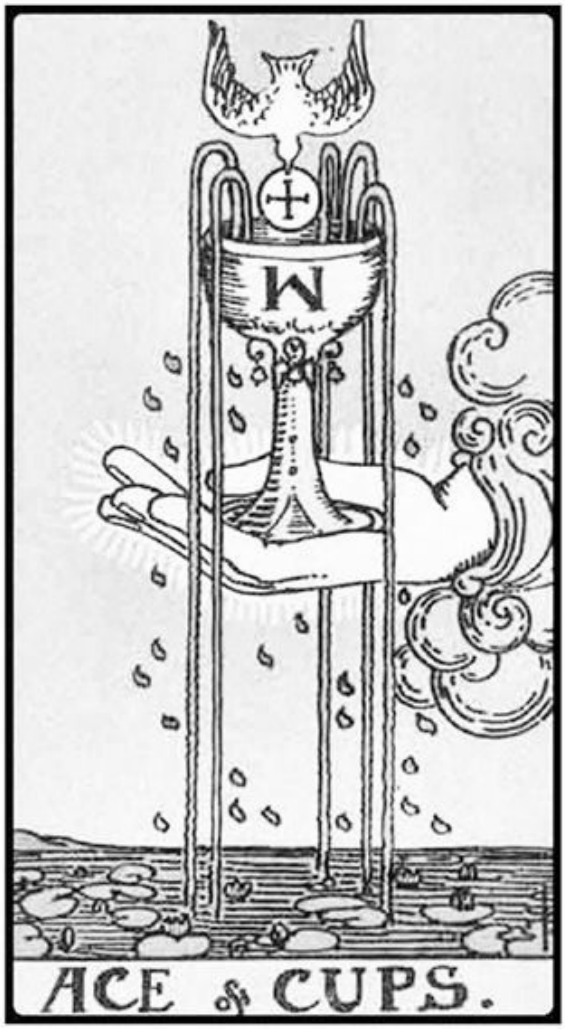
Reversed Meaning

He is a patronizing male authoritarian figure. There could be tyranny. The King of Wands in reverse could indicate an authoritative male figure in the Seeker's life with whom the Seeker often quarrels, or a negative, conflicting, or tense relationship between the two. The card may suggest someone who is too dogmatic, a doctrinaire; could also suggest a strict disciplinarian.

Suit of Cups

The suit of Cups tell a story about human sentiments. Cups reveal aspects of our emotional and social life; they answer the Seeker's questions about love and relationships, pleasure and discontent, and the self as it relates to others. As far as the four suits of the common deck of playing cards, Cups correspond with the red suit of hearts. Cups are governed by the element of Water. The suit of Cups is the human spirit, grounded on the principle that the inner sanctum is ruled by the Moon.[82] The theory of the Cups, or chalices, is related to the parabolic quest for the Holy Grail, or union with the Divine and thus is the suit of divinity.

Classical Element	Water
Fundamental Energy	Receptive (Yin)
Astrological Signs	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Animal Symbolism	Fish, Dolphin
Success Factor	Perception, Intuition
Prevailing Character Traits	Empathy, Concord, Compassion
Personal Issue Attribution	Love, Emotions, Relationships, Family
Quality	Fluidity
Season	Summer
Cardinal Direction	West
Moon Phase	Waxing Crescent
Social Hierarchy	Clergy
Armament	Naval
Hebrew Letter	Heh (corresponds with H_1)
Angel Representative	Gabriel
Gospel	John (Edification, Testimony, Fellowship)
Activating Minerals	Moonstone, Blue Calcite, Coral, Pearl, Rose Quartz, Lapis Lazuli, Blue Lace Agate
Activating Colors	Med. or Dk. Blue, Pink, Indigo, Purple
Olfactory Correspondences	Chamomile, Jasmine, Lavender, Rose, Ylang Ylang

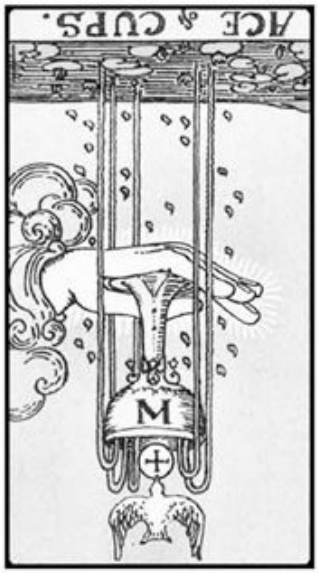


Abundance
Affirmation
Fountainhead

Number 1
Beginnings
Power

Three Aces
Wealth, Success

Four Aces
Exceptional
Greatness



REV:
Superficiality
Rejection
Promiscuity

A hand appears in the sky holding a golden chalice. Five streams of water spill out into the water below, where lily pads float. Leaves from the Tree of Life waft in the air. A white dove is placing a sacramental wafer into the cup, upon which the letter "M" is inscribed in reverse. Could the golden chalice be emblematic of the Holy Grail?

ACE OF CUPS

The Ace of Cups signals the beginning of prosperity, of overflowing love, joy, beauty, or health. There will be a breakthrough. There is fortune in love and marriage. Much happiness and peace are found in a new relationship. If the Seeker is asking about romance, this card indicates that a prosperous, joyous, healthy love is coming. The dove represents peace and harmony. In the Golden Dawn interpretive approach, the dove represents Venus as the Great Mother, while the wafer with the cross symbolizes the earth She has created.[83] The theme of the card is spiritual fulfillment. There may also be support, presence, or help from the divine. Streams of water spout from the source of divinity (or higher being, the spiritual life force), indicating a spiritual revelation. It could also represent a fountainhead, the chief source of success or prosperity; the concept of an original source. The Ace of Cups can be seen as the "indigo child"[84] card, denoting the birth of a child who will be remarkably empathic, intuitive, and seem to operate with a strong, maturely developed sense of self.

Practitioners disagree on the alphabetical letter depicted on the chalice. Is it a "W" for A. E Waite, the creator of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck? Or is it an "M" in reverse, and if so what does the

"M" stand for? Mary Magdalene? Magic? Magi? Magus? And what would be the significance of the reversal? How an individual practitioner interprets the letter affects the specific meaning of the card to that practitioner. The approach adopted by this book is to interpret the letter as an "M" in reverse, representing the capitalized Greek letter "Mu," which relates to the Phoenician letter "mem," meaning water. Like tarot cards, upright indicates activated, present energy; a reversal indicates untapped potential or evolving energy, where the true outcome may still be uncertain. The reversed "M" is thus a symbol of potential energy spewing forth, becoming kinetic.

Generally the aces of the Minor Arcana suggest opportunities presented and the corresponding elemental association will indicate the nature of the opportunity. Here, the Ace of Cups indicates a recessive yin or even feminine force surrounding the matter at hand. The Seeker will be receiving rather than doing.

Reversed Meaning

If the Ace of Cups is reminiscent of the Holy Grail, then the card in reverse suggests the seeking of glory for the wrong reasons. The Seeker is not in pursuit of glory for spiritual fulfillment, but rather for material or superficial gain. The card in reverse might also indicate delays in spiritual fulfillment as a result of materialistic or superficial motivations. The Seeker's heart is not in the right place, so the outcome will not be as the Seeker desires. In questions about romance, the Seeker's perception of love is too materialistic. The Seeker needs a spiritual breakthrough. The card could be a warning that the Seeker's objectives, even if achieved, won't bring joy. The card could also mean there is promiscuity in a relationship, unstable desires, or overindulgence. The promiscuity indicated by the Ace of Cups in reverse is most likely a mental or emotional one, not physical. Nevertheless, there is trouble in love. Entrepreneurial or creative ventures will not be spiritually fulfilling. More diligence is ahead before the venture will bring the Seeker contentment, that or the Seeker needs to reevaluate what his or her motivations are.

Friendship
Affinity
Cooperation

Number 2
Balance
Dualism

Three Twos
Cliques
Segregation

Four Twos
Conference
Dialogue

Rev:
Imbalance
Quarreling
Misunderstanding

A young man and woman raise their golden goblets to each other and touch, fingertip to fingertip. She has a laurel wreath of victory on her crown; he wears a wreath of roses. Hovering over them is a herald's wand, or two serpents entwining a winged staff with a red lion's head, known in modern times as a caduceus. Per traditional Mesopotamian and Egyptian mythos, the caduceus symbolizes harmony and balance,[85] *the yin and yang, female and male energy respectively. One coiled serpent is the Pingala per Hindu mythology, and the Od per the Kabbalah, the yang. The other serpent is Ida, or Ob, respectively, the yin. They symbolize the Biblical Adam and Eve. The caduceus is also the staff carried by Hermes in Greek mythology, and thus symbolizes diplomacy, mediation, and communication.*[86] *It is a symbol found in many cultures, from the Aztecs to the Persians.*[87]

Two of Cups

The Two of Cups is about harmony, cooperation, and two compatible personalities. It is a card of soul mates, people whose fate and karma are intertwined. The card represents two individuals who work well together. The lion's head atop the caduceus represents the combined strength of the two working cooperatively. It symbolizes the power of alliance. For some tarot practitioners, the caduceus suggests a sense of healing. Figuratively, the card can also represent the harmony and balance of our internal dichotomies. When a reading is about love, the card could indicate the start of a new romance and mutual attraction. The romance will have a strong friendship element to it. The

relationship will be one of healing. The couple is well-balanced. When a reading is not about love, the card indicates friendship and harmonious collaboration with one other individual that will bring fulfillment to both. It shows two people working together out of a mutual respect and love for each other. The caduceus wand is symbolic of commerce. In a question about work, there may be a genuine alliance that will yield great fruition and advantage to the Seeker. The red lion's head represents strength of character. The Two of Cups can be thought of as the best friend card. If there has been a great deal of conflict and quarreling in the Seeker's relationship, romantic or otherwise, the appearance of the Two of Cups indicates reconciliation.

Reversed Meaning

There is loss of balance in a relationship, be it a romantic, social, or professional relationship. There is mutual distrust, but there should not be. Instead, there are simply misunderstandings that the two parties must work out. There may be temporary conflicts with one that the Seeker regards highly. If married, there is tension in the marriage, but the tensions can be smoothed out with open communication. Generally, the Two of Cups in reverse is about a misunderstanding in a relationship. In a question about work, severed bonds with former allies may cause obstacles to commerce. To improve the Seeker's situation, he or she must seek out a strong alliance. A strong, sincere alliance will ensure that the Seeker prevails.

Celebration
Jubilee
Merriment

Number 3
Fruition
Expansion
Amplify

Three Threes
Deceit

Four Threes
Strategic Plan
in Place

REV:
Hedonism
Indulgence
Sensualist

Three maidens dance in a circle, their goblets raised into the air. One wears a white gown of purity, another wears a red gown of vitality, and the third, the yellow gown of joy and friendship. She holds a bundle of grapes in hand. The earth around them is abundant with plants and fruit.

THREE OF CUPS

Good fortune and good company. The abundance of fruits and blossoms, particularly the grapes, represent cornucopia, which throughout history has been a symbol of bounty, plenitude, and prosperity. There may be joyous social events ahead. It is a time for rejoicing. There will be a happy conclusion in an undertaking that took team effort. The Three of Cups is about community, friendship, and camaraderie. It echoes with the theme of celebration and friendships. The Seeker has people in his or her life that are dependable, genuine, and truly supportive of the Seeker. These friends are a crucial component to the situation at hand. When the Three of Cups appears for a female Seeker, this could suggest sisterhood or strong, deep bonds with female peers. No matter who the Seeker is, the Three of Cups appearing in a reading is about sincere allies who truly wish the Seeker well and rejoice in the Seeker's successes.

Also, note the significance of the pumpkin in the right bottom of the card. The pumpkin is a gourd, which for many cultures, East and West, symbolizes health, wellness, vigor, and vitality. The numerological correspondence of the number three suggests fruition and manifestation for the Seeker.

It is about drawing the energy of the earth to bring abundance. Earth energy, or resources, converges with the Water energy of the Cups, or emotions. Thus, a theme of the Three of Cups is plenitude.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is spending more time on play than work. The card is warning the Seeker that too much pleasure could become pain. The Seeker relies too much on pleasure-seeking. The Seeker's fullest talents remain dormant and are not being utilized. The card could also indicate that the Seeker thinks all has gone well and has rejoiced prematurely. Be careful. There is more to the story and it's not necessarily happy news. The card could also indicate that the Seeker is sexually unhappy. When the Three of Cups appears in reverse, it suggests hedonism as a means of overcompensating for deep, internalized dissatisfaction or restlessness. *Compare:* While The Devil card is about giving in to temptation and the battle with one's inner demons, the Three of Cups in reverse is less severe and more indicative of procrastination or boredom.

Introspection
Contemplation
Dissatisfaction

Number 4
Rationality
Stability

Three Fours
Abundance
Industry, Diligence

Four Fours
Order, Peace
Rule of Law

REV:
Regeneration
Emergence

A man sits on a grassy knob, legs crossed and arms crossed, under a tree,[88] *deep in contemplation. A single cloud appears in front of him, offering a goblet. Three more goblets are presented before him. He pays no heed to them. His vision is turned inward.*

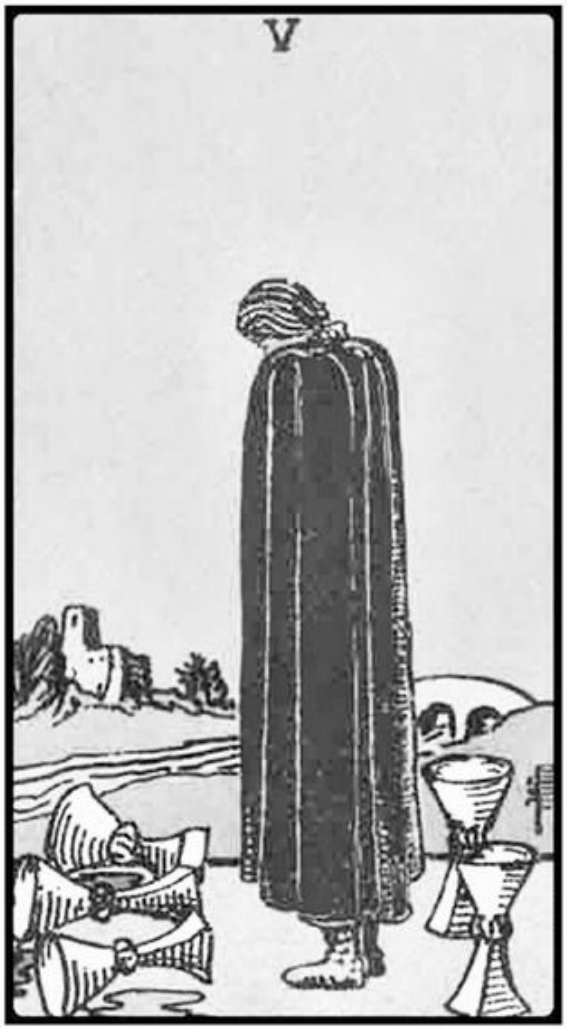
FOUR OF CUPS

It is time for personal reevaluation and internal reflection. The theme here is discontent. The Seeker had wanted more, or something different, from his or her circumstances and environment. The Four of Cups is about disappointment in the status quo or dissatisfaction with what the Seeker has or has not accomplished to date. As a result, the Seeker needs to reflect inward and reevaluate the path he or she is taking. Why has there been disappointment? What is the cause of the discontent? This card is advice to the Seeker to close off from the outside world (the world that has been disappointing him or her) and devote more time to introspection. The Seeker needs a purpose, an aim, in order for the Seeker to advance toward accomplishment. At this time, the Seeker is still evaluating what his or her purpose is. The Seeker has reached a stage in life where he or she is trying to understand the self. *Compare:* Key 9: The Hermit is a card abouta conservator of wisdom. Here, the Four of Cups is about reevaluating personal choices. The Hermit is reevaluating and reflecting on something deeper, more spiritual. Here, the Four of Cups suggests a sense of inertia. The Seeker is using apathy as a defense mechanism. Due to the Seeker's discontentment, he or she is withdrawing from society or social engagements. The Seeker is rejecting new offers and new opportunities.

The imagery of the Four of Cups calls to mind the Buddha meditating under a Bodhi tree to attain enlightenment. That imagery as applied to the card represents the finding of one's personal connection to the collective unconscious, to sit at the source of knowledge and find one's place in the world. The Seeker is looking inward for deliverance. However, the omission of a halo around the figure depicted on the Four of Cups is significant. With the Four of Cups, the Seeker's introspection pertains to trying to determine what the next steps should be.

Reversed Meaning

When the Four of Cups appears in reverse, it is an omen to start new relations. It is now a good time for a new relationship, to engage with society. The Seeker is ready to face the world again. The Seeker had previously closed him- or herself off from the world for introspection, but now it is time to come out of hiding. The Seeker is ready for new goals and more accomplishments. When the Four of Cups appears in reverse in a reading, the meaning of the Four of Cups upright had previously applied to the Seeker's situation; but now, with the card appearing in reverse, the Seeker is urged to reintegrate into his or her community and be social again. It is time to build new relationships and move on from past hurts and disappointments.

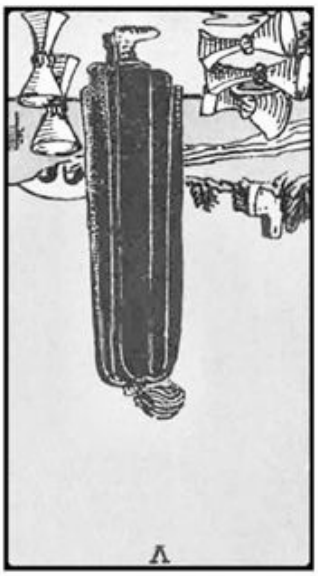


Loss
Mourning
Regrets

Number 5
Uncertainty
Adversity
Changing Tide

Three Fives
Competition

Four Fives
Unexpected
Advantage



REV:
Restoration
Acceptance

The skies are dark gray. A man cloaked in black faces three spilled cups and mourns the loss. Blood puddles have formed around the spilled cups. What the man does not see are the two remaining filled cups behind him. In the distance is a river, and over the river a stone arch bridge that leads home.

FIVE OF CUPS

The theme of this card is sorrow and mourning. Loss of a loved one or loss of something the Seeker loved or held dear; emotional losses in relationships. However, while mourning his or her loss, the Seeker neglected to see what he or she still has. Note how two of the cups in the card are still intact, but the cloaked man in the image cannot see them. If in a relationship that is on the verge of ending, the Seeker is asked by the cards to reexamine the issue and see if repairs or amends can be made. Look to see what you have and cherish it. The Seeker feels a loss of a particular future path. A relationship that should have lasted forever has now ended. Something that was meant to be now shall never come to pass. The Seeker is intentionally distancing him- or herself from others to mourn; depression. Note also the symbolic significance of the three spilled cups. Two of the cups spill forth blood, and the third is water. Per Christian mythology, blood and water flowed out of Jesus Christ when a Roman soldier thrust a spear into his side. Blood represents life and body; water represents spirit. What the Seeker has lost, the metaphorical death it represents, is in fact not a death or an end at all. There will be a resurrection. There may be wounds right now, but there is the prophecy still

foretold by the two intact and upright cups.

A catharsis often occurs within a Seeker when the Five of Cups appears in a reading and fully expresses the emotional tensions that had been burdening the Seeker. It forces otherwise repressed feelings within the Seeker up to the surface of the consciousness and compels a confrontation. A message in the Five of Cups that is often overlooked is the message of returning home. There has been pain, loss, and disappointment, and now is a good time to return home, to make peace with what is there, at that figurative (or literal) home, and find those two intact and upright cups that will lead the Seeker to a better emotional place.

Reversed Meaning

There are two seemingly contradicting interpretations of the Five of Cups in reverse. First, it could suggest a loss that feels insurmountable, a loss that the Seeker feels he or she might never get over, one of profound emotional ramifications for the Seeker. It could suggest deep wounds caused by that loss. Generally, when there are negative or dark cards dominant in a spread, then the Five of Cups in reverse will take on this first interpretation. Alternatively, the Five of Cups in reverse could suggest a return and restoration of hope after recent losses. The second meaning seems to contradict the first, but when surrounding cards suggest that the situation will get better for the Seeker forthcoming, then most likely the Five of Cups in reverse adopts the second interpretation. Here, the card suggests that the situation is just beginning to turn up for the Seeker. The Seeker is forming new alliances, and these new alliances will help alleviate the feelings of pain and loss. The Seeker is just starting to summon up the courage to deal with the loss. The Five of Cups in reverse here could indicate the midstream progress of moving on.

Nostalgia
Childhood
Reminiscence
Memories

Number 6
Harmony in
Body, Mind,
and Spirit

Three Sixes
Success

Four Sixes
Full Control
Happiness

REV:
Clinging
Attachment
Puerility

A little boy and little girl pass a goblet full of white daffodils between them. Their beautiful country home is behind them, made of solid stone. At the very left edge, a man in blue ambles toward the house with walking stick in hand. Perhaps he is returning from a long stroll. Goblets of blooming white daffodils stand in a row before the little boy and girl, symbolizing cheer, happiness, and return.

SIX OF CUPS

The Six of Cups is the card of nostalgia. There is a sense that the man with the walking stick is the Seeker revisiting home, symbolic of the Seeker revisiting the past. The children in the foreground represent that Seeker's past, which is still ever in the present. Childhood or the past is an ongoing factor in the Seeker's current life, but it is a positive factor. Something positive from the Seeker's past is visiting the present. There is reminiscence and sentimentality. Memories reemerge into the present consciousness. Generally the Six of Cups is a card about our past becoming our present again. If asking about a problem, the card indicates that the root cause can be found in the Seeker's childhood. If the card is in the projected future, look to neighboring cards: it may indicate the start of a new family or additions to the family. An important theme here is children and childhood. These are significant factors in the Seeker's situation at hand. The card could also suggest that someone from the Seeker's past will reemerge in his or her life.

Reversed Meaning

Childhood or the past is still a factor in current life, but it is a negative factor. Something negative from the Seeker's past will visit the present. The Seeker is clinging on to the past and nostalgia, unable to progress forward. When the Six of Cups is upright, it suggests positive nostalgia, a positive childhood or memories. In reverse, the Six of Cups suggests negative nostalgia, a difficult childhood or unpleasant memories. The card reversed could also indicate fertility issues in older women or difficulties with disciplining children, or suggest a deep longing for children or childhood.

Temptation
Superficiality
Enticement
Decoys

Number 7
Wisdom
Spirituality
Turning Point

Three Sevens
Alliances

Four Sevens
Disappointment

REV:
Determination
Decision
Purpose Revealed

The silhouette of a man contemplates the seven goblets that are presented before him, appearing from the skies in a cloud. Each goblet offers an enticing temptation to the man: the head of someone attractive; a shrouded figure, arms open, glowing red; a snake; a castle; jewels and treasure; a laurel wreath of victory; and a dragon.

SEVEN OF CUPS

The Seven of Cups is about temptation, about desiring titillation of the physical senses and losing sight of the righteous spiritual path. It represents false thought. The Seeker is at a crossroads, plagued by an inability to choose from many appealing options, but the appeal is superficial and they are but temptations. They are decoys that will lead the Seeker astray from his or her true path. Thus, in fact, the card suggests that the Seeker should not choose any of the options presented.

The attractive head is said to represent romance or lust; the covered figure glowing red is ominous, showing anger, resentment, or vengeance; the snake shows unrestrained ambition, pursuing goals for the wrong reasons; the castle and jewels represent material temptations; the laurel wreath, glory for the sake of glory; and the dragon as depicted in this card represents the dark and sinister. It is also said that the seven cups symbolize the seven sins or temptations: lust, rage, gluttony, pride, greed, envy, and sloth. *Compare:* The Devil card from the Major Arcana tends to present a more serious matter of temptation, a struggle with inner demons that could cause spiritual injury, whereas the Seven of Cups denotes a superficially appealing prospect that the Seeker is tempted to accept, but which

will likely cause emotional injury.

True clarity of vision is presently clouded and the Seeker is obstructed from seeing what he or she really wants, as a result of the tempting options. The options before the Seeker as indicated by this card are superficial (eg. wealth, fame, sex). The Seven of Cups is a card associated with wishful thinking, mostly of tempting mirages that are not long-lasting, substantive, or meaningful. The card may also indicate delusions of grandeur. The Seeker's goals, ambitions, visions, or fantasies are misguided. The Seeker must exercise greater patience and self-control.

Reversed Meaning

Reversed, the Seven of Cups is a good omen. It indicates that the Seeker has made or will make (depending on where the card is positioned in the spread) a decision supportive of delayed gratification. The cards affirm that the Seeker is moving in the right direction and is closer to accomplishing his or her goal. When the Seven of Cups appears inreverse, the Seeker is someone who was offered many appealing materially pleasurable paths, such as fame, fortune, etc., but the Seeker has refused those paths and seeks something greater out of life. *Compare:* The Seven of Cups in reverse is preparing the Seeker for the journey ahead indicated in the Eight of Cups. The Eight of Cups is about the abandonment of material pleasures to seek a higher plane of spiritual consciousness.

Abandonment
Detachment
Spiritual Journey

Number 8
Fortuity
Due Process
Wealth

Three Eights
Short Journey
to Come

Four Eights
Gossip, Rumors

REV:
Epicurean
Peripatetic
Drifting
Aimless

A man cloaked in red, with red boots, leans on his walking stick to ascend a hill. He has crossed rocky rivers, leaving behind eight golden goblets, neatly stacked in the foreground. In the background are steep rocks protruding out of the sea. Mountains are green and black. In a dark blue sky is a waning crescent moon with a full moon.

EIGHT OF CUPS

There has been an abandonment of past fruits. The Eight of Cups is about a soul-searching journey ascending to higher emotional ground. The Seeker is leaving behind something he or she spent much effort and care to nurture or develop. There was disappointment in a past undertaking and thus the Seeker has abandoned his or her previous work. Note how carefully stacked the goblets are. However, the Seeker is leaving it behind on his or her own terms, at will. The Seeker is looking for more than material success. A search for a higher meaning. The card may also indicate a charitable, beautiful, or kind personality. The Seeker is on a spiritual journey. The waning crescent moon suggests a release, banishment, or a period of deep reflection. The full moon, coupled with the man's red cloak and red boots, suggest power, strength, and transformation. This is the time for a change, a period of solitude. The rocky water suggests disturbances in the consciousness. The narrative of the Eight of Cups might call to mind the story of Prince Siddhartha, who left his castle and royalty for the ascetic life, to eventually become awakened to the Buddha. The card also resonates with Muhammad, the last prophet, who left behind the life of a merchant to receive revelations from God. Note that the

only other times that a face appears in astronomical elements are in Key 18: The Moon and Key 19: The Sun. The anthropomorphism here suggests the human association of our environment and world to a greater purpose or higher meaning.

Reversed Meaning

There are two possibilities when the Eight of Cups appears in reverse: It could suggest that the Seeker has returned to feasting and festivities, enjoying earthly, material pleasures. The Seeker has abandoned the spiritual path for the material. In the alternative, it could indicate peripatetic tendencies in the Seeker, journeying without purpose. The Seeker is drifting, and feeling aimless. The Seeker is going from place to place, literally, or wandering from experience to experience without a sense of purpose. Look to the cards surrounding this card in the spread to determine the appropriate interpretation. Since the crescent moon depicted on the Eight of Cups when reversed becomes a waxing moon, many practitioners interpret the Eight of Cups affirmatively to the Seeker: There will be growth, an increase in prosperity, or the fertilization of the seeds the Seeker has recently planted. From here, there shall be growth and progress forward. The Eight of Cups in reverse can indicate a weary traveler who has seen the world and gone on many journeys, but is now yearning for a place to call home. In reverse, the card suggests that such a Seeker has not yet found his or her home and is now searching for what is "home." *Compare:* While the Five of Cups has a latent message of returning home to make peace of what is there and needing that peace before the Seeker can progress forward, here the Eight of Cups in reverse is about a Seeker actively in search of where "home" is for him or her. If the Five of Cups is about returning home, the Eight of Cups in reverse is about finding home.

Wish Granted
Comfort
Material Success

Number 9
Change is Coming
for the Better

Three Nines
One Last Hitch
in the Plan Before
Success is Had

Four Nines
Unexpected
Burdens

REV:
Overindulgence
Greed
Wish Not Granted

A plump, wealthy man sits with his arms crossed at a table, surrounded by nine golden goblets. He wears a red cap of prosperity. Like a curtain, a blue tablecloth encircles from behind. Yellow is the dominant color above and below him.

NINE OF CUPS

The Nine of Cups is considered the wish card, though there is also the slight indication that the Seeker's wish is materialistic. When the Nine of Cups appears in a reading, material success is affirmed. The Seeker will get his or her wish. Everything will work out well for the Seeker. However, overtones of the Nine of Cups include a fondness of luxury and comfort, the fulfillment of superficial desires. *Compare:* The Ten of Cups suggests spiritual fulfillment and wealth in relationships and love. The Nine of Cups suggests material prosperity that *feels* like spiritual prosperity. When positioned in a spread indicating the present state of mind, the Nine of Cups shows a yearning wish for more material comfort than the Seeker possesses now. The Seeker is pining for material success, luxury, and comfort, but it is wishful thinking only. The blue curtain cloth symbolizes the curtain around the Seeker's dream world and thoughts; thus, the vision of wealth is still a figment of the Seeker's inner fantasies, as the man appears surrounded by the blue cloth.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker's wish will not be fulfilled. Look to the surrounding cards in a spread to see why. Could

also indicate too much self-praise and conceit, or greed and vanity. The Seeker thinks too highly of him- or herself. However, it is because the Seeker is highly talented and skilled at attaining luxury and comfort. The Seeker possesses an exceptional ability to gratify him- or herself. *Compare:* Key 14: Temperance in reverse suggests a fundamental tendency to overindulge. The Nine of Cups in reverse is more indicative of a temporary state. The Seeker is temporarily, in the present situation he or she is in, overindulging in that which is materialistic, thus causing the setbacks that the Seeker is experiencing. The Seeker must pull back from those materialistic overindulgences and then he or she will be on the right track again. The Nine of Cups in reverse often suggests a Seeker who has been on the rise, on the ascent, but because of that quick ascent upward, the Seeker has now acquired a great deal of self-pride and vanity. If that self-pride and vanity are not rectified soon, the Seeker will quickly begin the ascent downward. The Seeker has gotten quite far on his or her abilities. Do not throw away all the past work over greed or vanity.

Happiness
Joy; Felicity
Content Family

Number 10
Pinnacle of Success
or Pinnacle of
Tribulation

Three Tens
Good Time to
Buy or Sell

Four Tens
Exhaustion
Burnout

REV:
Discord
Broken Family
Shattered Values
Family-related
Disappointment

Ten golden goblets are embedded into a rainbow that stretches across a blue sky. A family beneath it celebrates. The man and woman embrace, joined at the hip, arms open in the air. Their two small children are also joining hands, dancing. A river leads up to their comfortable cottage in the distance.

TEN OF CUPS

The Ten of Cups represents ultimate happiness. The Seeker can enjoy a happy family life, true friendships, and rewarding relationships. The card is not necessarily an indication of wealth or material prosperity, but a strong indication of genuine joy and love. The rainbow is indicative of the message, "a promise from God." The heavens favor the Seeker and will align conditions in the Seeker's life so the Seeker will likely find ultimate happiness. Despite past difficulties, trouble, and many disappointments, the future for the Seeker will be bright and beautiful. Balance between heaven and earth. *Compare:* The Nine of Cups upright suggests that the success is material; a gain in wealth.

Reversed Meaning

There may be discord in the domestic sphere. Quarrels within the family may cause breakage. The Seeker should be sensitive to loved ones and not utter words that he or she may regret later. However, if all the cards surrounding this one in a spread are powerfully positive, then this could indicate that happiness is to come, but there may be a delay. Thus, the Ten of Cups in reverse isn't a

bad omen; it simply means a few struggles are ahead before the fulfillment and happiness of the Ten of Cups upright may be had by the Seeker. A third possible meaning for this card is a warning: the Seeker is trying too hard to mold life into a "perfect" life according to certain standards. Be content with the joys and relationships in your life already, even if they do not conform to certain societal standards or expectations of the "perfect" life. *Compare:* The Four of Wands, another card suggestive of domestic bliss, is positive whether upright or reverse. However, the Ten of Cups is strongly positive upright, even more so than the Four of Wands, since the Ten of Cups represents the penultimate of contentment among family and friends; but in reverse the Ten of Cups indicates discord and broken trust. In reverse, the Ten of Cups warns that the Seeker him- or herself is possibly tampering with harmony and taking actions that will sabotage the Seeker's harmonious family life or relationships.

EARTH WATER

Page Cups

Dreamer
Sensitive
Poetic

Receipt of
Personal News

Rev:
Quixotic
Dreamer

A colorful, well-dressed character holds a goblet containing a fish. In the background is a rolling river. An ornate floral pattern covers the character's tunic. The Page wears pink and blue, the soft colors of a childlike state.

Page of Cups

The Page of Cups is a gentle young female who is loving, tenderhearted, intuitive, and embraces her emotions. She is likely artistic or interested in the arts. The fish symbolizes creativity, and is also a reference to faith and Jesus Christ. She is sweet-natured, full of imagination, though with a tendency to be too idealistic. She does not deal well with facts and logic; she sees life and situations through the color spectrum of emotions. She tends to be a dreamer. The rolling river in the back may suggest immaturity or a need for more personal development. She is warm, a pacifist, and possesses a sweet personality; likely an emotional person. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, the Page of Cups could indicate the appearance of a young female with the foregoing qualities. Figuratively, the Page of Cups could indicate the receipt of news or messages regarding the Seeker's interpersonal relationships, or information that will have an emotional impact. Water-dominant, the Page of Cups demonstrates strong people skills, charisma, empathy, intuition, and a possible gift for prophecy. There is a tendency to be moody. Could signify Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces.

Note that two pages in a tarot reading can indicate a social event related to the matter at hand. Three pages denote children or social cliques. All four pages appearing in a single tarot reading

could indicate a classroom setting, school, university, or other educational or academic institution.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker has unrealistic expectations. The Seeker is being quixotic, an impractical visionary. The Seeker is also too impulsive. When the Page of Cups appears in reverse, it could be a sign of emotional instability or indolence. Could also indicate a young woman in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Page of Cups, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation.

AIR WATER

Knight Cups

Charming
Affable
Equanimity

REV:
Discouragement
Ennui
Unmotivated
Discomfiture

A knight in armor with red fish printed on his tunic. There are wings on his feet and on his head armor. His steed marches forward. A stream, fertile land, and hills are in the background.

KNIGHT OF CUPS

The Knight of Cups is a charming young man of high intelligence. He possesses great people skills He inspires and motivates others. The fish on his tunic are emblematic of faith and Jesus Christ. He is romantic, sensitive, a dreamer; someone with lofty thoughts. The Knight of Cups is usually skilled in the arts, very social and charismatic on the outside, but on the inside his feelings are easily hurt, and he does not take criticism well. He sees the world through poetry and beauty. Of the four knights, the Knight of Cups is the most intuitive and compassionate. He is an admirer of the arts and has a strong sense of style and aesthetics. He is a physically attractive man and is often admired by many for his attractiveness and charm. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, could indicate the appearance of a young male with the foregoing qualities. Figuratively, the Knight of Cups could indicate assertive behavior in interpersonal relationships, or being outwardly expressive of one's emotional state. Water-dominant, the Knight of Cups demonstrates strong people skills, charisma, empathy, intuition, and maybe a gift for prophecy. There is a tendency to be moody. Could signify Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces.

Note that two knights appearing in a tarot reading could indicate head-to-head conflict with another

individual of equal rank as the Seeker. Three knights in a reading indicate fraternity or brotherhood, and/or a sudden change, swift action that will take the Seeker by surprise. Four knights could suggest war, combat, or matters relating to the military.

Reversed Meaning

There may be feelings of discouragement. The Knight of Cups in reverse could also indicate someone who is out of touch with reality. The Seeker is overly emotional, feeling withdrawn from the world, or being lazy and idle. Could also indicate a young male in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Knight of Cups, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation. Knight cards are about action, and when the Knight of Cups appears in reverse, the Seeker is withholding from taking the necessary actions in a particular relationship. The Knight of Cups in reverse is about not fully expressing how you feel to another, and keeping your feelings about someone to yourself.

▽ ▽

WATER WATER

Queen Cups

Nurturing
Warm
Tender
Empathic

REV:
Manipulation
Jealousy

Of all the golden cups and goblets depicted in the Suit of Cups, the Queen holds the most ornate, most detailed, and grandest of the cups. Two angels stand atop two candelabra-like arms protruding from the cup. Unlike the other cups with open tops, the Queen's is covered. She sits on a throne carved with cherub-like mermaids, a seashell, and a fish. Her feet are at the edge of the ocean. The Queen wears white, with a cloak covered in clouds.

QUEEN OF CUPS

The Queen of Cups is a loving woman. She is the most intuitive of the four queens. She functions primarily through her intuition. She trusts her intuition, almost to the point of defying logic at times. She is tender, nurturing, and has a tendency to be overprotective of her loved ones. This woman is a counselor. She is a nurturer. She is likely a good wife and/or a good mother. She may be very empathic, creative, poetic, and generally have a kind demeanor. She is well-loved by many. Water-dominant, the Queen of Cups demonstrates strong people skills, charisma, and a possible gift for prophecy. There is a tendency to be moody. Could signify Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces. The ornate and unique golden cup she holds signifies her high privilege and status in life over others. Her clothing suggests purity in thought, good intentions, and someone who is a dreamer, likely very idealistic. Mermaids symbolize an idealized and rare form of feminine beauty. They also represent vanity and a fickle temper. The ocean water at her feet is rippling, unsettled. This suggests that the Seeker is someone who tends to overthink situations. Also shows amplification of emotions. Figuratively, the

Queen of Cups could indicate strong, effective nurturing of interpersonal relationships. From French playing card tradition, the Queen of Cups is said to correspond with the biblical character Judith, a widow who charms and seduces the villainous Holofernes and subsequently beheads him to save her city.

Note that two queens appearing in a tarot reading for a female Seeker could indicate direct competition with another female, while two queens in a reading for a male Seeker could indicate strong female allies and support. Three queens in a reading represent sisterhood or a female alliance, and four queens, women's interest, feminism, female authority, or feminist endeavors.

Reversed Meaning

The Queen of Cups in reverse is a warning that a woman who appears to be tender and warm is in fact manipulative. There could be deceit coming from a close friend or someone the Seeker trusts. Could indicate the negative influence of the Queen of Cups on the Seeker, or that the Seeker is embodying the negative personality traits attributed to the Queen. The Queen of Cups in reverse often represents emotional manipulation.

△ ▽

FIRE WATER

King Cups

Diplomatic
Caring
Fatherhood

REV:
Overwrought
Distracted

The king, in blue and cloaked in yellow and red, sits on his throne and platform in the middle of the ocean. The waves are strong. A ship is sailing in the background. A single fish leaps out of the water. The king's shoes seem to be made of scales.

KING OF CUPS

The King of Cups is a wise and diplomatic mature man. It is a card of caring male energy. However, may indicate a man with a troubled conscience or a lot of stress and pressure in his life. Yet his life is good overall, fruitful and full of blessings. He deals with his stress well, and demonstrates a quiet, calm temperament. Could be a professional man in law or business; very strong skills in the arts and letters. Figuratively, the King of Cups could indicate leadership or effective management of interpersonal relationships. He is often surrounded by other people due to his charisma and strong social skills, but he may have the tendency to feel lonely or alone, even among others. From French playing card tradition, the King of Cups is said to correspond with the holy emperor Charlemagne, and thus in tarot the card could call to mind the traits historically associated with Charlemagne, such as a strong emphasis on art, religion, and culture. Water-dominant, the King of Cups demonstrates strong people skills, charisma, empathy, intuition, and maybe a gift for prophecy. There is a tendency to be moody. Could signify Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces.

Note that two kings appearing in a tarot reading for a male Seeker could indicate direct competition with another male, while two kings in a reading for a female Seeker could indicate a

professional conference. In a reading about love, two kings can indicate two men competing for the amorous affections of one, but if the spread is Fire-dominant, then the two kings could indicate romantic relations developing from a professional conference or business trip. In a reading about career, two kings represent the significance of a professional conference in advancing the Seeker's goals, though if the Seeker is male, the two kings might denote direct competition from another male for the same promotion. Three kings in a reading symbolize a professional brotherhood, or a fraternity among men of high rank. Three kings could also suggest nepotism at play. Four kings represent a men's interest, issues related to masculinity, or dominant male authority.

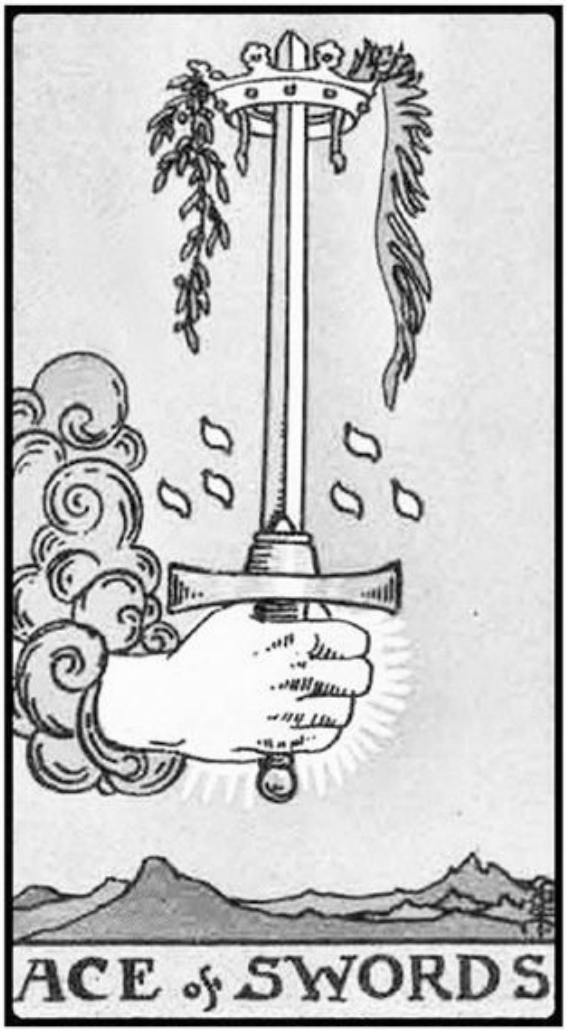
Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is being too emotional. The Seeker experiences difficulty in making decisions with conviction, is always looking to others to see what they do first. In reverse, the card suggests someone who is being spiteful to someone else. The Seeker is feeling the need to engage in petty vengeance. Could indicate the negative influence of the King of Cups on the Seeker, or that the Seeker is embodying the negative personality traits attributed to the King. *Compare:* the King of Wands can be hotheaded as a gut response to situations, but the bad temper of the King of Cups differs slightly; the King of Cups' temper strays from spiritual centeredness, a result of internal instability or flux, whereas the King of Wands is just reactionary.

Suit of Swords

The suit of Swords tells a story about human ambition. It also reveals the consequences of our pretension. The Swords tell us about loss, martyrdom, and the costs of aggression. Swords answer the Seeker's questions of an intellectual, philosophical, or psychological nature. In the four suits of the common deck of playing cards, the Swords correspond with the black suit of spades. Swords are governed by the element of Air. Air is "the bearer of the Message" from the Divine,[89] or the intelligence of Creation, and thus the suit of Swords is often associated with communication. The suit of Swords is also about command and execution, carrying out the message of divinity. The spirit of the Swords is that of the warrior.

Classical Element	Air
Fundamental Energy	Active (Yang)
Astrological Signs	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Animal Symbolism	Eagle, Owl
Success Factor	Force, Knowledge
Prevailing Character Traits	Intellectualism, Sophistication
Personal Issue Attribution	Ideas, Intellect, Communication; A Conflict
Quality	Enforcement
Season	Fall
Cardinal Direction	East
Moon Phase	Full Moon
Social Hierarchy	Nobility
Armament	Artillery
Hebrew Letter	Vau (corresponds with V)
Angel Representative	Michael
Gospel	Matthew (Wisdom, Ascension)
Activating Minerals	Amethyst, Kyanite, Yellow Jasper, Opal, Chrysoprase, Chrysocolla, Ametrine
Activating Colors	Light Blue, Gray, Black, White
Olfactory Correspondences	Frankincense, Lemongrass, Mint, Myrrh

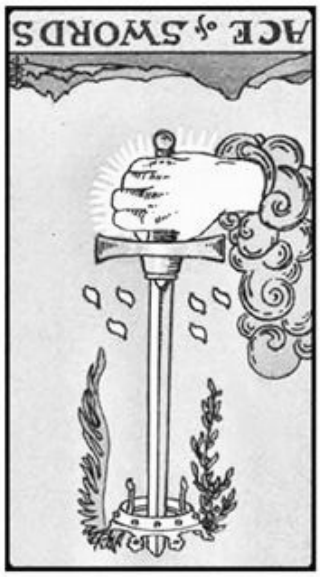


Conquest
Valiance

Number 1
Beginnings
Power

Three Aces
Wealth, Success

Four Aces
Exceptional
Greatness



REV:
Disruption
Entropy
Chaos, Anarchy
Complications

From a cloud, a hand appears, presenting a sword, solid, straight, and erect. Encircling the tip of the sword is a gold crown, with a green garland of laurels hanging from the right of the crown, the promise of victory, and a smaller garland with red buds hanging from the left. Six golden leaves from the Tree of Life float near the sword's hilt. The sky is light gray. The earth below is rocky.

ACE OF SWORDS

The Ace of Swords represents a new conquest, one of an intellectual nature. It notes the beginning of a conquest or victory, or could also indicate the birth of a child who will be valiant, ambitious, a leader, one with a natural gift for military strategy. The Seeker is a natural-born champion with the potential to achieve great power. The card frequently appears in spreads for Seekers with the potential to become leaders, but who have not yet become one. The Ace of Swords indicates one who is fierce, strong-willed, and even rebellious. Yet this is someone who will get seen and be recognized. Some practitioners say the Ace of Swords suggests that the Seeker (or a child born to the Seeker) will have two possible different paths: valiance in combat, a warrior-type, a conqueror; or someone who is deeply intellectual, philosophical, and inquisitive on a higher plane, a magus or sage. That interpretation of two possible paths is found in the two different garlands hanging from the crown: the one on the right represents military might while the one on the left represents the seeking out of greater knowledge and wisdom.

Note that the aces of the Minor Arcana suggest opportunities presented. The corresponding elemental association will indicate the nature of the opportunity. Here, the Ace of Swords indicates an active yang or even masculine force surrounding the matter at hand. However, like the Ace of Wands, the active force suggests that the Seeker will be doing rather than receiving (yin would suggest reception). The Seeker is in a position of action.

Reversed Meaning

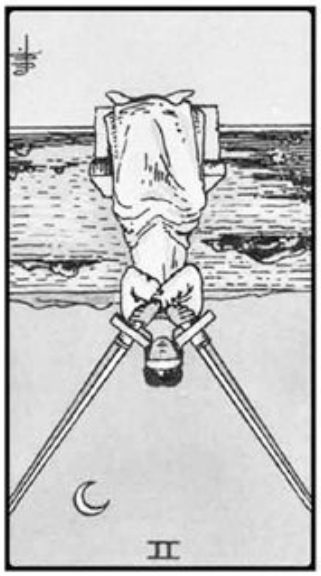
The Seeker has the potential to be valiant and victorious, but certain decisions the Seeker has made or will make (depending on whether the card appears in the past, present, or future) are more destructive than constructive. The Seeker is cautioned to exercise wisdom when wielding power, or else victory will be short-lived, if there is any at all. The Ace of Swords in reverse is often a negative omen, suggesting entropy to come, chaos, decay, and destruction. It suggests the inability to walk in a single trajectory; the Seeker's personal energy is scattered. Complications will ensue. In social issues, the Ace of Swords in reverse may indicate anarchy, whether literal anarchy in the Seeker's life or ideological anarchy within the Seeker. Take note when the Ace of Swords appears in reverse. It suggests a hostile negativity: strong, intense negativity that may lead to sabotage, of others or of the self that the Seeker must be aware of. The Ace of Swords in reverse is about unfulfilled ambitions, about greatness squandered.

Stalemate
Catch-22
Difficult Choice

Number 2
Balance
Dualism

Three Twos
Cliques
Segregation

Four Twos
Conference
Dialogue



REV:
Settlement
Decision
Arbitration

A blindfolded woman sits on a stone bench. Her arms are crossed, holding two oversize swords, one in each hand. Behind her is the ocean, with rocks protruding. A waxing crescent moon hangs in the sky.

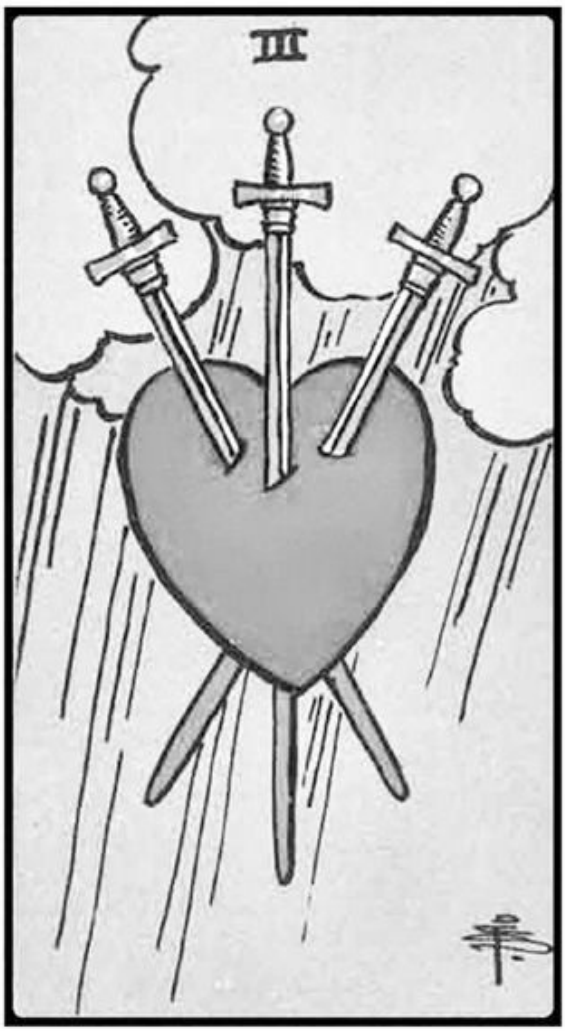
TWO OF SWORDS

The Seeker faces a difficult choice. There is a stalemate. The Seeker is having a difficult time discovering his or her current situation. The Seeker feels blinded, grasping through the darkness and the unknown. There is a stalemate in the current situation. Indecision is plaguing the Seeker; possible trouble ahead due to the indecision. Yet note how the figure in the card is holding the two swords: it is a position and stance of power. The Seeker is a strong-willed individual, someone who is capable of carrying large burdens (the way the woman depicted in the card effortlessly and dauntlessly holds both large swords). The Two of Swords is about choosing between two bad or difficult options. *Compare:* Seven of Cups is about choosing between many superficially appealing options. The Two of Swords is about two bad options. Rippling waters suggest an unstill heart. The waxing crescent moon in the background is a good sign, however. It indicates new beginnings and a time to start fresh; another chance; a good time to conceptualize new ideas. Waxing crescent suggests that the Seeker will choose correctly and there shall be gains thereafter. The blindfolded woman depicted in the Two of Swords calls to mind Lady Justice, as in Key 11: Justice in the Major Arcana; both are being blindfolded for objectivity, but Lady Justice holds the balancing scales in one hand and a sword in the

other. Here, in the Two of Swords, the woman holds two swords and no scales. There is no deliberating about strengths and weaknesses because both options are for all intents and purposes equal in their pros and cons; instead, the dual swords symbolize the remaining need for execution of justice. The swords symbolize the powers of logic and reason. It is no longer a time for deliberation, as in the Justice card; it is now a time for action. The woman's heart is covered by crossing arms and she is blindfolded, noting to the Seeker that the decision to be rendered will not come from the physical sensory plane or the emotional; only by logic and reason will the right decision be reached.

Reversed Meaning

There was a stalemate, but the Seeker seems to have made up his or her mind already. However, the card cautions of trouble and hardship ahead. There is a strong likelihood that the Seeker's movement is in the wrong direction. Think twice. The card in reverse shows a waning crescent moon. This is a time for endings and releases. Time for settlement of disputes, letting bygones be bygones, and correcting mistakes. The Two of Swords reversed may indicate that the Seeker is prone to choose incorrectly, so must take care in decision-making. In reverse, the Two of Swords refers to settlements, arbitration, and decisions having been made, but there is a slight hint that the decision made is not correct. There may be regrets or second-guessing afterward. There may be a sense of buyer's remorse here, because the Seeker did not arrive at the decision through logic and reason, and instead relied on the physical, senses and emotions.



Strife, Loss
Heartbreak

Number 3
Fruition
Expansion
Amplify

Three Threes
Deceit

Four Threes
Strategic Plan
in Place

REV:
Disorder, Hurt
Need for
Reconciliation

Three swords pierce through a red heart, which hovers under gray clouds and rain. In spite of the thunderstorm, the color of the heart is bold and bright.

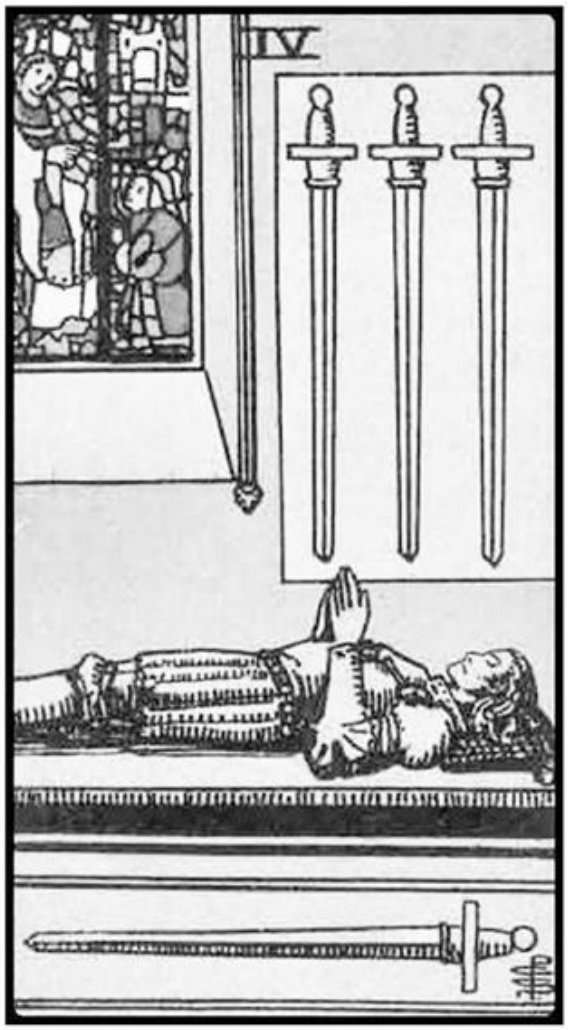
THREE OF SWORDS

The Three of Swords indicates strife, turmoil, loss, and sorrow. There has been a storm of emotions in the Seeker. There is a storm in the heart. There have been deep misunderstandings in the situation at hand, and as a result a storm is coming. The gray of the background suggests that sentiments, which are normally associated with the emotional plane, are suspended in the intellectual plane. The card could suggest political strife, or conflicts as a result of ambition and aggression. There has been pain and heartbreak, and rather than express that as sadness, the Seeker opts for anger; using anger to release pain and suffering. The Seeker may be experiencing quarrels with loved ones over politics, ideologies, power imbalances, and aggression. Note, however, the brightness of the red heart in spite of what the swords, the clouds, and the rain depict. The red here is blood, beauty, anger, passion, intense happiness, and intense agony. While all the other Swords cards suggest a dispassionate or pathological temperament, the Three of Swords is the only card in the suit of Swords that seems to impart a vivid emotion. There is heartbreak because the Seeker has a heart. The number three is associated with fruition and amplification of the status quo. That is *why* the Seeker is experiencing the storm: a lesson related to ambitions, ideologies, and communication will be learned and the growth to follow will be instrumental to the Seeker's future successes. Growth and fruition from the experience

are to come.

Reversed Meaning

There is loss and disorder. However, the loss and disorder is not as intense as it would be if the card was upright. The card reversal on the Three of Swords generally weakens the energies described by the card. Nearby cards in the spread will indicate what kind of loss has occurred. Generally it pertains to an emotion that the Seeker has overwrought with analysis and has attempted to compartmentalize with intellectualism. The card reversed could also indicate loss and sorrow, to a lesser degree. The Three of Swords in reverse can suggest a quarrel that the Seeker has had, and the Seeker is the one who should initiate and apologize first. The card suggests the need for reconciliation, so that the Seeker may move forward emotionally. *Contrast:* While the Ten of Swords does not seem to hint at forgiveness or reconciliation, the Three of Swords in reverse suggests that even though the Seeker has been hurt, or what once made sense is now in disorder, differences are reconcilable. The Seeker's heart will be restored. Heartbreak is not permanent.

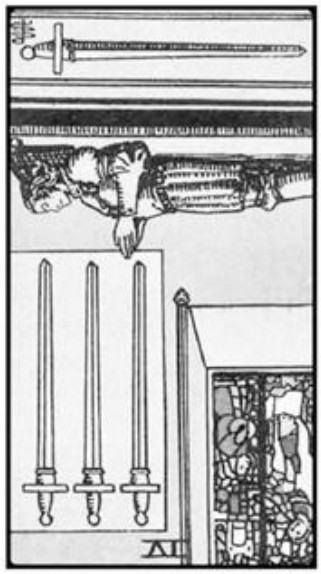


Repose
Recovery
Illness

Number 4
Rationality
Stability

Three Fours
Abundance
Industry, Diligence

Four Fours
Order, Peace
Rule of Law



REV:
Caution
Social Unrest
Need for Faith

A man rests in a sacred place. A stained glass window depicts a woman, child, and home. Three gray swords point downward over the man. A sword is embedded below him. He and the final sword are shaded yellow.

FOUR OF SWORDS

The Seeker has lost a battle, but the war is still ongoing. There may yet be victory for the Seeker, but only if he or she takes respite and recuperates to full strength before returning to the battleground. For now, it is a time for reclusion and retreat. The Seeker may have been sick or recluse, inactive. The yellow shading here symbolizes illness. Right now is a recovery period for the Seeker. The depiction in the stained-glass window symbolizes the Seeker's loved ones who are waiting eagerly for the Seeker's recovery and return home, be it a figurative or literal return. Much needed recuperation. Generally, the Four of Swords suggests a temporary recuperation period. The illness or period of injury, figurative or literal, represented here will pass, so long as the Seeker takes the correct measures to recover wholly. Note that in spite of the three gray swords pointed at the resting individual depicted in the card, the individual has a secret weapon or hidden advantage to combat the three swords with: the individual's own sword. It seems, however, that the secret weapon is even hidden from the Seeker's knowledge. Thus, the card suggests that the Seeker has one last measure yet unseen that he or she can use to thwart the three pointed swords. The Four of Swords can appear post-trauma or after a warring state in the Seeker's life, to indicate that the Seeker must rest and be

still before returning to normalcy.

Reversed Meaning

The Four of Swords in reverse suggests a greater severity of illness, be it physical, mental, or spiritual. It is one of the few cards where the reversal does not suggest a weakened intensity of the card's meaning upright, an inverted meaning, or delay. The Four of Swords in reverse is the sounding of an alarm. It can suggest that social unrest is up ahead. It can also suggest that the Seeker is plagued by illness and needs time to recuperate but is not able to get the time needed. Circumstances are such that despite personal injury, he or she still must go back out there and face the world to fight, most likely a fight on behalf of or in defense of loved ones or others. The card may even suggest that the Seeker's loved ones are a source of burden on the Seeker, and part of the cause of the Seeker's exhaustion. The Four of Swords in reverse suggests extreme exhaustion, with profound ramifications on the Seeker's health. Reclusion and recovery are needed, but not available.

Note: The prevailing interpretation of the Four of Swords in reverse that most tarot practitioners subscribe to is that the Seeker has completed his or her recuperation and recovery period and should return to the world, get back out there to live his or her life. The reclusion and retreat should be over now, and the Seeker has been delaying in rejoining civil society.

However, my personal approach differs from the prevailing interpretation. I do not get that interpretation from the Four of Swords in reverse, because in reverse the character pictured on the card has three sharp swords pointed ominously into the head, heart, and torso. The only defense the sleeping character seems to have against the three swords is the character's hands clasped in prayer. The three swords that seem ready to pierce the character in the Four of Swords reversed are reminiscent of the three swords piercing the heart in the earlier Three of Swords. Thus, the Four of Swords reversed also calls to mind strife, turmoil, loss, sorrow, and the need to recover from the current injuries sustained, but circumstances are preventing the Seeker from adequately recovering.

The Four of Swords in reverse also suggests the importance of spiritual faith. The Seeker must have unwavering faith in the greater powers at play. Thus, by harnessing spiritual faith and conviction and using the power of prayer, the Seeker can find the way toward healing. Overall, the Four of Swords, especially when it appears in reverse, calls to mind the importance of faith. The message to the Seeker here is, "You must have faith. The odds are against you right now, but if you succumb to doubt and negativity, you will only be attracting more hostile energy. Neutralize the opposing forces with positivity and conviction." *Compare:* The Five of Pentacles is another card that suggests the importance of faith to get through difficult times. The Four of Swords is more indicative of illness, figurative or literal, while the Five of Pentacles is indicative of poverty, again figurative or literal. The Five of Pentacles suggests divine intervention to come. The Four of Swords in reverse suggests the holding of faith but also the need to fight, too. The character depicted in the card has to reach behind, grab the lone sword, and fight back against the oncoming three swords.

Profiteering
Cunning
Machiavellian

Number 5
Uncertainty
Adversity
Changing Tide

Three Fives
Competition

Four Fives
Unexpected
Advantage

REV:
Recompense
Contrition
Penance

A man with fiery hair smiles slyly while hoarding three swords. Two swords lay on the ground. Two men walk away, their backs to the man. They have been defeated. Jagged gray clouds appear in the sky. The water in the distance is in a state of unrest.

FIVE OF SWORDS

This card is about unfair advantages and spitefulness. The green and red clothing worn by the main figure in the card may suggest applicability to either money or work-related matters. There are two ways to interpret the Five of Swords: either the Seeker has been taking advantage of others to get ahead, or the Seeker is the one who often gets taken advantage of by others.

Deep down, this is a Seeker who feels he or she was born with unfair disadvantages, that others are more privileged. There is a subconscious, unacknowledged resentment because of that. If the interpretation of the card is that the Seeker is the one taking advantage of others or certain situations to get ahead, it is because the Seeker is attempting to overcompensate for his or her disadvantaged state through cutthroat tactics to defeat those that the Seeker believes are more privileged. This is not a card about entitlement. Rather, it is a card about being resentful for not having what others have, and thus doing everything in one's power to get what others have. The Seeker reasons that if he or she could only have what the privileged have had all along, then the Seeker would be happy, content. However, now that the Seeker has obtained what he or she sought out, the victory feels empty. The Seeker thinks he or she has won, but the storm is just coming. Could also indicate that the competition

or battle is now over and the Seeker has won, but at what cost? The Seeker may have lost his or her friends and allies over the situation. Now these people who were once friends and allies have turned their backs on the Seeker. The two swords on the ground, which seem to belong to others and not to the Seeker, suggest that others have given up on the Seeker. *Compare:* The Five of Swords shows a cunning character who profits off others or misappropriates. The Seven of Swords is a little more playful and less calculating than the Five of Swords. The Seven of Swords also suggests deception but there is also a sense of impulsiveness, spontaneity, and tomfoolery. The Five of Swords is about a Seeker who feels like an outcast because he or she is less privileged than others, has been marginalized in the past, and the Seeker has now developed deep feelings of resentment. In response, the Seeker is acting out on those feelings of resentment by trying to gain unfair advantage over those who used to be more privileged. The Seven of Swords, though, is about a Seeker who feels like an outcast or is marginalized, but that Seeker is merely acting to gain attention.

The Five of Swords also gives a sense that the Seeker is using a proverbial sledgehammer to crack a nut. The Seeker is using more force than required, and in that disproportion will suffer undesirable consequences. There is also a sense that the Seeker, the main figure in the foreground, is looking back earnestly at the figures in the background, suggesting that no matter what it was that the Seeker had done, the truth is it was done out of a desire to belong, to be accepted. The Seeker just wants to be part of the group, though the Seeker's conduct has actually distanced him or her from the group.

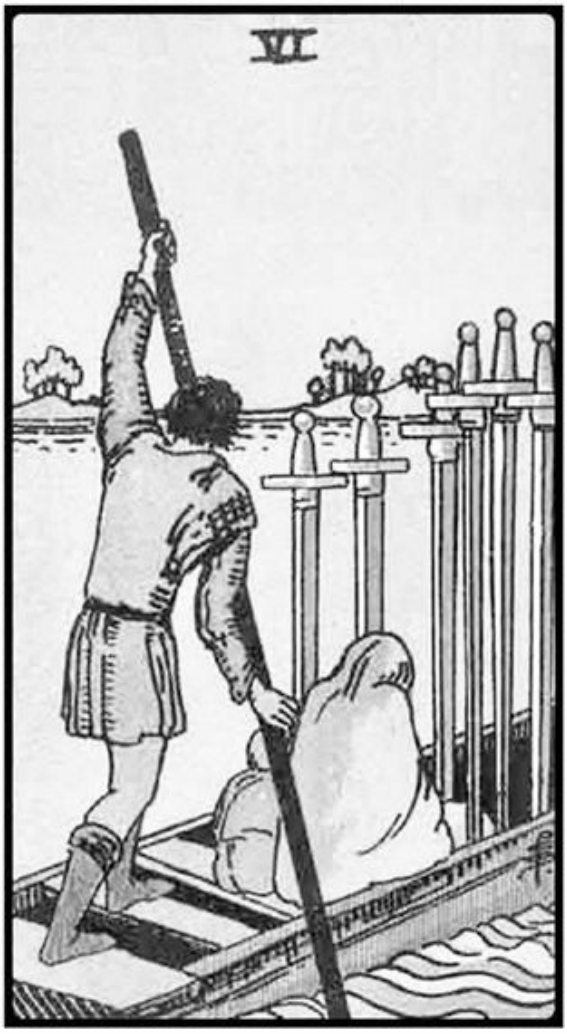
Some tarot practitioners believe that the Seeker is represented by the defeated men in the background and therefore the card warns of unfair advantages taken against the Seeker, suggesting that the Seeker is the one defeated. The figure in the foreground is the Seeker's primary foe. Thus, the card's appearance in a reading is a red flag to the Seeker that others may try to take advantage of the Seeker and greater caution should be exercised. Whether the Seeker is represented by the figure in the foreground who has gained an unfair advantage over others, or by the figures in the background who have been taken advantage of could vary from reading to reading. The best practice is to consider the other cards in the spread to determine which interpretation applies. The Five of Swords can also suggest misrepresentation or lies for personal gain. Again, there is ambiguity as to whether the Seeker is the man in the foreground who perpetrates dishonesty or is represented by the figures in the background who are the victims of someone's dishonesty.

Reversed Meaning

When the Five of Swords appears upright, it most likely indicates a Seeker who is defeating others disproportionately. When the Five of Swords appears in reverse, then, it indicates a Seeker who may experience defeat. Moreover, there is a suggestion in the card in reverse that the Seeker should accept the minor defeat and move on, as far away from the conflict as possible, put distance between the Seeker and the subject matter to avoid a far more serious, greater harm that could occur if the Seeker stays close. Another meaning to the Five of Swords in reverse is contrition, recompense, and a sense of penance for past bad acts and transgressions.

Noting the different interpretive views of the card, some practitioners may say that upright, the meaning of the card follows the Seeker as the figure in the foreground holding the swords. Thus, in reverse the meaning of the card follows the Seeker as the figures lamenting in the background. The Seeker is the one walking away from one who has taken unfair advantage of the Seeker. The tarot practitioner is encouraged to follow his or her intuition in interpreting the Five of Swords, upright or

reversed, in a reading.

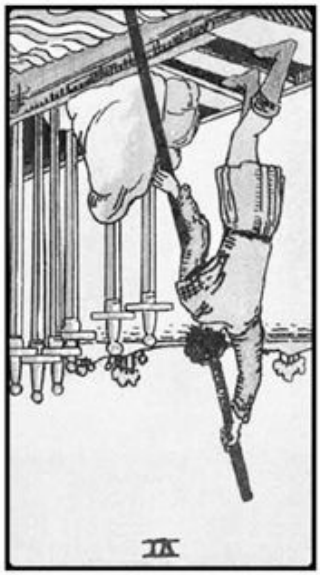


Journey
Pilgrimage
Baggage

Number 6
Harmony in
Body, Mind,
and Spirit

Three Sixes
Success

Four Sixes
Full Control
Happiness



REV:
Afflicted
Trapped
Yearning Escape

A cloaked figure and child travel by water with their six swords. A boatman ferries them. On one side of the boat, the water is rolling; on the other, it's calm and placid. There are sparse trees on the horizon. The sky is light gray.

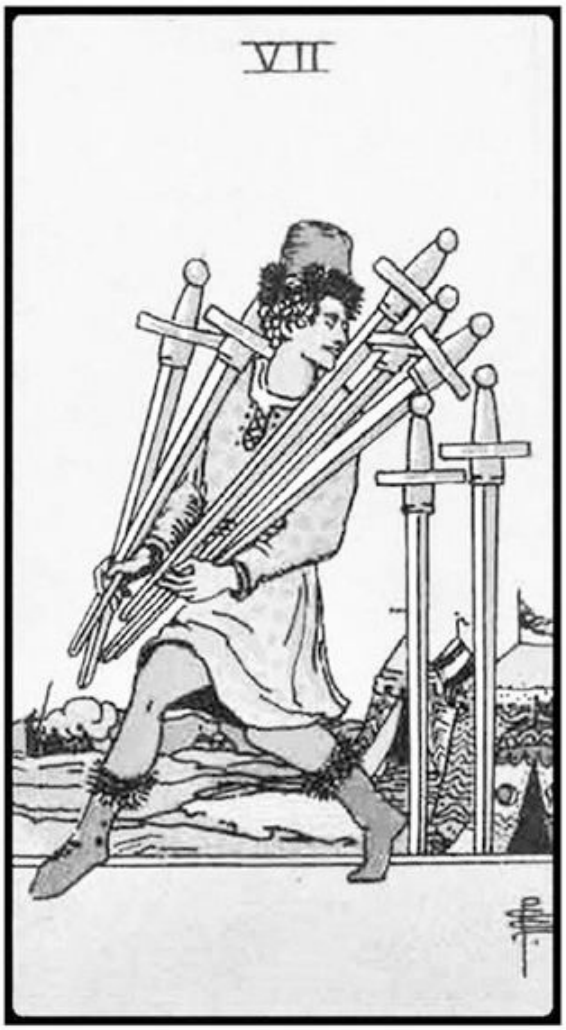
SIX OF SWORDS

The theme of the Six of Swords is journey. The Six of Swords can adopt two different shades o meaning for journey. It can be a passage away from hardship or sorrow, a change for the better. It is a good time to get away. There is the desire to run away from past pains, though the Seeker nonetheless seems to be carrying all his or her baggage along for the ride anyway.

Another meaning can be more positive and general: It is a good time for travel or there are travel plans ahead. There may be trips abroad or going out of town. Note the difference in the water on the two sides of the boat. This could indicate that the rough waters will soon be behind the Seeker. The horizon is smooth and calm. Cutting one's losses and moving on. The boat represents the body in movement. The child represents thoughts and hopes for the future. Turbulent waters on one side of the boat indicate a difficult past; still water on the other side indicates a journey toward smoother and calmer times. The card frequently appears in readings for Seekers who are trying to run away from their past, with the irony of ending up carrying all those past burdens with them into the future. Upright, though, the final message is positive: the Seeker does end up in smoother waters.

Reversed Meaning

Planned journey postponed. There are delays in travel. No immediate way out of a hardship. Feeling trapped in a geographical area that has been the place of much pain and loss, when the Seeker really wishes to leave and move far away. The Seeker is carrying heavy emotional baggage into a new phase. The Seeker is feeling afflicted. The Seeker is trying hard to journey toward smoother, calmer times, but the waters are still turbulent. Could indicate that the Seeker tried to leave behind old wounds by journeying far away from the place that was the source of the pain, but the attempt did not work out. The old wounds are still hurting the Seeker. The Six of Swords in reverse could indicate a yearning to escape from current geography, as the current geography reminds the Seeker of deep wounds or damages sustained. The Six of Swords in reverse often reveals a Seeker who is desperately trying to leave town to get away from past pain and regrets. However, the Seeker's external circumstances seem to prevent him or her from leaving. It is not the right time yet. The Seeker must confront the pain and regret, and resolve it, and only then will external circumstances and the greater divinity of karma allow for the Seeker to move on.



Impulsiveness
Spontaneity
Deception
Evasion

Number 7
Wisdom
Spirituality
Turning Point

Three Sevens
Alliances

Four Sevens
Disappointment

REV:
Reparation
Forfeiture
Requital

A man in a red cap flees from a caravan of tents, hoarding five swords in his arms. As he runs away, he turns around for one last look at the tents. There is a grin on his face. Men in the distance do not seem to notice. The dominant color is yellow.

SEVEN OF SWORDS

The Seven of Swords could indicate someone who flees from the norms of his or her time, someone who feels the need to do things his or her own way. There is a strong sense of an impulsive personality. The card could also indicate that the Seeker is fleeing from something he or she has done that he or she is not proud of, or that someone is spying with ulterior motives. There is betrayal and deception. Look to neighboring cards to determine what interpretation to apply. Either way, the Seven of Swords is about a character who demonstrates disregard for consequences and is more focused on getting his or her own way. Tents in the background suggest a battlefield or sense of impermanence. The men in the distance could indicate that the Seeker does not fit in with the crowd because the Seeker is different from others and as a result, may feel like an outcast. That feeling of being an outcast could be the reason for the Seeker's actions and attitudes. The Seeker is now embracing that role as an outcast and doing as he or she pleases, without concern for the group (since the group never cared for the Seeker anyway). *Compare:* The Five of Swords is a Machiavellian card, whereas the Seven of Swords is a little lighter. There is an air of caprice and frolic in the Seven of Swords; it is not quite as calculating as the Five of Swords. The Seven of Swords may even suggest a tendency to

fib or tell white lies, though generally without malice or the intention of harm. The Seven of Swords has an air of playfulness, of just seeking attention, whereas the Five of Swords suggests a motive of personal gain, a feeling of resentment.

Reversed Meaning

If contemplating something unethical, the card reversed indicates that the Seeker will get caught. The card may suggest slander. The Seeker is the subject of gossip and needs to be alert. Be more cautious of one's publicly perceived conduct. Could also indicate that whoever took unjustifiably from the Seeker will pay his or her dues and get caught soon enough. Another indication is that of a Seeker who is trying to deceive the self or others into believing that he or she has it all or can handle it all just fine, though the reality is that the Seeker experiences a great deal of instability and insecurity. This is also a card about sabotage, whether to oneself or to others. The Seven of Swords in reverse may also indicate requital, forfeiture, or reparations that will be made by or to the Seeker. Whether it is by the Seeker to others or to the Seeker from others will depend on the other cards drawn in the spread. Note that in a few cases, the Seven of Swords reversed could indicate a Seeker who is intentionally hurting or cutting him- or herself, someone who has been made to feel like a pariah and as a result is now on a path of self-destruction.

Imprisonment
Confinement
Captivity
Constraints

Number 8
Fortuity
Due Process
Wealth

Three Eights
Short Journey
to Come

Four Eights
Gossip, Rumors

REV:
Emancipation
Release
Clemency

A woman in red is bound and blindfolded. She is surrounded by eight swords staked into the ground, and she seems to be imprisoned or confined by them. There are shallow puddles of water beneath her feet. A castle set into a steep rocky mountain is in the distance behind her.

EIGHT OF SWORDS

The Seeker feels mentally bound or imprisoned. The woman depicted in the card could represent blind Justice without her sword or her scales. Thus, there is a theme of injustice in the Seeker's life, of being unfairly sentenced. It may indicate mental self-imprisonment as a result of feeling physically confined. The Seeker feels stuck in a situation, as if there is no way out, and it is a precarious situation that the Seeker feels unjustly put in. The Seeker feels he or she has done nothing to deserve this. However, the Seeker is not actually bound, but merely blind to his or her way out of the bindings. With strength and creativity, the Seeker can be released. Take, for instance, the woman depicted on the card. She is blind to her situation. However, she could use the blades of the swords that surround her to cut through her bondage. Thus, while the Seeker may feel bound or imprisoned by the circumstances, the Seeker isn't actually bound or imprisoned. The imprisonment is a state of mind. Minor adjustments (as symbolized by the use of the blades surrounding the woman in red to cut herself free) or a shift in perspective will reveal to the Seeker that the imprisonment was only in the mind, and not in actuality.

Note also how the woman depicted in the card seems to have her back turned on the castle. There is a turning away from the Seeker's support system, and as a result the Seeker feels alone in his or her

plight. The Eight of Swords suggests a false or inflated sense of victimhood. The Seeker is so focused on feeling like the victim that he or she does not recognize the otherwise easy way out of the situation.

Reversed Meaning

A forthcoming sense of release from a situation that the Seeker had felt bound by. There will be emancipation. The card could also indicate injustice, as a woman bound suggests blind justice *not* prevailing. Another meaning, which is somewhat similar, yet distinct, is mercy or clemency. Although the Seeker might have deserved a tougher sentence, leniency or forgiveness will be shown.

Haunted, Grieving
Insomnia, Troubled

Number 9
Change is Coming
for the Better

Three Nines
One Last Hitch
in the Plan Before
Success is Had

Four Nines
Unexpected
Burdens

REV:
Recuperation
Healing
Infidelity

Nine interlaced swords appear horizontally against black. A person sits up from the bed, awake, unable to rest, hands to face. A blanket of roses and astronomical symbols cover a quilted blanket. Carved into the side of the bed are two men fencing, one clearly the victor and one fallen, defeated.

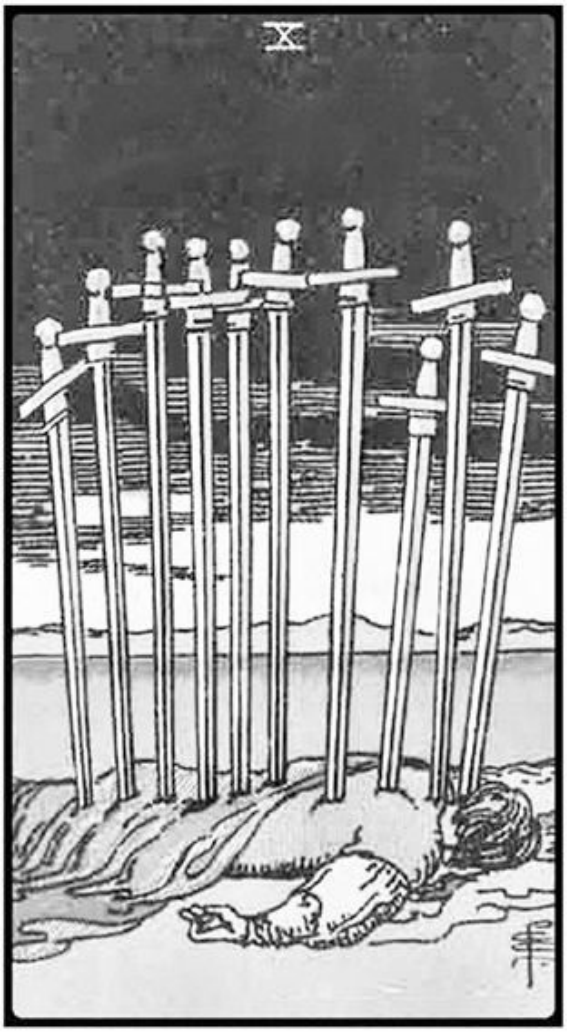
NINE OF SWORDS

The Seeker is haunted by a sense of loss, whether the sustaining of material loss in a given situation or the intangible loss of a loved one. What's more, there is also loss of sleep over the matter. Cutting thoughts disturb the Seeker's rest. The Seeker blames him- or herself for what has happened. The Seeker believes that the loss is his or her own fault and could have been prevented somehow, but the Nine of Swords tells us that in fact what has happened to the Seeker was, in a way, inevitable. It was beyond the Seeker's control. It was a loss that would have occurred one way or another. It simply had to happen, for reasons the Seeker perhaps cannot perceive right now. There is a strong sense of force majeure in the Nine of Swords. The roses printed on the quilted blanket represent mystery and the alternating quilted pattern of astrological symbols suggest causes well beyond the Seeker's personal control—a matter "written in the stars" or, at the very least, caused by powers greater than the Seeker. Fencers carved into the wood of the bed indicate that a combat took place, and the Seeker was not the victor. When one awakes from unsettling dreams and is caught in the haze between the conscious and unconscious, when the Seeker is unsure what is real or unreal, that feeling is what the

Seeker feels at the moment. Note how the points of the nine swords depicted on the card extend out of view, suggesting that the total amount of damage is not yet ascertainable at this time.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is now in a healing stage. The Seeker's sense of haunting pain is waning. If the Seeker is in a marriage, the card in reverse could be a hint that the Seeker is contemplating infidelity. The card could also indicate that the haunting of loss that the Seeker feels right now is going to be comparatively minor in the grander landscape of his or her life, even though right now the Seeker feels overwhelmed by the loss. This pain shall fade in time. The Nine of Swords in reverse suggests a lesser degree of haunting and pain. It is optimistic and assures that the worst of it is over already.

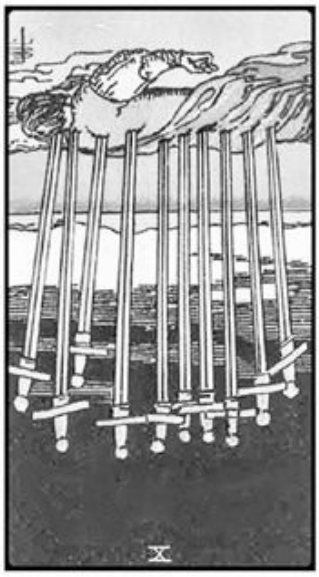


Retaliation
Reprisals, Revenge
Treachery

Number 10
Pinnacle of Success
or Pinnacle of
Tribulation

Three Tens
Good Time to
Buy or Sell

Four Tens
Exhaustion
Burnout



REV:
Endurance
Comeback

A man cloaked in red is lifeless on the ground. Ten swords are stabbed into his back. Though most of the sky is black, right at the horizon, at the edge of the mountain line, it is yellow and bright.

TEN OF SWORDS

It is a low point in the Seeker's life. The card denotes sudden misfortune, defeat. Others are acting against Seeker out of jealousy, envy, hatred, aggression, or retaliation. There have been retaliatory actions against the Seeker, though the Seeker staunchly believes that he or she has acted judiciously. Many are acting against the Seeker and the Seeker feels defeated by them. However, keep hope. There is a bright horizon and some good will come out of all this, like the yellow light in the card's horizon. The Ten of Swords should call to mind the story of Julius Caesar. Also note that the fallen person's right hand is making the same hand sign as the right hand of the pontiff in Key 5: The Hierophant of the Major Arcana. This is referred to as the hand of benediction and is associated with Jesus Christ. In ancient Rome, the sign indicated speaking, or the sign of the orator. As applied to the Ten of Swords, the hand sign suggests that the Seeker is someone of remarkable greatness and societal importance. The Seeker was the proverbial nail that stuck out the most, and thus was the first to be hammered down. The Seeker is someone with the pure intention of making a big difference, and he or she *has* made a significant impact; but by essentially being the most prominent one, the Seeker became the target of mob attack. The Ten of Swords expresses the curse of prominence: the higher

you rise, the more merciless your opponents will be, and the farther you will have to fall.

Reversed Meaning

There is the courage to rise again. The Seeker will make a comeback. Overthrow of the forces against the Seeker. Even though others try to defeat the Seeker, he or she will thwart their retaliatory aggressions. The Seeker can endure and will persevere. Others tried to betray and take down the Seeker, but it was the Seeker who prevailed. Nonetheless, the knowledge of that betrayal still stings inside. *Compare:* The Three of Swords in reverse hints to the Seeker to consider forgiveness. However, while the Ten of Swords is about the Seeker's triumph over his or her foes, it suggests that the Seeker should move on and not look back. These foes who used to be the Seeker's friends at one point will never become the Seeker's friends again. The Seeker shall rise alone, not reconcile.

EARTH AIR

Page Swords

Ambitions
Judicious
Communication

REV:
Inhibition
Self-Conscious

The young page stands on a small hill wielding a sword. Red boots, wind blowing in hair, and cumulus clouds in the background; there is some instability, yet the young page is passionate and ambitious. Flying birds in the sky symbolize the unique gift to turn adversity into great opportunities.

PAGE OF SWORDS

The Page of Swords is an aggressive but graceful young woman. She is a strong intellectual, with great capacity for learning, great potential for diplomacy, and likewise, great potential for becoming a fighter. However, that is also her character flaw. She is too quick to judge others or situations. She is quick to fight others and be confrontational, even hostile if she does not get her way or when people disagree with her. On the other hand, she is a warrior, and would make a great fighter. She is who you want as an ally in a war. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, the Page could indicate the appearance of a young female with the foregoing qualities. Figuratively, could indicate receipt of news or messages regarding politics or ambitions. Black birds flying in the sky not only represent the ability to turn adversity into opportunity, but also symbolize higher intellect and high ideals. Air-dominant, the Page of Swords is ambitious, sometimes controversial, prone to stir controversy with her words, a bit argumentative, but a rational, intelligent, bright, and articulate individual. Could signify Libra, Aquarius, or Gemini.

Note that two pages in a tarot reading can indicate a social event related to the matter at hand.

Three pages denote children or social cliques. All four pages appearing in a single tarot reading could indicate a classroom setting, school, university, or other educational or academic institution.

Reversed Meaning

Fear inhibits action. The Seeker is letting other people's judgments, bad advice, and opinions affect his or her perception of the self. Be wary of gossip. Do not care so much about what others think. Could also indicate a young woman in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Page of Swords, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation. The Seeker needs to exercise greater self-control. The Seeker rushes to judgment of others or of situations and will suffer for those judgments. The Seeker must learn to be more of a pacifist.

AIR AIR

Knight Swords

Aggressive
Charge
Warrior

REV:
Warpath
Aggression
Hostility

An armored knight flashes his sword and charges impetuously onward on his white steed. Stratus clouds are in the skies behind him. Birds are printed on both the knight's cloak and his horse's saddle. Winds are high. Both knight and horse are fierce and focused. A single, bright red heart adorns the horse's reigns.

KNIGHT OF SWORDS

The Knight of Swords is a strong, brave, domineering young man. The card represents a man who still subscribes to the romantic form of chivalry. He abides by and also enforces a rigid code of honor. In a reading for a young woman, this young man, the Knight of Swords, is charging fast into the Seeker's life, even if the Seeker is resisting it. This is a man who has the potential to become a great warrior, a fighter in life. He is headstrong and will scatter away threats and competition with intimidation tactics. In a reading for a young female Seeker asking about love, could indicate the appearance of a young male with the foregoing qualities. Yet be careful, because he is a man who likes to dominate. Note also the tiny red heart on the horse's reigns. It gives a revised meaning to "wearing his heart on his sleeve." It is also reminiscent of the red heart in the Three of Swords. The character represented by the knight loves fast, rushes into it, and has a penchant for fighting in the name of love. Figuratively, could indicate swift action or active progress in politics or ambitions. The trees in the background suggest that the direction of a strong wind is blowing against the Knight, yet he charges against the wind undaunted. The birds symbolize the ability to turn adversity into opportunity. The

knight calls to mind Sir Galahad of King Arthur's Round Table. He is gallant and pure of heart. He ultimately finds the Holy Grail. The Knight of Swords is one on an active quest for a higher meaning Air-dominant, the Knight of Swords is ambitious, sometimes controversial, prone to stir controversy with his words, a bit argumentative, but a rational, intelligent, bright, and articulate individual. Could signify Libra, Aquarius, or Gemini.

Note that two knights appearing in a tarot reading could indicate head-to-head conflict with another individual of equal rank as the Seeker. Three knights in a reading indicate fraternity or brotherhood, and/or a sudden change, swift action that will take the Seeker by surprise. Four knights could suggest war, combat, or matters relating to the military.

Reversed Meaning

The theme when the Knight of Swords appears in reverse is warpath. There are strong hostilities, and someone may be engaging in aggression out of anger. Reconsider aggressions. The Seeker is following the "shoot first, ask questions later" mantra. Not good. Take a step back to clear and calm head. Could also indicate a young man in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Knight of Swords, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation. Tendency to be impatient will cause trouble for the Seeker.

WATER AIR

Queen Swords

Astute
High-Achieving
Executive
Striking

REV:
Spite
Snobbery
Elitism

The queen wears a golden crown of butterflies. Her cloak is made of clouds. Low in the skies behind her are the same dense, cumulonimbus clouds. Trees in the distance suggest a strong wind blowing through them. A winged cherub and more butterflies are carved into her throne. We see her from her side profile only. She wields a sword confidently. A single black bird soars in the distance.

Queen of Swords

The most incisive of the four queens, she is intensely perceptive, quick, and confident, perhaps childless. She is a strong, indomitable character. She can bear her own sorrows. There is a tendency to be pessimistic. She does not like to show her weakness to others. She is highly astute and reads personalities accurately. People will not fool her easily. She is fiercely independent. The Queen of Swords values structure, order, and tasteful, organized, standardized beauty. The Queen is shown from the side profile only and the dense low-level clouds suggest a woman who is hard to get to know. Others find her difficult to read. They may even find her intimidating. The butterflies symbolize beauty and metamorphosis. This is a woman who became the way she is today, of her daunting stature, because at one point early in her life she was vulnerable and insecure about her self-worth. The story of her transformation mirrors that of the caterpillar to butterfly. This is a woman who knows sorrow.[90] Figuratively, could indicate strong, effective nurturing of politics and ambitions. From French playing card tradition, the Queen of Swords is said to correspond with Athena, and thus

in tarot, the card could call to mind the traits historically associated with the goddess of warfare, justice, and divine intelligence. The single black bird flying above the queen's crown represents her high intelligence and high ideals. Air-dominant, the Queen of Swords is ambitious, sometimes controversial, prone to stir controversy with her words, a bit argumentative, but a rational, intelligent, bright, and articulate individual. Could signify Libra, Aquarius, or Gemini.

Note that two queens appearing in a tarot reading for a female Seeker could indicate direct competition with another female, while two queens in a reading for a male Seeker could indicate strong female allies and support. Three queens in a reading represent sisterhood or a female alliance, and four queens, women's interest, feminism, female authority, or feminist endeavors.

Reversed Meaning

The theme of the Queen of Swords in reverse is elitism. There may be snobbery involved. The Queen of Swords represents someone with the tendency to be cruel and malicious. Slight the Queen of Swords and she will be hell-bent on vengeance. She will smite you with her sword if it so pleases her. She can be narrow-minded, prideful, and spiteful. She acts out of pettiness or malice. She holds grudges, so no one should be surprised if the Queen can remember the ills committed against her decades ago. The figurative interpretation of the Queen of Swords in reverse is political ambitions gone awry. The card could also indicate a woman in the Seeker's life who is having a negative influence on the Seeker. Look to neighboring cards and also the location in the spread to determine whether it should take on a literal or figurative meaning.

FIRE AIR

King Swords

Intellectual
Analytical
Stern
Orderly

REV:
Malice
Unyielding

The king sits on a throne with butterflies and both the waxing and waning crescent moons. He wears blue. There are a few dense clouds behind him, but they are not as thick and prominent as the clouds with the Queen of Swords. The inner lining of his cloak is a bold red. A winged cherub is carved into his crown. Two black birds soar in the distance.

KING OF SWORDS

The King of Swords presents a stern demeanor. Military might and intelligence. He appears dispassionate and detached from others. He is intellectual, analytical, and exudes articulate masculine energy. The King of Swords thrives in the world of logic, facts, and rationality, but has a tendency to be too rigid. This is an adult man in the military, or a judge, or a man of extremely high discipline with an analytical mind, a man firm with friends and firm with enemies. He also can be overcautious. This king is a wise counselor. Sometimes in his mind he believes he has made a fair judgment, but it is not. He is a man of action. Figuratively, could indicate leadership or effective management in the areas of politics and Seeker's ambitions. Often misunderstood and undervalued, because he is anything but the salesman type. He is a guardian of social order. Like the Knight of Swords, the King of Swords expects himself to uphold a rigid code of conduct, but he does not stop there; he also expects everyone around him to uphold the same rigid code. From French playing card tradition, the King of Swords is said to correspond with the righteous and fair warrior-king King David of Judeo-Christian mythos. Like the Queen of Swords, the King of Swords is accompanied by a single black

bird flying in the sky behind him, representing his higher thought and intelligence, and like the Queen, he sits on a throne depicting butterflies, suggesting metamorphosis. He is a man who is bound to go through profound changes through the various stages of his life. Air-dominant, the King of Swords is ambitious, sometimes controversial, prone to stir controversy with his words, a bit argumentative, but a rational, intelligent, bright, and articulate individual. Could signify Libra, Aquarius, or Gemini.

Note that two kings appearing in a tarot reading for a male Seeker could indicate direct competition with another male, while two kings in a reading for a female Seeker could indicate a professional conference. In a reading about love, two kings can indicate two men competing for the amorous affections of one, but if the spread is Fire-dominant, then the two kings could indicate romantic relations developing from a professional conference or business trip. In a reading about career, two kings represent the significance of a professional conference in advancing the Seeker's goals, though if the Seeker is male the two kings might denote direct competition from another male for the same promotion. Three kings in a reading symbolize a professional brotherhood, or a fraternity among men of high rank. Three kings could also suggest nepotism at play. Four kings represent a men's interest, issues related to masculinity, or dominant male authority.

Reversed Meaning

The King of Swords in reverse suggests ruthless action, malice, and warns of ulterior motives. There may be evil intentions from others. Someone is not acting with integrity. The King of Swords in reverse denotes destructive, self-serving ambition. The card could also indicate a literal man in the Seeker's life who is having a negative influence on the Seeker. Look to neighboring cards and also the location in the spread to determine whether it should take on a literal or figurative meaning.

Suit of Pentacles

The suit of Pentacles tells a story about humanity's physical and material realm. Pentacles answer the Seeker's questions about finances, comfort, industry, and tillage. The suit addresses our foundations. It represents the resources we need to build our lives and ambitions. In the four suits of the common deck of playing cards, the Pentacles correspond with the red suit of diamonds. Pentacles are governed by the element of Earth. The suit represents the body incarnate, how humanity and civilization manifest in the world.[91]

Classical Element	Earth
Fundamental Energy	Receptive (Yin)
Astrological Signs	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Animal Symbolism	Bull, Snake, Dog
Success Factor	Material Resources, Physical Strength
Prevailing Character Traits	Pragmatism, Diligence
Personal Issue Attribution	Property, Finances, Material; The Physical Body
Quality	Fruition
Season	Winter
Cardinal Direction	North
Moon Phase	Waning Crescent
Social Hierarchy	Artisans and Merchants
Armament	Infantry
Hebrew Letter	Heh (corresponds with H_2)
Angel Representative	Uriel
Gospel	Luke (Ministry, Practice of Faith)
Activating Minerals	Moss Agate, Aventurine, Smoky Quartz, Black Tourmaline, Lodestone, Brown or Green Jasper
Activating Colors	Green, Gold, Brown
Olfactory Correspondences	Cedarwood, Cypress, Patchouli, Vetivert

Offer
New Venture
Investment
Financial Gain

Number 1
Beginnings
Power

Three Aces
Wealth, Success

Four Aces
Exceptional
Greatness

REV:
Disillusionment
Financial
Disappointment

A hand, radiating with a white aura, appears in the sky bearing a golden coin. Beneath it is a rose and lily garden in full bloom. Silver peaks of mountains are on the horizon. Though the garden below is green and lush, the dominant color is light gray.

ACE OF PENTACLES

The garden represents fertile ground for the Seeker's ventures and aspirations to bloom. There will be financial rewards. Monetary or property gain to come. There may be a new venture in finance or the beginning of financial prosperity. The launch of a new project will yield gain. The Seeker is headed for an auspicious and comfortable life. The Seeker possesses great power for achieving on the material plane. Note that the hand bearing the gold coin appears in the air, suggesting that the focus of this card and thus the Seeker's focus is not on material or financial manifestation, but rather on the hand that brings about material or financial manifestation. Thus, the Ace of Pentacles, while boding well for securing money and material possessions, is about not wealth, but the prosperous start of creating wealth.

Also, the light gray suggests that the Seeker will need to be prepared to cope with some minor grief or stress related to the financial gain. Though good things are to come, they bring with them a new facet of problems that perhaps the Seeker did not anticipate. These problems are minor, however. The Seeker will overcome them. The Aces of the Minor Arcana suggest opportunities presented, and the corresponding elemental association will indicate the nature of the opportunity. Here, the Ace of

Pentacles indicates a recessive yin energy surrounding the matter at hand. Like the Ace of Cups, it suggests receipt rather than action. There will be gains for the Seeker, but at the hand of a benefactor or by inheritance.

It should also be noted that the Ace of Pentacles is the only Ace that does not depict leaves from the sacred tree, or the Tree of Life archetype. *Compare:* In the Ace of Wands, Ace of Cups, and Ace of Swords, leaves float around the main object of the suit (the wand in the Wands, the golden chalice in the Cups, etc.), which suggests that for these three aces, there is a motif of science, religion, philosophy, and mythology, of knowledge. Here, that motif is notably absent. The Ace of Pentacles, while a positive and affirmative omen of success, material gain, and opportunities presented, is also a quiet caution to not lose sight of knowledge, of gaining the wisdom of the sacred tree. As the Seeker develops from the Ace of Pentacles, enjoy the gains, but do not permit those gains to steer the Seeker off the path of acquiring knowledge.

Reversed Meaning

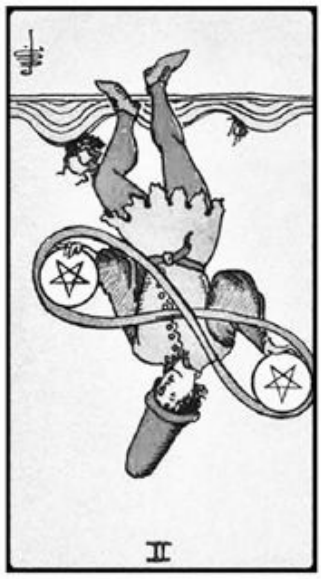
May experience material gain, but the gain is fleeting, unfulfilling, or seemingly irrelevant to the Seeker. The gain won't bring the Seeker any happiness and will feel too small, dissatisfying to the Seeker. The Ace of Pentacles in reverse brings newfound prosperity as does the card upright, but in reverse that prosperity will not satisfy or fulfill. There may be disillusionment. The Ace of Pentacles could also suggest a false sense of security. There may be misrepresentations made to the Seeker about money or investments. Be careful. The Seeker could be coping with disappointment from commercial ventures not panning out as well as expected.

Multitasking
Juggling
Prospects
Possibilities

Number 2
Balance
Dualism

Three Twos
Cliques
Segregation

Four Twos
Conference
Dialogue



REV:
Overwhelmed
Must Prioritize
Adrift
Off Course

A man in a high red top hat juggles two golden pentacles in his hands. A green lemniscate surrounds and connects the two pentacles. Skies are clear blue. Rolling waves behind him carry two ships, one large and one small, out to sea.

TWO OF PENTACLES

The Two of Pentacles denotes a Seeker who is a master at juggling and harmonizing multiple responsibilities at once. The Two of Pentacles is about a seemingly infinite potential for handling multiple businesses or multiple venture projects at the same time and succeeding at it all. Boundless possibilities are available to the Seeker. The tall red hat suggests the enormity of the Seeker's potential for holding multiple thoughts in his or her mind at once. The Seeker can handle tough decisions with grace. The Seeker is juggling several pretty good prospects. The ships in the background represent commerce and wealth. Waves indicate active engagement. The juggler's red clothing indicates vitality and ambition. *Compare:* Key 14: Temperance from the Major Arcana is an archetypal force representing the ability to harmonize two otherwise very different elements to a balance. Here, the Two of Pentacles is not pertaining to a higher archetypal force, but rather the mundane, material level of human life. It indicates the ability to harmonize multiple responsibilities, professional tasks, or career interests at the same time, to succeed at finding a balance where others might be overwhelmed. The Seeker is encouraged to go forward with multiple pots cooking on the stove; the Seeker can handle it. *Compare:* The Two of Swords is about a choice between two

difficult options, a choice that must be made in the plane of reason and thought, not the plane of emotion. The Two of Pentacles is also about having choices, but both options are appealing prospects—and what's more, the Seeker does not need to choose between the two, but is in a prime position to acquire and have both. The Two of Pentacles seems to suggest that Seeker *can* have it all, especially where commercial or business ventures are concerned.

Reversed Meaning

There's difficulty keeping up with everything that the Seeker has on hand. The Seeker is trying to do too much at once. Sometimes new projects have a hard time staying afloat due to difficulty in maintaining momentum. The Seeker must focus and concentrate. While the Two of Pentacles upright indicates getting both prospects, in reverse it indicates having to choose between the two. The card in reverse could also indicate that the Seeker is being led astray by others into foolish action that will cause instability to the Seeker's finances.

Endorsement
Recognition

Number 3
Fruition
Expansion
Amplify

Three Threes
Deceit

Four Threes
Strategic Plan
in Place

REV:
Mediocrity
Displacement

Three pentacles are carved into the archway of a great structure. An artisan stands on a bench, showing his handiwork off to a friar and a noblewoman dressed in flashy attire. The noblewoman holds the plans for the structure. The friar and noblewoman look pleased with the artisan's workmanship.

THREE OF PENTACLES

This card frequently appears in spreads for artists and craftsmen. Skills and abilities will be rewarded. In the card imagery, the artisan is standing higher than the others, on a workbench, suggesting elevation in society due to his craftsmanship, and he has the undivided attention of both the friar and the noblewoman. The Seeker will gain approval and applause from his or her peers. Long-overdue recognition is coming. The Three of Pentacles is the card of validation. The Seeker is being recognized for his or her merits. Note that many have interpreted the rose embedded into the archway as representing membership into a secret fraternity or society. In questions related to work, the Seeker could be finally gaining recognition within a professional organization or institution.

Reversed Meaning

The Three of Pentacles in reverse suggests mediocrity in workmanship, mediocrity generally, or fear of mediocrity. The card in reverse usually suggests that the Seeker has been feeling exhausted, overworked, or burnt out in his or her craft, and as a result has been producing mediocre work. That

mediocre work is why the Seeker has not been able to gain the recognition he or she craves. The Seeker needs to reevaluate the current trajectory and take a more unconventional, creative path. The work the Seeker has been producing is far from his or her best. The Seeker is not putting in his or her best efforts. The card reversed could also indicate difficulties with the Seeker's friends or social circle, if the Seeker is still in school, and difficulties with coworkers if the Seeker is working. There may be conflicts with a boss, superiors, or mentor. The Seeker is not taking enough care with his or her workmanship; there has been irresponsibility. The Three of Pentacles in reverse could also indicate a sense of displacement or the Seeker feeling like he or she doesn't belong with the group. Whether the Seeker is asking about romance or career, the Three of Pentacles in reverse represents efforts invested by the Seeker that don't seem to yield the expected fruition.

Miser
Frugality

Number 4
Rationality
Stability

Three Fours
Abundance
Industry, Diligence

Four Fours
Order, Peace
Rule of Law

REV:
Recession
Obstacles

A well-dressed man, perhaps a merchant or nobleman, keeps four pentacles close to him, one tightly in his arms, another on his head, balanced above his crown, and two beneath his feet. The city is behind him. Both the sky above him and the ground below are gray.

FOUR OF PENTACLES

The Four of Pentacles is the miser card. The Seeker has fortune and prosperity and yet is impoverished because of his or her attitude. The Seeker's own material comfort is the obstacle. It is holding the Seeker back from happiness. The Seeker must detach from yearnings for earthly power or money. Be more generous and open. While the Seeker possesses an excellent gift for money management, he or she is also very miserly and too frugal. The miserliness is causing emptiness. The Seeker is not happy in spite of the material wealth he or she has. The Seeker is too possessive over his or her material wealth.

The gold coin on the figure's head symbolizes someone whose thoughts are weighed down by material concerns. The coin over the chest symbolizes feeling insecure and hoarding possessions protectively; attempting to cover the heart with a shield of gold. The coins by the feet show one who walks the path of avarice.

The Seeker is probably working in the city, in an urban setting, or constantly surrounding him- or herself with people and material pleasures, leaving no time or room for spirituality and reflection. The red robes of the man in the image indicate ambition. The Seeker is encouraged to consider doing

some charity work, as in the Six of Pentacles, or to give back to the community. The Seeker will find happiness by doing so. To understand the meaning of the card, the Four of Pentacles might be compared to the character Ebenezer Scrooge and the lesson that Scrooge must learn in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843). This is a Seeker who counts his or her gold by the coin and holds each one tightly and firmly. The Seeker is urged to be more openhearted and to consider what other gains can be found, other than the material.

On the other hand, the Four of Pentacles might suggest "new money," or a Seeker who was not always fortunate. As a result of the Seeker's past misfortunes, the Seeker is now insecure about fortune and approaches life with a miserly attitude. The Four of Pentacles is about teaching a Seeker who has experienced past misfortunes not to lose heart. In readings about love and relationships, the Four of Pentacles can suggest a Seeker who is reluctant to give away too much of his or her heart, an emotional miser.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker may lose some money or material possessions. There may be business obstacles, a personal recession. In reverse, the Four of Pentacles might indicate unemployment. Save, save, save right now. Be cautious and prudent. Be conservative with expenses. Another reading of the card in reverse is that the Seeker's miserliness is now taking a serious, obvious adverse toll on his or her life. The pains the Seeker feels right now are from the miserliness and being so small with his or her heart. A minority of practitioners interpret the Four of Pentacles in reverse as indicating a Seeker who moved from the proverbial small pond to the great ocean and is now feeling lost in that ocean. The Seeker went out seeking his or her fortune in that great ocean, but instead has found financial instability and commercial disappointments. It is thus time for the Seeker to reevaluate his or her positioning.

Destitution
Privation
Hardships

Number 5
Uncertainty
Adversity
Changing Tide

Three Fives
Competition

Four Fives
Unexpected
Advantage

REV:
Rehabilitation
Rebound
Refurbish

Snowfall is upon them. Two indigents walk past a church lighted from within. The stained-glass window depicts five golden pentacles blooming off what appears to be the branches and trunk of a tree. The indigents walk barefoot in the snow.

FIVE OF PENTACLES

The Five of Pentacles is the card of destitution. There may be financial difficulties, a sense of displacement, or a loss of a sense of home. The Seeker feels homeless. Oftentimes in the Five of Pentacles, financial poverty and spiritual poverty converge. The Seeker must be more cautious, or that poverty will take a toll on the Seeker's health. There's a chance of illness brought on by the financial difficulties that plague Seeker. The card may indicate the start of deep depression. It denotes the winter season of the Seeker's current situation.

However, take heart that spring is coming. Now is a good time for the Seeker to be conservative with finances. Although it is a low point in the Seeker's finances, the situation will turn upward, with faith. The five pentacles glow bright in the stained-glass window, symbolizing divine intervention to come, so long as the indigents remain faithful, hopeful, and strong in heart. Assure the Seeker that right now is a time when faith is crucial. The Seeker's faith must be unwavering. Help "from above" is coming, but not arbitrarily: the Seeker must continue to help him- or herself and walk "the path of God," in other words stay righteous and true.

The Five of Pentacles is an acknowledgment of Seeker's current troubles and sense of destitution

There is a strong theme of helplessness here. However, it is also a card of assurance that very strong cosmic forces are forthcoming that will alleviate the Seeker's situation. The Five of Pentacles can be interpreted as the divine intervention card.

Reversed Meaning

There will be economic or financial revival after past hardships and instability. Rebound. The Seeker is entering a recovery period. There is rehabilitation of the Seeker's financial situation. The Seeker must refurbish him- or herself after recent losses. The Five of Pentacles in reverse indicates a Seeker who is recovering from a winter season, though it is not yet the figurative spring for the Seeker. There was loss in business or profession, but it is time to cut losses. It is now time for rebounding. The Seeker must use greater efforts to bring recovery to his or her business or profession. The Seeker is now slowly recovering from a lowest point in finances. Continue to be conservative and things will begin to improve. While the Five of Pentacles upright might suggest divine intervention, in reverse it does not. The Five of Pentacles in reverse suggests that the Seeker will have to dig his or her way out of this one by human diligence alone.

Charity, Alms
Benevolence
Philanthropy

Number 6
Harmony in
Body, Mind,
and Spirit

Three Sixes
Success

Four Sixes
Full Control
Happiness

REV:
Ungracious
Indigence
Financial Hardship

A well-dressed man holds golden scales in one hand and with the other gives alms. Two destitute indigents at his feet look up at the man to receive his alms. One of the beggars, though, has a little slip of red in his pocket that the benefactor does not see.

SIX OF PENTACLES

The theme of the Six of Pentacles is generosity, sharing with others, and charity. It is the social justice card. The card could either indicate that the Seeker is the benefactor to others or that the Seeker is benefiting from the great generosity of others. If the Seeker has a chance of benefiting from others' generosity, he or she is encouraged to accept it. A good question to ask is, who in the card does the Seeker represent: The benefactor giving out the alms? The beggar who is grateful to receive the alms? Or the beggar who is receiving the alms but is hiding something, with that slip of red in his pocket? Some interpret the Six of Pentacles upright to suggest that the Seeker is the one giving the alms, and the Six of Pentacles in reverse to suggest that the Seeker is the one receiving the alms.

Reversed Meaning

The card is about generosity, but the Seeker is not appreciating the generosity of others or that which has been bestowed upon him or her. The Seeker is reminded to be more appreciative. Upright, the Six of Pentacles is more likely to indicate that the Seeker is the benefactor, the one giving the alms. In reverse, the Six of Pentacles is more likely to indicate that the Seeker is one of the beggars, the one

receiving the alms. *Compare:* the Five of Pentacles is a card about indigence, poverty, or deprivation, while the Six of Pentacles is a card about charity. In reverse, the Six of Pentacles suggests that the Seeker's hardships will be saved by other people's charity.

Promotion
Harvest
Fiscal Responsibility

Number 7
Wisdom
Spirituality
Turning Point

Three Sevens
Alliances

Four Sevens
Disappointment

REV:
Anxiety
Denial
Non-Confrontation
Hesitation

A man has worked hard to tend to his garden and now it is in full bloom. He is ready to reap the fruits of his hard toil and labor. Before he harvests, he pauses, leans on his hoe, and gazes into his full-bloom garden with longing. Why does he hesitate?

SEVEN OF PENTACLES

The Seeker has worked hard and the fruits of his or her labor are now showing. The Seeker is financially responsible and has been good with savings. However, the Seeker is hesitating before reaping and enjoying the fruits of that labor. In a career reading, the Seven of Pentacles is a sign that the Seeker should ask for a raise or promotion.

This is a card about investments and return. If the Seeker is an artist, then he or she is now in the process of reevaluating work done so far; the Seeker's heart is in his or her artwork. The Seven of Pentacles is about devotion, dedication, and cultivation of one's work. The card is also a gentle nudge to the Seeker to not be such a workaholic and to enjoy life. The Seeker is not someone who works for the reward, but is genuinely engaged in the work itself. However, note the loneliness of the figure depicted. He is by himself, with only the fruits of his work for companionship, and even those fruits he seems hesitant to harvest and enjoy. In modern applications, the Seven of Pentacles can indicate a workaholic nature. The Seeker now has the resources to enjoy life and should do so. There is more to life than work and financial acquisition.

Reversed Meaning

Anxiety about whether hard work will bear fruit. The Seeker's heart is invested wholly in this work and thus whether fruition will occur is of high importance to the Seeker. Another reading of this card reversed is that the Seeker's head is buried in the sand and he or she is neglecting to confront his or her financial situation. The card is a warning to pay closer attention to finances. Could mean that finances are not in order and the Seeker must be more aware of his or her financial stability. The Seven of Pentacles in reverse could be an indication that Seeker has overinvested and that such an investment may not yield the returns that the Seeker is hoping for.

Aspiration
Apprenticeship
Natural Gifts
in Craft

Number 8
Fortuity
Due Process
Wealth

Three Eights
Short Journey
to Come

Four Eights
Gossip, Rumors

REV:
Squandering
Trifle; Idle

A young artisan sits on his workbench hammering diligently on his craft, a pentacle. He is in his work clothes and his expression is one of intense concentration. Hanging in a vertical row on the wooden wall before him are his completed works. Underneath his bench is another pentacle, one likely discarded by him due to his own dissatisfaction with his craftsmanship.

EIGHT OF PENTACLES

The Eight of Pentacles appears to Seekers who are studying the arts. However, the Seeker is still an apprentice. This is a card about aspirations. The Seeker is a perfectionist when it comes to his or her work, methodical in his or her craft. The Seeker shows great promise in becoming a highly skilled artisan. This is the card of diligence, hard work, and how attention to detail will pay off and reward the Seeker later. The Seeker is on the right track. The card can also indicate gainful employment. The card suggests someone who possesses natural talent or gifts in his or her craft. The Eight of Pentacles often appears in readings for those who are aspiring to turn their arts and crafts into a small business venture.

Compare: The Three of Pentacles is about the master artisan who is gaining recognition for his or her craft. The Eight of Pentacles shows the apprentice artisan who is still working hard at perfecting his or her craft. While the Three of Pentacles is about proportionately more recognition than effort, the Eight of Pentacles is about proportionately more effort than recognition. Note how many pentacles the apprentice has crafted in this card and hung up for display, and yet no one is around to admire the

work.

Reversed Meaning

The Seeker is not working hard enough. The Seeker is wasting his or her talents. There is a lot o artistic talent in the Seeker, but it is being wasted or not utilized to the fullest. In reverse, the Eight of Pentacles indicates squandered talent or gifts. The card could also suggest idle hands: the Seeker is not working hard enough at his or her craft. If a particular project has been on the back burner, the appearance of the Eight of Pentacles in reverse can be a sign to the Seeker to move that project from the back burner to the front, and to return to diligent work on said project.

Prosperity
Refinement
Independence

Number 9
Change is Coming
for the Better

Three Nines
One Last Hitch
in the Plan Before
Success is Had

Four Nines
Unexpected
Burdens

REV:
Dissatisfaction
Depression
Longing

A beautifully dressed woman in a golden-yellow dress enjoys her blooming garden, lush and abundant with grapes. A regal-looking bird is perched on the woman's gloved hand. Her beautiful castle of a home is seen in the distance. The skies are yellow.

NINE OF PENTACLES

The theme of the Nine of Pentacles is material well-being. It represents the solitary enjoyment of the good things in life. Perhaps the Seeker is an accomplished woman who is living alone. She is highly educated, intelligent, cultured, and has succeeded at utilizing those capabilities to secure her own material well-being. The Nine of Pentacles is about refinement and enjoying easy comfort, but doing so alone. That is because the Seeker is distrusting of new acquaintances. The card could also indicate an inheritance. There is wealth and comfort. The bird on the woman's hand symbolizes the receipt of good news; spirits are high. While the first message of this card is that of an individual enjoying great comfort, success, status, and financial independence, there is a secondary dimension of sadness and loneliness in the card. While the Seeker is someone with great potential to succeed on his or her own merits, the Seeker's great success is often intimidating to others, leaving the Seeker to feel alone. The Nine of Pentacles most often appears in the readings for successful, well-to-do, highly educated women.

Reversed Meaning

There is so much in the Seeker's life to enjoy, but the Seeker is not happy because he or she feels alone. The Seeker has been so focused on work and accruing material gain that he or she neglected interpersonal relationships. As a result, the Seeker is now enjoying success in solitude and this is a source of depression. The Seeker feels empty inside, in spite of great independent wealth. The Nine of Pentacles in reverse suggests dissatisfaction, despondency, or depression, even though on the outside the Seeker appears to others to lead the perfect, charmed life.

Stability, Alliance
Aristocracy
Urbanity, Prestige

Number 10
Pinnacle of Success
or Pinnacle of
Tribulation

Three Tens
Good Time to
Buy or Sell

Four Tens
Exhaustion
Burnout

REV:
Disengagement
Ostracism
Familial Disunion

An elder patriarch of the family sits with two hound dogs by his feet. He is dressed elegantly, surrounded by grapes, a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Beyond a stone archway showing the family crest and a balancing scale carved into the column, there is a well-dressed man and woman enjoying each other's company. A child is close to the woman's side. Their big, beautiful home is in the distance.

TEN OF PENTACLES

The Ten of Pentacles represents dynasty. It represents a financially stable and secure family. That family will gain long-lasting wealth and prosperity. Pinnacle of success. This card typically appears in spreads for Seekers who are from a thriving family business or come from a family of wealth or financial stability. There is good pedigree. Good family reputation. There is also a strong patriarch, and the family is enjoying the fruits of the patriarch's hard work. Dogs indicate faithfulness and domesticity. The Ten of Pentacles can also suggest the acquisition of power through family alliances.

Reversed Meaning

There may be some strife in a family that is otherwise more accustomed to comfort and stability. The card could indicate that a family that once enjoyed material blessings is now falling apart or in flux due to new financial issues. Another reading of the card reversed is that a family is highly capable with money transactions or the family business, but there is no sense of fulfillment. The family is not

enjoying one another's company. There is detachment or coldness in the home. Home life is not fulfilling. The card could also suggest a Seeker who has been outcast or ostracized from the family dynasty. There are risks of familial disunion. The Seeker and family must work harder at keeping the family together and unified. The family is stronger, financially that is, together than apart.

EARTH EARTH

Page Pentacles

Practical
Stylish
Scholarly

Receipt of
Financial News

REV:
Materialism
Superficiality
Receipt of
Financial News

A young page wearing a red hat stands in green pastures admiring a pentacle. The earth around the page is green with life. A blue mountain peak is seen in the distance. The skies are a bright yellow.

PAGE OF PENTACLES

The Page of Pentacles wants to make a difference. This is someone with great respect for learning and scholarship. Oftentimes she is born into a good family or enjoys material things and possessions. In contemporary times, the Page of Pentacles can also suggest a stylish woman, someone with great aesthetic taste. She is pragmatic, result-oriented, and possesses a strong sense of purpose. In a reading for a Seeker asking about love, could indicate the appearance of a young female with the qualities of the Page. Figuratively, could indicate the receipt of news or a message regarding the Seeker's finances or property. Earth-dominant, the Page of Pentacles is resourceful, practical, and has more common sense than the courts of the other three suits. Could signify Capricorn, Taurus, or Virgo.

Note that two pages in a tarot reading can indicate a social event related to the matter at hand. Three pages denote children or social cliques. All four pages appearing in a single tarot reading could indicate a classroom setting, school, university, or other educational or academic institution.

Reversed Meaning

In reverse, the Page of Pentacles can point to someone who tends toward material excess, someone

who is wasteful. She has an unhealthy fondness for luxury and may be overly materialistic. Not responsible with money. Could also indicate a young female in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Page of Pentacles, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation.

AIR EARTH
Knight Pentacles

Methodical
Rational
Stable
Reliable

Rev:
Inertia
Timidity

An armored knight sits on a black steed. They are stationary, but appear solid and stable. Green leaves adorn the head of his armor, and also adorn the head of the horse.

Knight of Pentacles

The Knight of Pentacles is a methodical, rational man. He is trustworthy, reliable, but perhaps not very imaginative. He lives a life of conventionalism. He may have a heavy, dull, or materialistic outlook. However, he is kind and gentle and his soul is fundamentally good. He is someone whom others can count on to be financially stable. He will always take care of his loved ones. In a reading for a young female Seeker asking about love, could indicate the appearance of a young man with the foregoing qualities. Figuratively, could indicate impending action or active progress in the areas of finances, wealth, or property; however, while the other Knights suggest *swift* action, the action of the Knight of Pentacles is slow and steady, but stable and assured. Of the four knights, the Knight of Pentacles is the one to count on, though the Knight of Pentacles is also the one most likely to be perceived as boring or plain vanilla. The Knight of Pentacles prefers the straight and narrow path. He would rather be safe than sorry. In prosperous times, others will complain that the Knight of Pentacles is prosaic, conservative, or overly cautious; yet in tougher times, those same individuals will rush to rely on the resourcefulness of the Knight of Pentacles. In bad times, he is the one that can be counted on. Earth-dominant, the Knight of Pentacles is resourceful, utilitarian, and has more common sense than the courts of the other three suits. Could signify Capricorn, Taurus, or Virgo.

Note that two knights appearing in a tarot reading could indicate head-to-head conflict with another individual of equal rank as the Seeker. Three knights in a reading indicate fraternity or brotherhood, or a sudden change, swift action that will take the Seeker by surprise. Four knights could suggest war, combat, or matters relating to the military.

Reversed Meaning

Money affairs are at a standstill. The Knight of Pentacles in reverse could indicate timidity. Could also indicate a young man in the Seeker's life who embodies the qualities of the Knight of Pentacles, but who has a negative impact or influence on the Seeker's current situation. The Knight of Pentacles in reverse indicates inertia in financial matters.

WATER EARTH

Queen Pentacles

Charitable
Noble
Opulence

REV:
Dependence
Indebtedness
Self-Preservation

She wears a red robe and golden crown and holds a single gold pentacle. Her throne bears carvings of a ram, for power and leadership, and a cherub angel behind her, watching over the queen. The land around her is abundant and lush. Roses adorn her from above. A rabbit darts across the foreground, a symbol of luck, abundance, and harmony.

QUEEN OF PENTACLES

The Queen of Pentacles is a resourceful and intelligent woman. She is creative in business ventures rich and charitable. She is great at generating prosperity. The Queen would make a great entrepreneur. She has a lot of material possessions or is very interested in material possessions. She also has a great deal of pride in her beauty, wealth, fortune, materials, friends, network, etc. Yet she wields a strong sense of duty and responsibility. Like the Page of Pentacles, the Queen of Pentacles is also stylish, with great aesthetic taste. There may be a tendency to be vain or materialistic. She also has a tendency to submerge her emotions and not express them to others until the point they bottleneck. That said, she is very attuned to and considerate of others. Figuratively, the Queen of Pentacles could indicate strong, effective nurturing of the Seeker's wealth, finances, or property. From French playing card tradition, the Queen of Pentacles is said to correspond with the biblical character Rachel, the wife of Jacob and mother to Joseph, and thus, in tarot, the card could call to mind the traits historically associated with her: physically she is someone shapely and beautiful. Earth-dominant, the Queen of Pentacles is resourceful, utilitarian, and has more common sense than the courts of the other

three suits. Could signify Capricorn, Taurus, or Virgo.

Note that two queens appearing in a tarot reading for a female Seeker could indicate direct competition with another female, while two queens in a reading for a male Seeker could indicate strong female allies and support. Three queens in a reading represent sisterhood or a female alliance, and four queens, women's interest, feminism, female authority, or feminist endeavors.

Reversed Meaning

There is overdependence on others. When the Queen appears in reverse, she is not self-sufficient. In reverse, the rabbit darting in the foreground indicates vulnerability and shyness. If the card appears in a reading for a woman, the Queen of Pentacles indicates her potential, but there are delays before the Seeker will reach that potential, most likely due to insecurity and passivity. The card may suggest indebtedness to others. May indicate a sense of self-preservation; dependency on others for financial sustenance. The card could also indicate the negative influence in the Seeker's life of a woman who fits the profile of the Queen of Pentacles.

△ ▽

FIRE EARTH

King Pentacles

Powerful
Enterprising
Established

REV:
Sophomoric
Stoic
Lethargy

The king wears a black robe covered with grapes and vines. He looks confident, content, and proud. Ram heads adorn his throne. He sits outside on the terrace of his big, beautiful, regal castle. Greenery is in full bloom everywhere in his castle walls.

KING OF PENTACLES

He is the chief of industry. The King of Pentacles is a mature man of exceptional self-control. He is a steady, enterprising male energy. He is a man in finance, banking, or real estate. Reliable married man with children. He is the caregiver, the provider. And he takes his duties as a caregiver and provider seriously. Great financial gifts; accomplished with finances. He is of great help to the Seeker or potentially very helpful. Could also indicate materialism or dwelling too much on the value of material things, overlooking the spiritual. On the negative side, this person is susceptible to bribery and temptation. Figuratively, could indicate effective management of wealth and property; having full control over one's finances. From French playing card tradition, the King of Pentacles is said to correspond with Julius Caesar, and thus, in tarot, the card could call to mind a character of unmatched military power, a man with a great gift for forging alliances. *Compare:* the Ten of Swords conveys the fall of Caesar and the theme of assassination, while the King of Pentacles would refer to the character of Julius Caesar—a man who, generally speaking, had an exceptional gift for political alliances and knew how to wield it to his advantage. Earth-dominant, the King of Pentacles is resourceful, utilitarian, and has more common sense than the courts of the other three suits. Could

signify Capricorn, Taurus, or Virgo.

Note that two kings appearing in a tarot reading for a male Seeker could indicate direct competition with another male, while two kings in a reading for a female Seeker could indicate a professional conference. In a reading about love, two kings can indicate two men competing for the amorous affections of one, but if the spread is Fire-dominant, then the two kings could indicate romantic relations developing from a professional conference or business trip. In a reading about career, two kings represent the significance of a professional conference in advancing the Seeker's goals, though if the Seeker is male, the two kings might denote direct competition from another male for the same promotion. Three kings in a reading symbolize a professional brotherhood, or a fraternity among men of high rank. Three kings could also suggest nepotism at play. Four kings represent a men's interest, issues related to masculinity, or dominant male authority.

Reversed Meaning

There may be corruption, or the person represented by the King of Pentacles is prone to corruption. When the King of Pentacles appears in reverse, be wary of bribes and shortsightedness. Desires for wealth and possessions may lead to hasty actions that, if the King was acting rationally, he would never have engaged in because they go against his principles. The card in reverse might also indicate someone who pines for wealth but is not willing to work hard enough to attain that wealth. The card could indicate unproductive financial endeavors. The card reversed could also indicate an authoritarian male figure in the Seeker's life that the Seeker is financially dependent on, such as a father, a boss, an older male, etc.; but Seeker has a terse or negative relationship with this figure. The card could indicate the negative influences of a man that fits the profile of the King of Pentacles.

Chapter 10

Signifier Cards

In a typical tarot reading, the first step of the session is to select a signifier card (traditionally referred to as a "significator"[1] card) to represent the person you are reading for. My general approach to signifier cards is to use court cards. Consider the characteristics and traits that each court card indicates, and select a signifier card for the Seeker that best fits him or her.

Generally, kings are selected for adult or mature men; queens for adult or mature women; knights for young or adolescent men; and pages for young or adolescent women. "Mature" and "young" may be defined by either actual physical age or the Seeker's mind and heart (i.e., an adult woman may still use a Page signifier because she is unmarried and childless, or is herself like a child at heart). With regard to which suit to select, adopt your own approach based on one of the following:

- **By Complexion.** Select Wands for light complexions, Cups for moderate complexions, and Swords or Pentacles for olive and darker complexions. I find that signifiers by complexion, at least through the traditional associations, straddle the line of being Eurocentric and non-inclusive, so I avoid this method.
- **By Disposition.** Selecting by the Seeker's disposition will require higher intuition from the tarot practitioner. Select Wands for creative, energetic dispositions; Cups for sensitive, emotional dispositions; Swords for aggressive, strong warrior dispositions; and Pentacles for industrious, materially wealthy, business-minded, quiet, and/or stern dispositions.
- **By Date of Birth.** There are several approaches here. First, you can select by the astrological sun sign. If by astrological sign, decide whether to use a court card or a Major Arcanum as the signifier. The second approach is to select a signifier based on the birth month or season that the Seeker was born in. See the table on the subsequent page.
- **By Intuition.** From time to time I will encounter a Seeker who has energies or an aura that cannot be fully expressed by the court card that corresponds with his or her date of birth. In such cases, I will forego the general correspondences and go with intuition to select the appropriate signifier card. In past actual readings, that has been The Star card, or The Fool or Strength, to cite three cases.

It is a common practice to select the signifier card and place it down on the table at the commencement of a reading. The first card drawn after shuffling the deck is then placed on top of the signifier card. This is most commonly seen in the Celtic Cross spread, for example, which will be discussed later in this book. In other spreads, the signifier card is placed to one side of the spread, such as in an eighteen-card spread, which will also be discussed later.

Court Card Signifier by Complexion, Disposition, or Birth

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
PAGE	Young woman, light complexion.	Young woman, moderate complexion.	Young woman, moderate or olive complexion.	Young woman, olive or dark complexion.
	Creative. Dynamic.	Emotional. Imaginative.	Ambitious. Judicious.	Industrious. Practical.
	FIRE: Aries, Leo Sagittarius *or* SPRING	WATER: Cancer, Pisces, Scorpio *or* SUMMER	AIR: Libra, Gemini Aquarius *or* AUTUMN	EARTH: Taurus, Virgo Capricorn *or* WINTER

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
KNIGHT	Young man, light complexion.	Young man, moderate complexion.	Young man, moderate or olive complexion.	Young man, olive or dark complexion.
	Impetuous. Competitive.	Sensitive. Affable.	Domineering. Aggressive.	Methodical. Rational.
	FIRE: Aries, Leo Sagittarius *or* SPRING	WATER: Cancer, Pisces, Scorpio *or* SUMMER	AIR: Libra, Gemini Aquarius *or* AUTUMN	EARTH: Taurus, Virgo Capricorn *or* WINTER

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
QUEEN	Mature woman, light complexion.	Mature woman, moderate complexion.	Mature woman, moderate or olive complexion.	Mature woman, olive or dark complexion.
	Attractive. Down-to-earth.	Nurturing. Tender.	Striking. Intelligent.	Resourceful. Proud.
	FIRE: Aries, Leo Sagittarius *or* SPRING	WATER: Cancer, Pisces, Scorpio *or* SUMMER	AIR: Libra, Gemini Aquarius *or* AUTUMN	EARTH: Taurus, Virgo Capricorn *or* WINTER

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles

KING	Mature man, light complexion.	Mature man, moderate complexion.	Mature man, moderate or olive complexion.	Mature man, olive or dark complexion.
	Passionate. Authoritarian.	Caring. Diplomatic.	Analytical. Stern.	Enterprising. Reliable.
	FIRE: Aries, Leo Sagittarius *or* SPRING	WATER: Cancer, Pisces, Scorpio *or* SUMMER	AIR: Libra, Gemini Aquarius *or* AUTUMN	EARTH: Taurus, Virgo Capricorn *or* WINTER

When using the preceding charts to select a signifier card, rest assured that the Seeker need not fit both the complexion *and* disposition attributes. It is sufficient for the Seeker to fit either the complexion *or* the disposition attribute listed for the court card. The cards, like people, can take on different personalities for different times.

Signifier cards are critical to my tarot practice. It is remarkable to me how well a Seeker's personality is represented by the tarot suit, i.e., element that the Seeker most identifies with. For some Seekers, their identifying suit and element corresponds with their astrological sign. For others, nurture has surpassed nature and they have come to identify firmly with a particular suit and element that does not correspond with their birth charts.

Those who are Fire signs are part of the court family in the suit of Wands. Fire personalities tend to be born leaders and hunters. They are the planners, architects, and innovators of society. From frequent tarot practice, one may come to observe that those who identify with the Wands, who are governed by Fire, tend to struggle most with finding balance in their lives, as they are prone to extremes. Their lives tend to be a cycle of self-creation (as they are born innovators) and also self-destruction (as they are the first to tear themselves down).

Those who are Water signs or identify most with the suit of Cups probably suffer from a hero complex. These individuals are greatly concerned with the nurturing of others, with aiding and being of use to their loved ones, and thus have a tendency to be codependent. Those identifying with the suit of Cups are those who strive to save souls and change the world. They're spiritual, intuitive, and as a result of their deep connection with the natural environment around them, often experience what feels like divine intervention. There are strong influences from the spiritual (or even supernatural) world in their lives. Since they invest with their heart and their emotions, the predominant mode of economic exchange for Water signs is through relationships.

Courts from the suit of Swords, or Air signs, are born warriors. They are prone to quick, intense bursts of deep focus and then a longer period of lacking focus. They will fight tooth and nail for their independence and often engage in dissent. Those who identify with the suit of Swords are prone to conflict and often find themselves embroiled in adversity with others, often fighting the ideological fight. These individuals contribute to society through their minds and their intellect. They thrive on the exchange of ideas and information.

Signifiers from the suit of Pentacles, the Earthsigns, are the most stable and reliable of all signs. They set down roots and opt for the familiar. They are born conservators and yet great trendsetters.

They are motivated by changing uncertainties into certainties. They're resourceful, careful, thorough, and ground those around them. To their loved ones, they are the anchor. Commercial transactions, management, and accounting are best left to the Earth signs.

From time to time, none of the court cards may feel right intuitively for a specific Seeker. Thus, while generally a court card is selected, it is not an absolute rule. A card from the Major Arcana can be used instead. There are three prevailing methods for selecting Major Arcana cards as signifiers: 1) by the Seeker's astrological sign, 2) by the nature of the specific question presented, or 3) by the Paul Foster Case method.

Major Arcanum Signifier by Date of Birth

Horoscope Sign	*Sun Sign Dates*	*Signifier Card*
Aries	March 21 - April 19	Key 4, The Emperor
Taurus	April 20 - May 20	Key 5, The Hierophant
Gemini	May 21 - June 20	Key 6, The Lovers
Cancer	June 21 - July 22	Key 7, The Chariot
Leo	July 23 - August 22	Key 8, Strength
Virgo	August 23 - September 22	Key 9, The Hermit
Libra	September 23 - October 22	Key 11, Justice
Scorpio	October 23 - November 21	Key 13, Death
Sagittarius	November 22 - December 21	Key 14, Temperance
Capricorn	December 22 - January 19	Key 15, The Devil
Aquarius	January 20 - February 18	Key 17, The Star
Pisces	February 19 - March 20	Key 18, The Moon

Thus, for a Seeker who is a sun sign Aries, male or female, The Emperor could be selected as the signifier. However, the practitioner is urged to use his or her intuition in selecting the right signifier. For a Seeker with an intense, commanding presence who is an Aries, The Emperor could be quite suitable, but for a Seeker who seems meek, timid, and shy, The Emperor might not be suitable. A Major Arcanum may also be selected as the signifier card based on the specific question that is being asked. Under such a practice, four categories of specific questions are observed. See the following chart for the four categories and the corresponding signifier cards.

Major Arcanum Signifier by Nature of the Question

Nature of Specific Question	*Signifier Card*
Spirituality, Intuition	**Key 2, The High Priestess**
Love, Fertility, Family	**Key 3, The Empress**
Work, Career, Business	**Key 4, The Emperor**
Health and Wellness	**Key 8, Strength**

Traditionally, as noted in Paul Foster Case's seminal text *Oracle of the Tarot*, Key 1: The Magician is used as the signifier card for men and Key 2: The High Priestess for women, irrespective of all other factors.[2] The traditional method may be the easiest approach for the beginner tarot practitioner to work with.

Traditional Signifiers

Male Seeker	Female Seeker
Key 1, The Magician	Key 2, The High Priestess

Cards from the Minor Arcana also work well as signifiers, especially for specific questions. If a Seeker requests a reading on a specific question or project, then a signifier card may be selected to express the nature of that question or the subject matter of the project. The Two of Wands, for example, might be an appropriate signifier for a Seeker who is college-bound and about to embark on a journey away from home. The Two of Swords can be used as the signifier if the Seeker is trying to reach a decision between two prospects. After the Two of Swords is set down in a reading as the signifier, a practitioner can set down cards toward one point of the sword and an equal number of cards toward the other point, and such a reading might help a Seeker analyze the two prospects side by side and use such insights to help him or her reach a final decision.

As I prepare for a reading, I like to explain to the Seeker what tarot is about, its structure, a little bit of history, and my own method of practice. I select a signifier card based on the dominant trait or energy the Seeker emits. I may ask what his or her date of birth is and select a court card based on the astrological sign. Or I may match the court card with his or her outward personality traits. Sometimes, I get a particularly strong vibration from someone and may opt for a Major Arcanum. As the practitioner, I let my intuition and the Seeker guide me to select the right signifier.

The signifier card is the anchor for each reading. The seventy-eight cards of the tarot represent seventy-eight archetypes that form the complete narrative of the universe. To hone a universe's worth of information toward a single Seeker, the signifier card is selected to represent the self in the universe. That grounds and channels the rest of the cards around the self so that the Seeker may best divine what forces are at play in his or her life. In my practice, the signifier card is an important preliminary step because it is the frame of reference for the other cards.

A contemporary use of signifier cards is to focus a reading on one specific subject matter. For instance, if a Seeker would like to know what energies are significant in her love life right now, then the practitioner might select The Lovers card or Two of Cups as a signifier, and then draw a few cards around the signifier to analyze those energies. If a Seeker has gone through profound heartbreak and feels a storm of emotions that he is having trouble navigating, then the practitioner might select the Three of Swords to symbolize the Seeker's pain and then draw cards into a spread to determine how the Seeker can overcome the pain represented by the Three of Swords. To read about life after a heartbreak, the Five of Cups would make a great signifier for the specific inquiry. The Nine of Swords is another great signifier for reading about a specific trauma. A friend of mine and fellow tarot practitioner went through a profound betrayal from a group of girlfriends she had trusted. She consulted the tarot to help her find a way to get over the pain and anguish. She used the Ten of Swords as her signifier.

Any card in the deck that seems to capture your state of mind with intense accuracy would make a great signifier card in a specific inquiry. When reading for a Seeker with health concerns who wanted to understand how she could emotionally and spiritually cope with her deteriorating health, I used the Temperance card as the signifier. The Fool could be used if a Seeker is looking for a fresh start. The

Ace of Pentacles is a great signifier card for inquiries about a new startup company. The Nine of Cups, considered the wish card, could be used to identify what measures the Seeker might take to ensure that his or her wish comes true.

Per my practice approach, it is the practitioner who selects the signifier card for a reading. The practitioner will often ask the Seeker for his or her date of birth, and select the proper signifier using the Seeker's sun sign and identifying gender. I lean heavily toward using court cards keyed to sun signs and gender, e.g., the Queen of Swords for a Libra female or the King of Pentacles for a Capricorn male. When only the gender is known, but not the date of birth, I adopt the traditional approach of The Magician for male Seekers and The High Priestess for female. In rare instances, my intuition tells me that a court card is not appropriate for a specific Seeker, and so then I will let my intuition lead me to the correct card, which is usually a Major Arcanum. All that said, if the Seeker is learned in tarot and tells the practitioner in advance that he or she identifies specifically with a particular card as the signifier, I will respect the Seeker and use that specified card as his or her signifier.

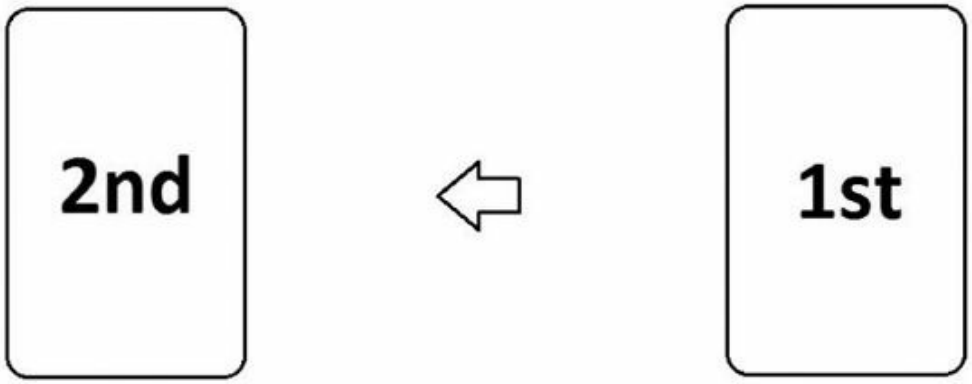
Note, too, that not all tarot practitioners use a signifier card. Some practitioners feel that by extracting one card from the deck for the signifier, the subsequent reading will not be with a "full deck" and therefore may alter the reading detrimentally. For me, however, the tarot deck in its entirety represents the complete energies of the universe, and in a tarot reading the Seeker uses the deck to identify which energies are most relevant to his or her life at the time. To channel the complete energies of the universe at a given moment toward the Seeker, an anchor is needed. That anchor is the signifier card. Thus, by extracting a card out of the deck, a practitioner isn't causing "one card to be missing" during the reading, but rather is identifying the card in the deck that represents the Seeker's "self" energy. That "self" energy will then attract the most relevant energies from the deck into the tarot spread.

For me, signifier cards are imperative in grounding a reading, but the beginner practitioner should try reading both ways, with and without signifiers, and tailor a personal approach.

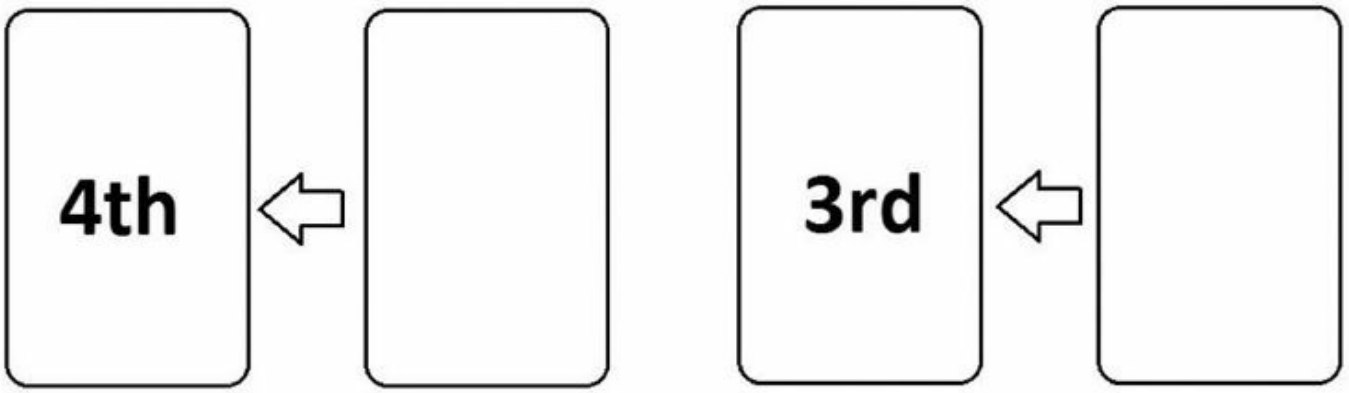
Chapter 11

The First Operation

THE FOLLOWING IS A contemporary adaptation of the Case Method popularized by Paul Foster Case, an American occultist. He calls the following step the First Operation. It is performed as a preliminary step before a tarot reading. After a signifier card is selected for the Seeker, the practitioner shuffles the signifier card back in with the deck and hands the deck to the Seeker. The Seeker concentrates on his or her question (if consulting for a specific inquiry) or clears the mind with meditation techniques (if consulting generally) and shuffles. The tarot deck is then cut as follows:



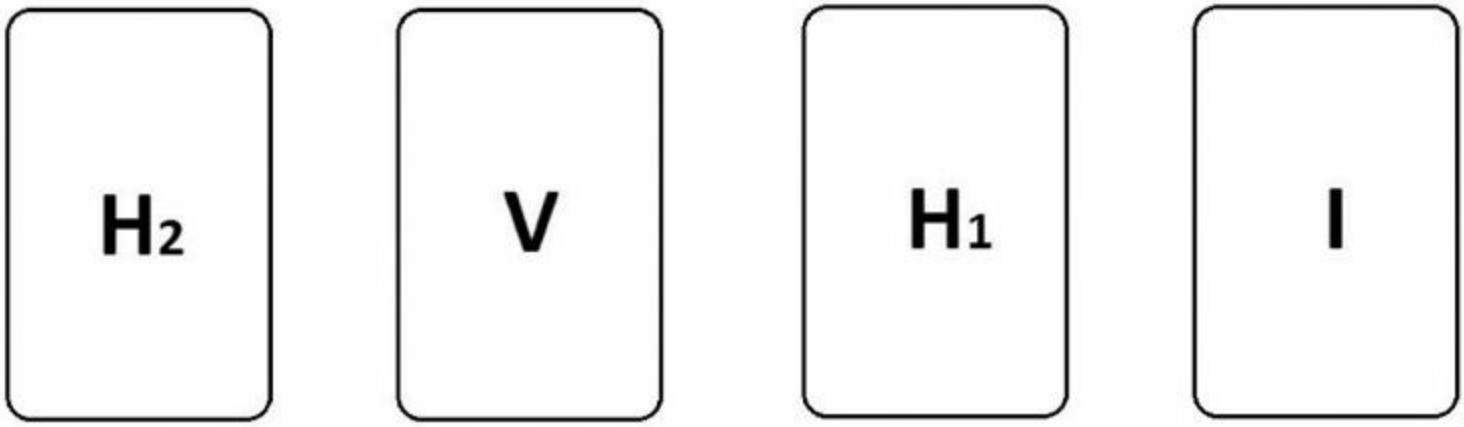
Traditionally, only the left hand is used for cutting,[1] but that habit has often been discarded in modern reading techniques. From the two piles, have the Seeker take part of the first pile and cut left again to form the third pile illustrated below. Then take part of the second pile and cut left to form the fourth pile.



You should then have four separate piles. Right to left, the piles represent IHVH, the four constants forming the Hebrew tetragrammaton or name of the supreme being, the four corners of the universe, the four quadrants of the human condition, the four cardinal directions, and the four elements, Fire, Water, Air, and Earth respectively. Note that the four constants can also be spelled IHVH or YHWH (for Yahweh), depending on the transliteration method used. This book will refer to the spelling as IHVH. The concept can be extended to represent the cosmic qi, a universal vital energy that is the

collective unconscious.

Next, the practitioner sifts through each of the four piles to locate the signifier card. The pile that the signifier card is found in (i.e., I, H_1 V, or H_2) will indicate the nature of the Seeker's question. I is work and the body, our labors. H_1 is the emotional plane, about relationships. V is the formative, the mental plane, about our thoughts and the power of those thoughts. It is also about how we have been communicating those thoughts to others. H_2 is the material plane, our possessions and resources.



I	***Personal Development; Health & Wellness***. Seeker is asking about matters of personal development, such as work or career. Could indicate an interest in beginning a new venture or carrying out a new idea. Pile is also associated with the physical, such as body, health, or wellness issues. (*Corresponds with Wands*.)
H_1	***Love, Marriage, Family***. The internal sphere: Seeker is asking about emotions, feelings, personal relationships, or desires. This pile pertains to the domestic sphere and interpersonal matters. When love or romance is the matter at hand, or the matter that Seeker should focus on at present, the signifier will appear here. (*Corresponds with Cups*.)
V	***Politics, Ambitions, Social, Intellectual***. The intellectualized sphere: Seeker is asking about ambitions and high aspirations. This pile corresponds with the Seeker's role in society. Activists and leaders often find their signifier cards in this pile. This pile could also pertain to conflict resolution, imbalances or disappointments. Note further that this pile could suggest intellectual matters at play, or a mental struggle. This is the hardest of the four piles to read, but curiously enough, the signifier rarely appears in this pile-only for the most unique of Seeker spirits does the signifier appear here (*Corresponds with Swords*.)
H_2	***Money, Business, Property***. Seeker is asking about a material matter, finances, property, or wealth. When the signifier appears in this pile, the Seeker should be focusing on financial concerns, wealth management, or the settlement of a particular piece of property. (*Corresponds with Pentacles*.)

If the Seeker consulted for a general inquiry, then the pile indicates what area of the Seeker's life requires the most attention right now. As you perform the reading, keep in mind the First Operation results and apply the reading through the lens of the First Operation. For example, if the signifier appeared in the H_1 pile during the First Operation, then the subsequent appearance of the Ace of Wands might suggest a new addition to the family or the healthy start of a new relationship. If the signifier card appeared in the I pile, then the subsequent appearance of the Ace of Wands might suggest the start of a new creative project.

If the Seeker consulted for a specific question but the pile the signifier card is found in is *not* the nature of the question asked, then Case recommends that the reading does not proceed further.

According to Case, if the practitioner cannot succeed at identifying the nature of Seeker's question during the First Operation, then the practitioner should not proceed with a tarot reading. Case recommends to the novice to practice this first step repeatedly for a week and log the total number of attempts with the number of times the practitioner identified correctly and the number of times the practitioner identified incorrectly.

However, I approach it differently. If the Seeker asked a specific question, then the pile the signifier card is found in indicates the sub-issue that is most relevant to resolving the Seeker's main issue. Thus, the First Operation is used as a preliminary diagnosis of what aspect of a problem, project, or situation will most affect what happens. The piles would then correspond as follows:

- **I**: Focus on the development. Preliminary stage of work is critical. Per the four psychic functions espoused by Carl Jung, the resolution of Seeker's problem will be reached through Intuition.[2]
- **H_1**: The people or characters involved will affect the outcome. Take care in nurturing relationships. Per the four psychic functions, the resolution of the problem will be reached through Feeling.
- **V**: The source of the problem at hand is in the thought plane. There may be disputes or quarrels over ideological matters, or there may be communication issues. Also, focus on community. Think on the greater good here. The matter is primarily cerebral, not physical. Per the four psychic functions, the resolution of the problem will be reached through Thinking.
- **H_2**: There are concerns with financing, assets, money, or property. The problem at hand is in the foundation. Go back to the foundation and make sure the proper resources are available to the Seeker to build a strong, stable foundation. Per the four psychic functions, the resolution of the problem will be reached through Sensing.

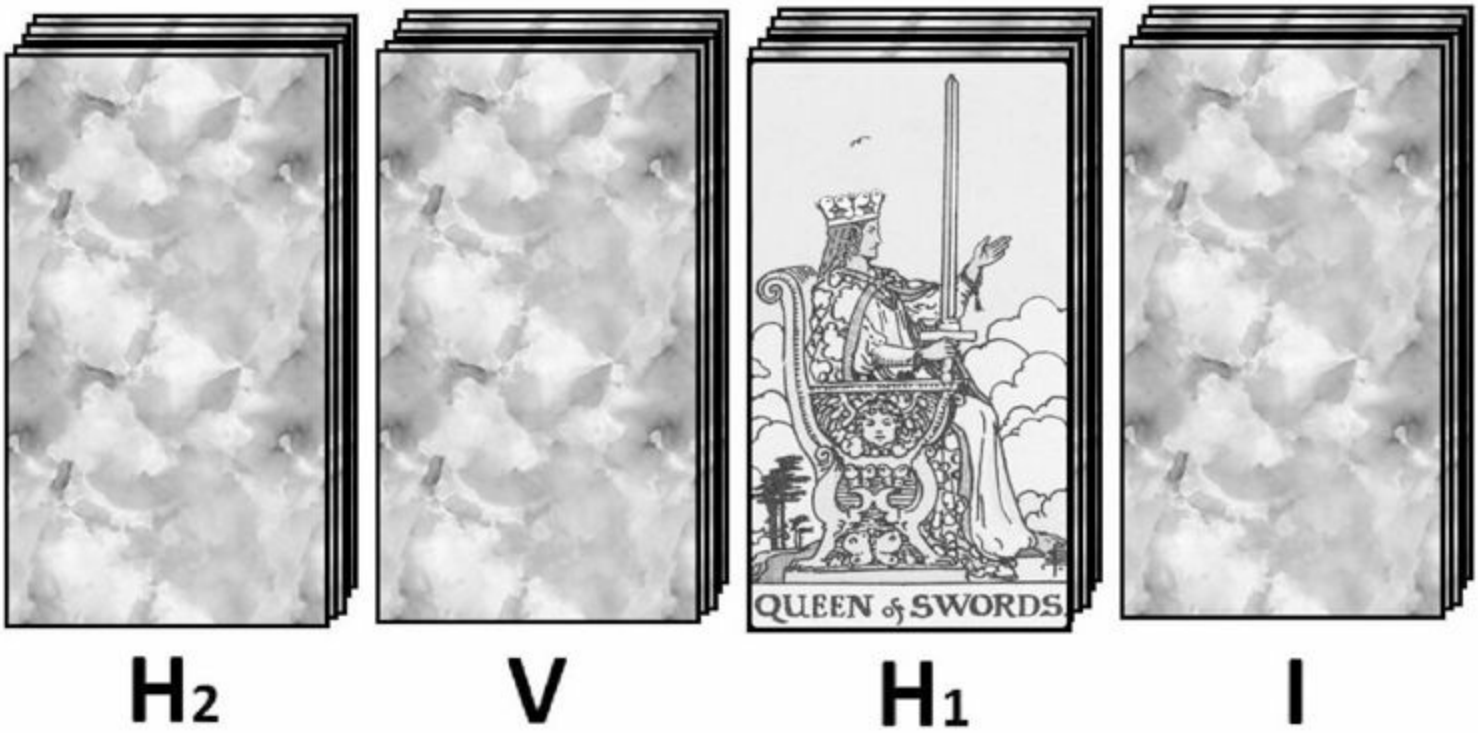
Note that my correlations to each of the four piles differ from the correlations espoused by Case. After my years of practice, I have found the foregoing to be a more accurate approach in assessing a Seeker's present situation.

Those who are interested in insights into their career prospects often have the signifier card appear in either the I or H_2 pile. Those who have been more concerned with a spouse, love, romance, or family issues find their signifier cards turning up in the H_1 pile. And those who seem destined for a higher purpose in life, who are activists, leaders, and power players by nature, who have a mission involving greater influence over the community at large, will find their signifiers appearing in the V pile.

The First Operation is uncanny at pointing out what most plagues a Seeker's mind at a given time or the sub-issues that will most affect the outcome of a matter.

Case Study: Lakshmi

You are reading for Lakshmi, who wants to know whether she will get a promotion at work. Lakshmi is a Libra, an Air sign, so you select the Queen of Swords as her signifier. In the First Operation, the signifier appeared as follows:



How would you the practitioner interpret the result? Recall that the four piles correspond as follows:

Suit	*Suit Correspondence*	*Pile*	*First Operation Correspondence*
WANDS	Development, Career	I	Work/Career; Health/Wellness
CUPS	Emotions, Relationships	H_1	Love, Relationships, Family
SWORDS	Ideas, Logos, Ambitions	V	Politics, Ambition, Conflicts
PENTACLES	Material Wealth, Finance	H_2	Money, Business, Property

Some practitioners will interpret the foregoing result as indicating that the tarot deck, the Seeker, and the practitioner are not properly connected at this time to answer Lakshmi's inquiry. Thus, no reading would be performed unless the signifier appeared in either the I or H_2 pile.

However, another approach, which is the approach the author of this book follows, is to read the First Operation result as indicative of what sub-issue of the Seeker's main issue requires further development and attention so that the Seeker's main issue will yield a positive outcome. Here, the signifier card appears in the H_1 pile. That suggests that Lakshmi's promotion is going to hinge on the professional relationships with colleagues

and the people she works with.

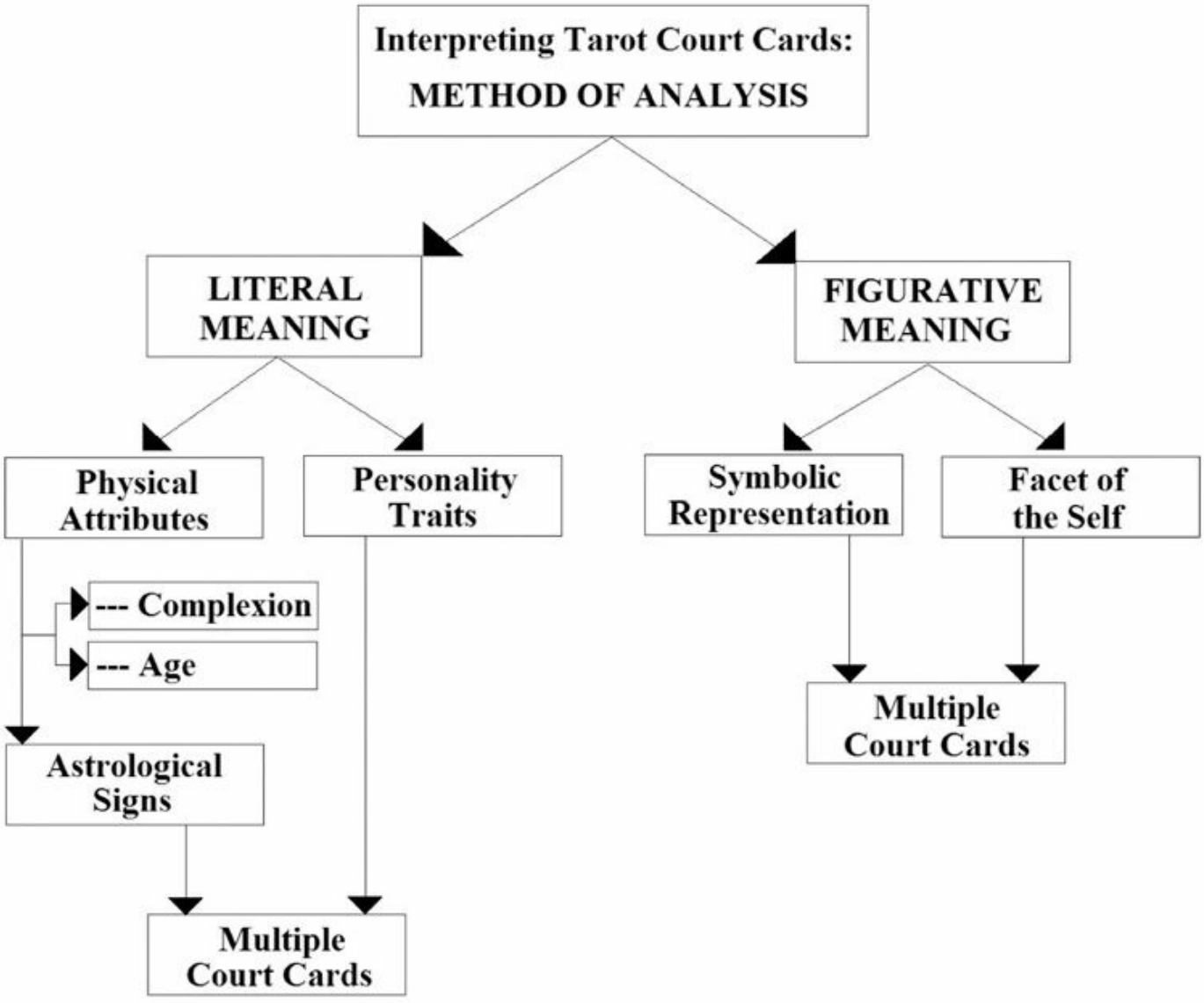
If the Queen of Swords had appeared in the I pile, it might indicate that Lakshmi's promotion would hinge on her work product. In the V pile, it might take on two possible meanings: either Lakshmi's promotion would hinge on the resolution of a persisting conflict of some kind, one likely based in ideological differences between the parties, or the matter at hand is much bigger than just a promotion. It might indicate that Lakshmi has what it takes to ascend to the very top of the corporate ladder. In the H_2 pile, it would have indicated that Lakshmi's promotion involves financial concerns, and money or assets seem to be a crucial factor to her present motivations.

Whether the tarot practitioner chooses to integrate the First Operation into practice does not change the author's strong suggestion that every practitioner become familiar with the First Operation and be prepared to perform it if need be. Appendix H provides a worksheet for the starting practitioner to use in First Operation training. Consistent, repeated practice of the First Operation is a form of programming between the tarot deck and the practitioner and a form of meditation that will improve the communication line between tarot and practitioner. It is guaranteed that the more receptive a practitioner is to the First Operation and the more he or she practices it, the more success that practitioner will have with the technique, to the point of uncanny accuracy.

Chapter 12

Interpreting Court Cards

Novices tend to find court cards difficult to interpret. I know I did.[1] The fundamental to remember is that all court cards have voices.[2] When they appear in a spread, there is a voice speaking out. Listening intently to what that voice has to say about the matter at hand is imperative. The more court cards that appear in a spread, the more influential such voices are in the matter at hand for the Seeker. Interpreting tarot court cards may seem daunting at first, but with a set method of analysis, the process can be deconstructed into a simple flowchart for beginners. Just remember that interpretation hinges on whether the court card takes on a literal meaning or a figurative meaning.



The first step of your inquiry is to determine whether a particular court card is serving as a literal or figurative representation.[3] Does the court card represent an actual person in Seeker's life or is it a metaphor or even a reflection or shadow of the Seeker?

If a **literal meaning** is interpreted, then first proceed with an analysis of the physical attributes. Offer the Seeker your analysis of the actual person's complexion (fair, olive, dark) and age (younger

than Seeker; Seeker's peer; older than Seeker). The court cards can also indicate astrological signs More often, they represent personality traits in the actual person.

If a **figurative meaning** is interpreted, then consider whether it is a symbolic representation. Court cards do not necessarily represent people. They could represent events or latent inner psychological aspects of the Seeker.

Literal Interpretation

A literal interpretation of a court card means it represents an actual person in the Seeker's life. The card will provide clues as to the person's identity. The below table provides a broad overview of typical physical attributes associated with each court card.

Chart of Physical Attributes

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Page	Young woman with light complexion.	Young woman with moderate complexion.	Young woman with moderate or olive complexion.	Young woman with olive or dark complexion.
Knight	Young man with light complexion.	Young man with moderate complexion.	Young man with moderate or olive complexion.	Young man with olive or dark complexion.
Queen	Mature woman with light complexion.	Mature woman with moderate complexion.	Mature woman with moderate or olive complexion.	Mature woman with olive or dark complexion.
King	Mature man with light complexion.	Mature man with moderate complexion.	Mature man with moderate or olive complexion.	Mature man with olive or dark complexion.

A court card may also indicate the individual's temperament or personality trait rather than his or her physical attributes. The court card could represent either (A) an acquaintance or someone Seeker has not met yet, or (B) someone close to the Seeker. Examine the overall landscape and the position of the card to identify which. If (A), then it is more likely that the card will follow the individual's physical attributes, but inform the Seeker of the possible prevailing personality traits. If (B), then it is more likely that the card will follow the individual's personality traits, but inform the Seeker of the possible distinguishing physical attributes.

Chart of Personality Traits

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Page	Creative. Dynamic.	Emotional. Imaginative.	Ambitious. Judicious.	Industrious. Practical.
Knight	Impetuous. Competitive.	Sensitive. Affable.	Domineering. Aggressive.	Methodical. Rational.
Queen	Attractive. Down-to-earth.	Nurturing. Tender.	Striking. Intelligent.	Resourceful. Proud.
King	Passionate. Authoritarian.	Caring. Diplomatic.	Analytical. Stem.	Enterprising. Reliable.

Keep in mind that the foregoing summation is a generalized deconstruction of the court card meanings in a spread. You *must* exercise your own intuition on a case by case basis. The cards, just like people, are not one-dimensional; different facets of the self can surface at different times based on circumstances, the community, the location, and the timing. You must observe the overall landscape of the spread to determine what facet of the card is being presented at that particular moment. Here is also when the signifier card for the Seeker plays a role. If the Seeker is a Page, then a Page card will indicate a female peer and a Knight will indicate a male peer; a Queen will indicate an older woman and a King an older man. The following table sets forth the age of the actual person that the court card represents, which is relative to the age (or signifier card) of the Seeker.

Age Indications

		COURT CARD DRAWN			
		PAGE	**KNIGHT**	**QUEEN**	**KING**
SEEKER'S SIGNIFIER CARD	**PAGE**	Female Peer	Male Peer	Older Female	Older Male
	KNIGHT	Female Peer	Male Peer	Older Female	Older Male
	QUEEN	Younger Female	Younger Male	Female Peer	Male Peer
	KING	Younger Female	Younger Male	Female Peer	Male Peer

I have found that when court cards take on a literal meaning, they can be as specific as to indicate the astrological sign of the actual person. Wands are associated with the Fire signs, Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius; Cups are associated with the Water signs, Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces; etc. See the below chart for the astrological attributions.

Astrological Attributions

WANDS	FIRE Signs	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
CUPS	WATER Signs	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
SWORDS	AIR Signs	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
PENTACLES	EARTH Signs	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn

The suit of the card can also indicate the actual person's temperament. That tends to be immensely helpful to the Seeker for identifying who that actual person is. Note that the following table can also be applied to figurative interpretations, except rather than indicate the person's temperament, it indicates a facet of the Seeker's latent self or inner psychology.

Generally an upright court card under a literal interpretation will suggest a positive or active influence. A court card reversed will suggest a negative or latent influence. The main point in there is "or." Be sensitive to the overall landscape of the spread to determine whether the influence of that actual person is "positive or negative" *or* "active or latent." Note, however, that there may be exceptions, so the matter must be determined on a case by case basis.

Temperament by Suit

WANDS	FIRE TEMPERAMENT: A motivated, career-driven, fiery, and energetic individual. Wands can indicate a creative, artistic type.
CUPS	WATER TEMPERAMENT: A sensitive, warm, emotional individual who is more focused on interpersonal relationships.
SWORDS	AIR TEMPERAMENT: A person of high intellect and thought, logic, an ambitious, aggressive individual. Swords tend to suggest a “Type A” personality. Tendency to be detached, dispassionate, and capricious.
PENTACLES	EARTH TEMPERAMENT: A person who enjoys material or financial success, an industrious hard worker, or a strongly business-minded individual.

Multiple Court Cards in a Spread—Literal

	2 IN A SPREAD	3 IN A SPREAD	4 IN A SPREAD
PAGES	Competing for Seeker's attention or affections.	Social clique of children or youth. Celebration. Joy.	School, classroom; Large family; Many children/offspring involved.
KNIGHTS	Competing for Seeker's attention or affections.	Social clique of young men.	War, competition, combat; may indicate men in the services.
QUEENS	Competing for Seeker's attention or affections.	Close female bonds; circle of close female friends or sisterhood.	Women's organization or special interest community of women.
KINGS	Competing for Seeker's attention or affections.	Strong male bonds; close male friends or brotherhood.	Men's organization or special interest community of men.

Literal interpretation of multiple court cards will reveal voices. These are people in the Seeker's life whom he or she has been listening to or who have had an influence over him or her. When multiple pages and knights dominate over a spread for a Seeker whose signifier card is a Queen or King, the cards could suggest the Seeker's work as a teacher, mentor, or leader. In these instances, exercise intuition and observe the spread carefully. Rather than indicating youth, the pages and knights could indicate those of lower status than the Seeker or the Seeker's followers.

Two knights in a spread, or two pages, two queens, or two kings may indicate two individuals who are competing against each other for the Seeker's affections or attention. Three court cards in a spread typically indicate close bonds among peers. Four in a spread will indicate community, society, institutions, or Seeker's group affiliations.

Figurative Interpretation

Note that court cards do not always indicate an actual third party in the Seeker's life. The card could take on a symbolic representation or it could represent a facet of the Seeker's self. When a single court card is present but it does not seem to suggest an actual individual in the Seeker's life, it may be a symbolic representation of an event. Pages represent news or messages. Knights represent action and movement. Queens represent nurture and supportive roles. Kings represent authority.

General Symbolic Representations

	Work/Career; Creative Projects	Love or Interpersonal Relationships	Politics, Ambitions; Intellectual	Finance, Wealth, or Property
Receipt of News or Message Regarding:	Page of Wands	Page of Cups	Page of Swords	Page of Pentacles
Pending Action or Swift Action; Active Progress In:	Knight of Wands	Knight of Cups	Knight of Swords	Knight of Pentacles
Strong, Effective Nurturing or Progressive Development Of:	Queen of Wands	Queen of Cups	Queen of Swords	Queen of Pentacles
Leadership or Effective Management Of:	King of Wands	King of Cups	King of Swords	King of Pentacles

The Rider-Waite-Smith tarot decks are based on a patriarchal society, so if that is distracting, the RWS decks are probably not the best to work with. Consider the Goddess Tarot, Motherpeace Tarot, or Daughters of the Moon.

Court cards could also represent the inner psychology or sub-surface aspects of the Seeker. Based on where the card is positioned in a spread, it could suggest latent facets of the Seeker's personality or how the Seeker has been acting. If the court card is in reverse, it suggests that the Seeker has been behaving in a negative way and the cards are alerting the Seeker to change for the better. If the card is upright in a speculative position, it suggests that these personality traits are critical for the Seeker to manifest if he or she wants success. In a present position, the card indicates that these are the current prevailing characteristics of the Seeker influencing the matter at hand.

Under a figurative interpretation, if the court card indicates a facet of the Seeker's self, then an upright court card will suggest that the positive traits of that card prevail. In reverse, the negative traits of the card prevail. For example, if the Page of Cups upright represents how the Seeker has been behaving or responding to a given situation, then her creative abilities or sensitivities have been instrumental. If the Page of Cups is in reverse, she has been setting unrealistic expectations and her head is stuck in the clouds. If the court card takes on a symbolic representation, then upright the card generally suggests a positive energy; reverse, a negative energy. Therefore a Page of Cups upright would symbolize receipt of a message relating to love and relationships that the Seeker will be happy to hear; the Page of Cups in reverse may bring news that will disappoint her.

Character Keywords

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Page	Creative Motivated Visionary Flamboyant	Sensitive Expressive Dreamer Seeks to Please	Assertive Graceful High Intellect Fighter	Practical Learned Easygoing Financially Secure
Knight	Impetuous Cavalier Rebellious Opinionated	Handsome Charming Romantic Proud or Vain	Gallant Domineering Valiant Competitive	Methodical Rational Steady; Loyal Conventional
Queen	Attractive Adored by all Self-assured Down to earth	Loving Nurturing Spiritual Seems aloof	Astute; Strong Dignified Accomplished Solitary	Resourceful Charitable Affluent Self-Absorbed
King	Creative Successful Passionate Authoritarian	Wise; Noble Diplomatic Well-liked Communicator	Stem Intellectual Powerful Conqueror	Enterprising Gifted; Clever Prosperous Broad shoulders

Multiple court cards under a figurative interpretation will suggest events or conditions. Multiple court cards in a spread indicate to the Seeker that something significant is going to happen and there will be many parties involved.

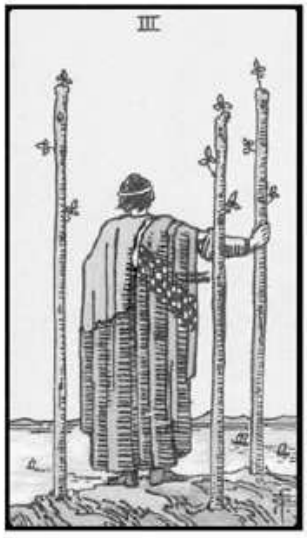
For example, four kings once appeared in a nine-card reading for a female I was reading for. At first I wondered whether her life was surrounded by men for some reason. It turned out the four kings were a figurative representation of a pending conference that the Seeker was going to be the keynote speaker of. Note that the meaning of multiple court cards will differ based on the gender of the Seeker. If the Seeker had been a man, for example, then I could have read the four kings in the spread to indicate heavy-handed competition and threats surrounding the matter the male Seeker is inquiring about.

THE FOOL.

VII
THE CHARIOT.

KING of SWORDS.

KING of WANDS


III

IA

KING of PENTACLES.

III

KING of CUPS.

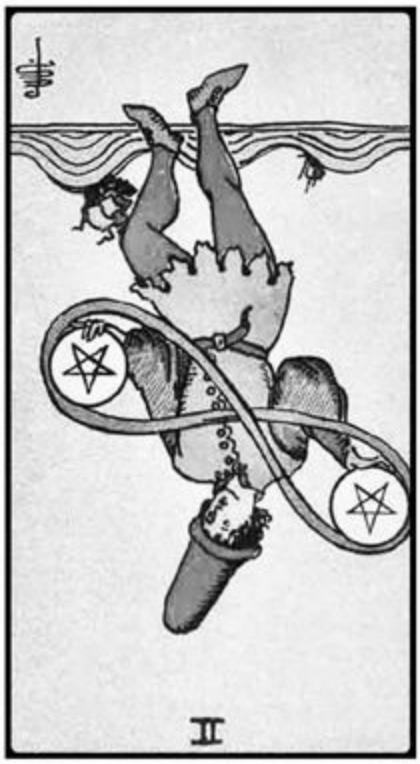
Multiple Court Cards in a Spread—Figurative

	2 IN A SPREAD	3 IN A SPREAD	4 IN A SPREAD
PAGES	A social event will be relevant to the matter at hand.	Seeker will find help from the young in the matter at hand.	New ideas or plans with be the solution to the matter at hand.
KNIGHTS	There will be incidental conflict to the matter at hand.	There will be sudden changes or unexpected news.	Events in the matter at hand are going to be moving swiftly.
QUEENS	If Seeker is a woman, then there will be competition or a confrontation. If Seeker is a man, then strong female influences will have an impact.	Strong friendships or partnerships will be relevant to the matter at hand. Sisterhood. Close circle of female to female bonds and support.	Female authority figures will be helpful to Seeker in the matter at hand. Large network of female to female bonds and support.
KINGS	If Seeker is a woman, then a conference will take place. If Seeker is a man, then there will be competition or a confrontation.	Seeker will be enjoying newfound higher rank, promotion, or will be bestowed a high honor.	Seeker will be meeting with high level individuals who will have an impact on the matter at hand (leaders, executives, etc.).

Although this chapter attempts to deconstruct court cards into an analytical process, tarot reading is an art. As such, it is by its nature *not* formulaic. In fact, you the practitioner may bond with a certain tarot deck in such a way that everything mentioned here is null to you and an entirely different set of meanings has been established, particular to you and your bond with the tarot. However, the beginner must start *some*where, and the foregoing method of analysis is one place to start.

The intuition of the practitioner is essential to interpreting court cards correctly. This chapter sets forth the possibilities, but the one applicable to any particular reading will depend on the other cards in the spread, the layout of the spread, and even who the Seeker is. In sum, court cards can take on a literal meaning, i.e., it represents an actual individual in the Seeker's life who possesses the qualities represented by the card, with upright generally indicating a positive influence and reverse a negative influence; or it can take on a figurative meaning, i.e., the personality represented by that card is a facet of the Seeker's personality. In spread positions indicating social spheres, love, or allies, it is more likely to be literal, though there are exceptions. In other spread positions, it is more likely to take on a figurative meaning. If the signifier card selected for the Seeker was the Queen of Wands, for instance, then the appearance of a Page of Wands has a stronger likelihood of indicating the Seeker's past self.

Tarot spreads will be covered later in this book, so for the purposes of applying court cards to the following hypothetical readings, only the essence of the spreads illustrated will be covered. The focus will be on the court cards that are drawn and how they relate to the question at hand and relative to the other cards in the spread.



Bill, a male Seeker, wants to know whether his current creative project will enjoy financial success. You draw the above three cards for him: Two of Pentacles, reversed; Knight of Wands; and Three of Pentacles. How would you interpret the Knight of Wands in the spread?

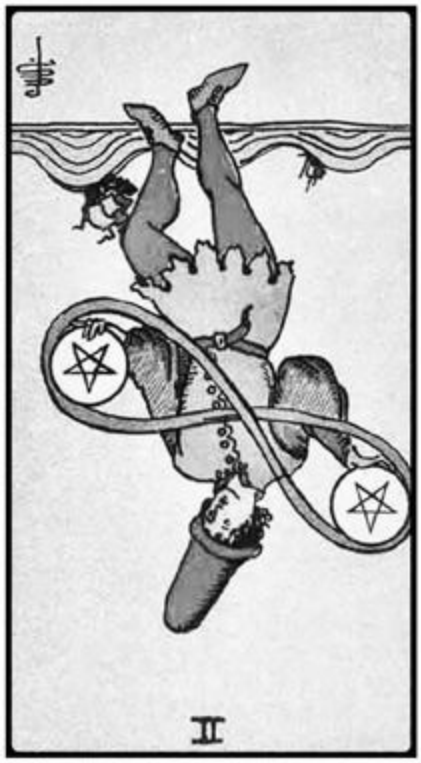
As a court card, it could take on a literal or figurative meaning. Literally, it would represent a man in Bill's life that embodies the qualities of the Knight of Wands. While that is certainly a plausible interpretation, consider also that the card is placed at the center of the spread, indicating Bill's present. Intuitively I would lean toward interpreting the card figuratively, as an aspect of Bill's Self. However, in my reading session with Bill, I would outline both the figurative and literal meaning to him and let him connect directly to the card to obtain his own understanding of the card's message.

Thus, I would explain to Bill as follows: Court cards can assume either a literal or figurative meaning. So, for instance, the Knight of Wands can represent an actual man in your present who has quite a stake in your current creative project. He's a creative, energetic, fiery fellow and perhaps physically one with a light complexion. The suit of Wands is associated with the Fire signs, so he could be an Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. If Bill acknowledges that in fact the coauthor on the project is John, his best friend, then you can stop at the literal interpretation. If not, note to Bill that the Knight can also take on a figurative representation, representing the dominant personality traits in Bill that are steering the project: It might indicate an impetuous, competitive nature in Bill, which is why he is so bent on this project's success. The card also suggests innate gifts in the creative fields and working with his hands in the arts, so that could validate Bill's chances of success. I might also note to Bill that the Knight can represent swift action or progress in his creative project. Since his question pertains specifically to a creative project, the last

interpretation is most likely applicable.

Case Study: Beatrice

Imagine that Beatrice, a female Seeker, comes to you with the same question: will her current creative project enjoy financial success? Assume that you draw the same three cards you had for Bill. Now what could the cards indicate?

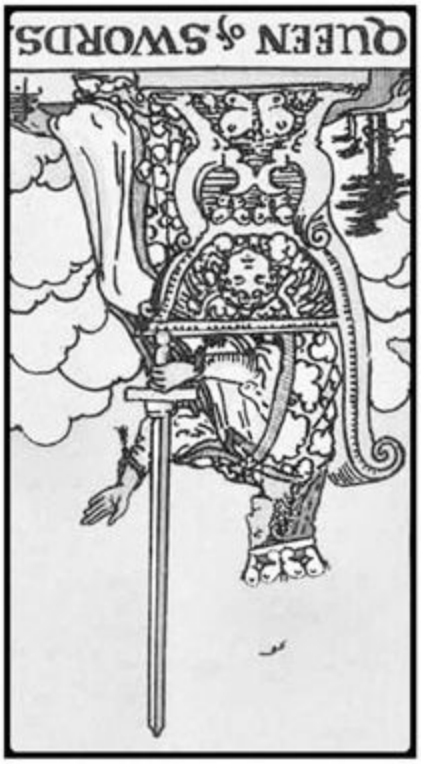


Since Bill was a male Seeker, the Knight's appearance had a stronger possibility of representing a facet of his Self. For Beatrice, the Knight will have a stronger possibility of representing either an actual young man in her life or the figurative meaning of pending action in creative projects and pursuits. If Beatrice's question was love- and romance-related, then the most likely reading is that of an actual young man. Since Beatrice is asking about her creative project, it most likely represents pending action.

Note that Case Study: Bill was an actual reading. Case Study: Beatrice was a hypothetical. All case studies in this book are based on actual readings with the personal identification information of the Seekers changed for confidentiality. For the purpose of illustrating how one card may take on different meanings for different Seekers, some of the case studies are hypotheticals based on actual readings, with certain significant factors changed, such as in the cases of Bill and Beatrice, or Candace and Caleb below.

Case Study: Candace

Candace, a female Seeker, doesn't have a specific question. She wants you to perform a general reading for her. You draw the following three cards: Key 12: The Hanged Man; the Two of Wands; and the Queen of Swords, reversed.



Again, start with the first guideline, that court cards can take on either literal or figurative meanings. If a literal meaning is applied, consider Candace's age or the signifier card selected for her. If she is young and represented by a Page for her signifier, then most likely the Queen is an older woman relative to Candace. If Candace herself is mature in age and you had selected a Queen for her signifier card, then the Queen could be a peer or colleague. If the First Operation was performed, then apply the category selected by the First Operation to the reading. Even if the First Operation was not performed, the other cards in the spread—the wand-like post from which the Hanged Man hangs and center-placed Wands card—indicate a reading that is career- or work-oriented. Thus, the Queen, if a literal meaning is adopted, could be a coworker or even Candace's boss. You might ask Candace, at this point, if her boss at work is female, for instance. Be sure to also consider the figurative meanings of the Queen. The card could represent a facet of Candace.

Case Study: Caleb

If Caleb, a male Seeker, comes to you wishing to know what is in store for his career and professional life and the same three cards as for Candace (see above)—The Hanged Man, the Two of Wands, and Queen of Swords—are drawn for him, then you will note that a female court card appearing in his spread more likely represents an actual woman in his life than a facet of himself, though do not immediately rule out the figurative interpretation either. It could suggest delays or some obstructions to the nurturing of his ambitions.

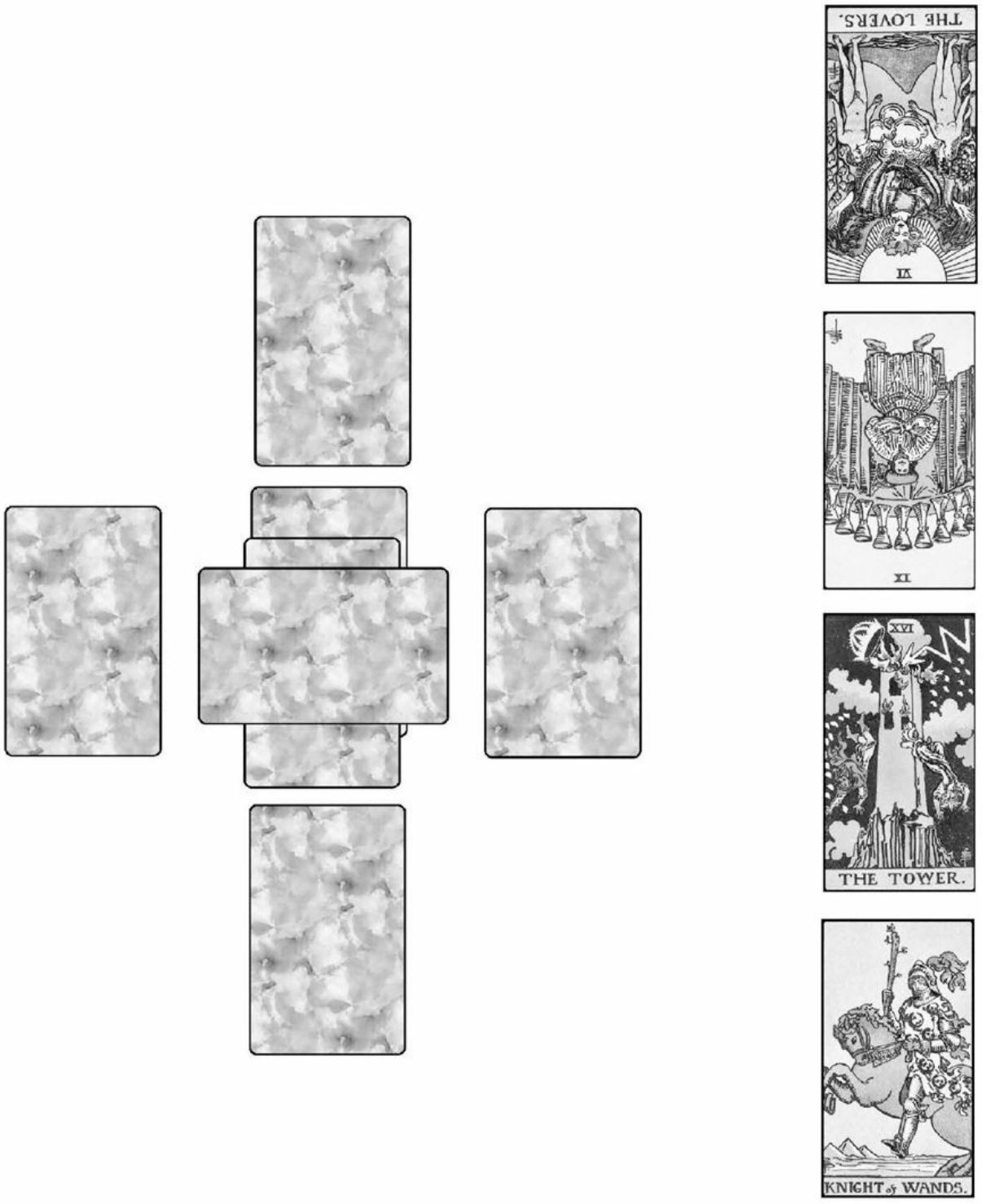
Considering the hypothetical spread, the Two of Wands indicates Caleb's high aspirations. Regrettably, the reversed Queen in the future position of the spread adjacent to the Two of Wands could suggest that Caleb won't achieve his ambitions, not without greater diligence than what he has been exhibiting now.

Note that Case Study: Candace was an actual reading. Case Study: Caleb was a hypothetical.

Case Study: Marilyn

Marilyn comes to you for a reading. You select the Celtic Cross Spread. Since the Celtic Cross has not been discussed in this book yet, focus primarily on the court card in the spread, the Knight of Wands. Three other cards from the spread are provided for context only.

Here, does the Knight take on a literal or figurative meaning?



The position in the spread that the Knight of Wands appears in corresponds to how others view the Seeker. Based on that, the most likely interpretation of the court card here is that of character trait, not physical appearance, astrological association, or even the symbolic representation. That is because the card indicates how Marilyn's friends, family, and colleagues perceive her. Also, since Marilyn is female, the practitioner should be further affirmed that the meaning here is figurative, a facet of Marilyn's self. I would read the Knight of Wands here as indicating someone who is considered impetuous, competitive, perhaps a bit hotheaded by others. Her associates would call her energetic, a person who acts swiftly and with conviction toward her goals.

Marilyn, as it turns out, is a headstrong overachiever, a female with active yang energies in her, indomitably ambitious, and with a bright career, so the Knight of Wands perception

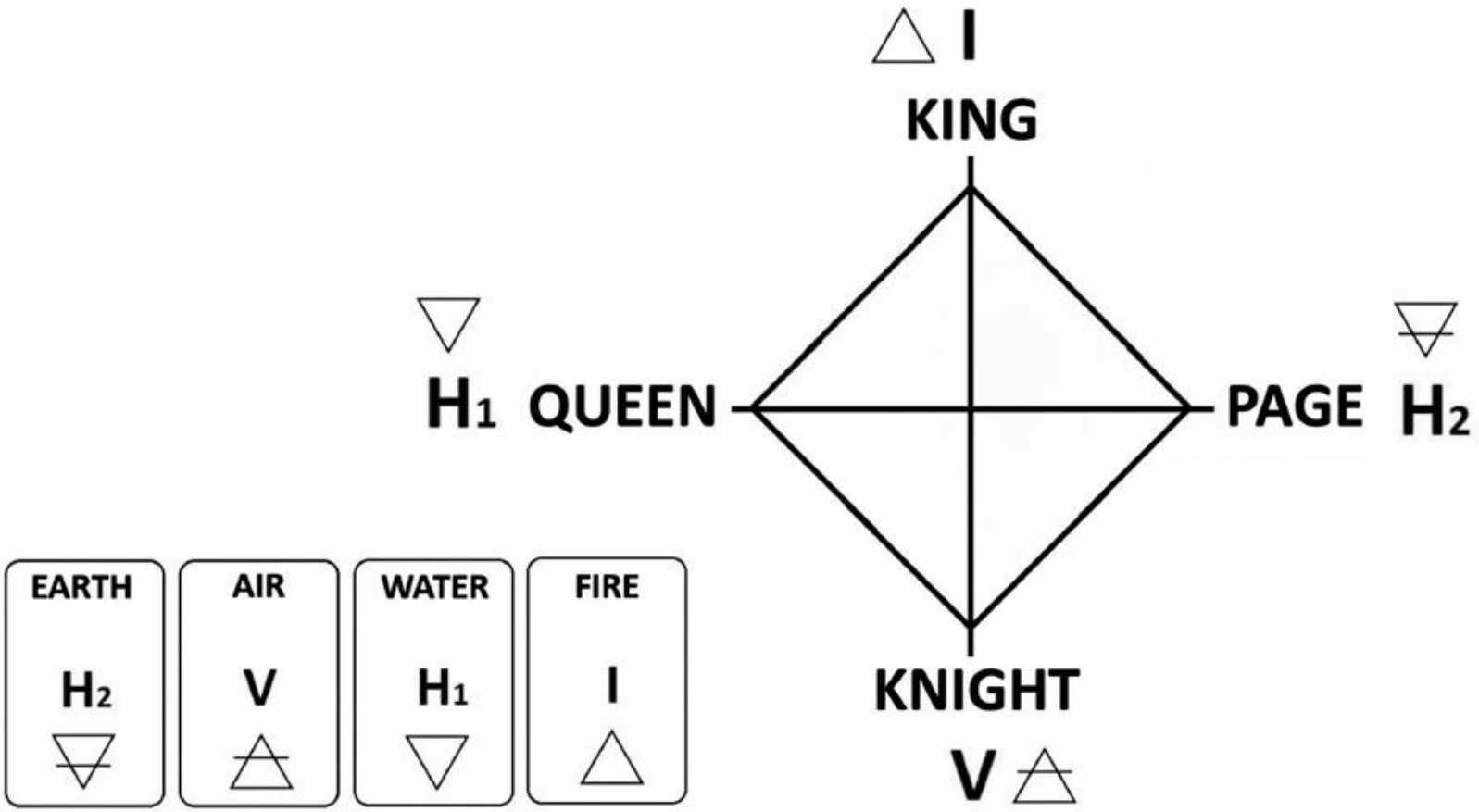
of her held by others makes sense. Also note the appearance of The Tower in the card position, corresponding to how Marilyn views herself. The Tower here suggests hubris, ego, sudden downfalls after high achievement, and the need to learn a lesson on humility. Suffice it to say, many of the cards in Marilyn's spread point consistently to a powerful woman, but after she gave birth to her son many of her priorities changed. Instead of joining the high ranks and receiving the same accolades as her former academic peers, she ended up in a position where a lesson of humility had to be learned. What she may not have realized, though, is that people's perception of her hadn't changed: they still saw her as the Knight of Wands.

Now, if the Knight of Wands had appeared in a different position in the spread, it might have taken on a literal meaning, representing an actual young man in Marilyn's life. In the past position, for example, Card Position 4 in the Celtic Cross, or even in the future, Card Position 6, the probability of the Knight assuming a literal meaning would be greater, though again the neighboring cards in the spread must be considered.

Court Cards and the Classical Elements

Influenced heavily by twentieth-century English occultists, tarot practitioners who adhere to the Golden Dawn system of interpretation attribute the court cards to the four classical elements: pages to Earth; knights to Air; queens to Water; and kings to Fire. As a member of a suit, the cards are also assigned an element that corresponds with its suit, so for example the Page of Wands would be Fire and Earth. The additional element describes the court card's behavioral tendencies.

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Page	FIRE EARTH	WATER EARTH	AIR EARTH	EARTH EARTH
Knight	FIRE AIR	WATER AIR	AIR AIR	EARTH AIR
Queen	FIRE WATER	WATER WATER	AIR WATER	EARTH WATER
King	FIRE FIRE	WATER FIRE	AIR FIRE	EARTH FIRE



Papus, an early Golden Dawn member, wrote extensively on tarot divination, and attributed the four court cards as diagrammed above.[4] The four courts correspond with IHVH. Chapter 11 explained how the letters correspond with the four elements—I: Fire, H_1: Water, V: Air, and H_2: Earth.

How the elemental correspondence of the suit interacts with the elemental correspondence of the court card is believed to offer insight into the meaning of the card. For example, the Page of Wands is Earth and Fire, thus the stability, conviction, and resourcefulness of Earth is combined with the creative, enthusiastic, passionate energies of Fire. The sum is a motivated youth who is very resourceful at getting what she wants.

	△ Wands **FIRE**	▽ Cups **WATER**	△ Swords **AIR**	▽ Pentacles **EARTH**
▽ Page **EARTH**	Motivated, career-driven	Intuitive, emotional	Intellectual, aggressive	Pragmatist, stable; refined
	Inquirer; Seeks to acquire	Inquirer; Seeks to acquire	Inquirer; Seeks to acquire	Inquirer; Seeks to acquire
△ Knight **AIR**	Motivated, career-driven	Intuitive, emotional	Intellectual, aggressive	Pragmatist, stable; refined
	Pioneer; seeks out action	Pioneer; seeks out action	Pioneer; seeks out action	Pioneer; seeks out action
▽ Queen **WATER**	Motivated, career-driven	Intuitive, emotional	Intellectual, aggressive	Pragmatist, stable; refined
	Nurturer; seeks out harmony	Nurturer; seeks out harmony	Nurturer; seeks out harmony	Nurturer; seeks out harmony
△ King **FIRE**	Motivated, career-driven	Intuitive, emotional	Intellectual, aggressive	Pragmatist, stable; refined
	Commander; seeks to rule	Commander; seeks to rule	Commander; seeks to rule	Commander; seeks to rule

The Queen of Swords is Water and Air, thus the emotional component of Water is combined with the intellectual, aggressive component of Air. The sum is a strong, fierce, highly competent woman, albeit one who may at times rule with her emotion, or with a tendency to be spiteful or snobby. Understanding the elements offers yet another plane of interpretation that the practitioner may utilize.

Court cards are often said to be the most difficult cards in a tarot deck to understand, especially for beginners. That is because, like people, court cards are not absolutely one exact way. They can be, by nature, just like people, hypocritical, contradictory, and fluid. Our personalities change with our circumstances. Similarly, court cards can assume different meanings at different times for different Seekers. However, the general theme of each card remains consistent and the different meanings are but variant shades of that same theme, just like how in spite of how complicated and multifaceted we may be, we do have a core essence. For quick snapshot profiles of the court cards, see Appendix E.

A Contextual Character Analysis of the Court

Understanding the court cards as characters will help the practitioner improve his or her application

of the cards to a Seeker's situation. The pages are a universal representation of our aspirations, the knights of our quests, the queens of nurture, and the kings of our domains. Their stories are the archetypal stories of many a historic figure, and through the retelling of these stories, a Seeker can find identification.

The Pages

The pages were traditionally noble-born, young, and the attendants to knights, with the aspiration of one day becoming knights themselves. They also served as messengers for a court. In contemporary tarot interpretation, the pages represent young feminine characters.

Collectively, they have come to represent girlhood or the energy of the youth, of children. Of the four pages, the Page of Wands is the most adventurous. She is the tomboy who climbed trees and caught frogs and crayfish in the creek beyond her home. She is full of vitality and creative energy. She wants to explore. She wants to see the world with her own two eyes. The Page of Swords, like the Page of Wands, is also full of active, externalized energy. She is a girl with strong conviction, a girl who will fight on those convictions, much like Joan of Arc, a young peasant girl who fought for her ideologies and became a saint.

The Page of Cups is artistic and expressive. She is pure, kind, and filled with faith, faith in the divine and faith in fellow humanity. If the Page of Wands is on a quest for adventure, the Page of Swords on a quest for glory, and the Page of Pentacles on a quest for acquisition, then the Page of Cups is on a quest for love—romantic love and also a divine love. She is the most compassionate of the four pages. The Page of Pentacles is one who seeks to make her mark on the world. If the Page of Swords possesses ideological and philosophical intelligence, the Page of Pentacles possesses practical intelligence. The Page of Pentacles knows how to negotiate the material world to her advantage.

The Knights

Knights were in service of the reigning monarch. They fought under a rigid code of conduct. In contemporary tarot interpretation, the knights represent the coming of age into manhood. They are figures of action. They are the facilitators of energy: the Knight of Wands of creative energy; the Knight of Cups of artistic, humanistic, or spiritual; the Knight of Swords of either conquest or destruction; and the Knight of Pentacles of commerce and human economy.

Note how the Knight of Wands and the Knight of Swords, the yang knights, are charging on their horses, though the Knight of Swords appears more aggressive, and both face to the Seeker's left. The Knight of Cups and Knight of Pentacles, the yin knights, both face the opposite direction, to the Seeker's right. While the Knight of Cups is going at an easy trot, the Knight of Pentacles is not in motion at all.

If the Knight of Swords calls to mind Sir Galahad of King Arthur's Round Table, gallant, pure of heart, and on a quest for the Holy Grail, then the Knight of Cups is Sir Lancelot, raised by the Lady of the Lake, a lover of the Queen, who manages to catch a glimpse of the Holy Grail. Sir Gawain is also the embodiment of the Knight of Cups, a compassionate, loyal knight, a healer, and an advocate for the underprivileged.

The Knight of Pentacles is steady, reliable, and stalwart. He is perhaps the strongest of the four knights, and because of the genuine greatness of his strength, he has nothing to prove. He remains on a still horse, the only knight not in active movement.

The Queens

The queens represent womanhood and nurture. The Queen of Wands is the reigning queen, for Fire is the element of divinity. She is the Queen of Established Strength,[5] the daughter of Mother Earth, the closest of the four queens to nature. She represents creative energy. The Queen of Cups, in contrast, is intuitive energy, holding the powers of the oracle. She is a dreamer, and the water at her feet represents her closeness to the collective unconscious. Of the four queens, she is not only the most attuned to emotion, but also the most clairvoyant. She is creative like the Queen of Wands, though her creativity is in the realm of the spiritual while the Queen of Wands' is in the realm of the natural.

The Queen of Swords is the fiercest of the four queens, often associated with Athena, a warrior queen. Traditional Golden Dawn interpretations of the Queen of Swords have been rather negative,[6] suggesting that the power she wields is illusory. Since the author of this book identifies with the Queen of Swords, there will be disagreements between the traditional Golden Dawn interpretation and the approach this book espouses. While the Queen of Swords is often depicted as barren or childless, not quite as in touch with her nurturing energies as the other queens, she is also the queen most in touch with the external sphere and the community at large, rather than the internal or domestic sphere. She is an executive … and also an executioner, and so her power is by no means illusory. Of the four queens, the Queen of Swords is the only one to show only her side profile, suggesting the difficulty of getting to know her. She lacks the openness of either the Queen of Wands or Queen of Pentacles, or the command of emotion and humanism of the Queen of Cups.

The Queen of Pentacles is the most sensual of the four queens. Her beauty is seductive. If the Queen of Wands is a natural beauty, the Queen of Cups an ethereal beauty, and the Queen of Swords beautiful in her strength, the Queen of Pentacles is physically the most alluring. She is a woman of great resource and abundance. Her kingdom, compared to the other queens', is the most fertile. Her kingdom is wealthier, more industrious, a powerful, thriving, majestic empire. Cleopatra would have been a Queen of Pentacles, as would the Queen of Sheba.

Opposite of the knights, the Queen of Wands and Queen of Swords face right (whereas the Knigh

of Wands and Knight of Swords face left), while the Queen of Cups and Queen of Pentacles face left Also, each Queen faces in the opposite direction of her respective King. The slight difference is in the Swords, where the Queen of Swords faces completely right with only her profile revealed, while the King of Swords faces completely forward, head-on.

The Kings

The kings represent manhood, masculinity, and authority. The only king and the only court card to face forward is the King of Swords, suggesting his confrontational demeanor. He is often associated with the biblical King David, a righteous (but also self-righteous) warrior-king who defeated Goliath when the king was a mere boy, then took Goliath's sword and beheaded the giant. He is as ruthless as he is righteous. However, King David ultimately angers God and suffers for his sins.

The apologue of Alexander the Great can be seen in several of the Wands cards, in the Two of Wands and also among the court cards, in the King of Wands. He is Fire on Fire, the most ferocious and ambitious, the one who has inherited a kingdom but wants to conquer far more than his father's land. He represents the primal life force that governs us, the motivation that has distinguished humanity from all the other animals of Earth—that urge to transcend the accomplishments of the father.

The King of Cups is said to correspond with the holy emperor Charlemagne, and thus in tarot the card could call to mind the traits historically associated with Charlemagne—a strong emphasis on art, religion, and culture. He, like the Queen of Cups, has his foot by the water, representing his closeness to the collective unconscious. He is the most spiritual of the four kings. He is perhaps the closest in spirit to the divine, though it is the King of Wands who rules by divine right. The King of Cups is the true Renaissance man, a polymath, gifted in all aspects of art and culture.

Julius Caesar is another figure whose narrative is articulated in the tarot archetypes. He is seen here in the King of Pentacles, a leader who knows how to use alliances to his advantage, that theme of alliances having repeated elsewhere in the suit of Pentacles, most notably the Ten of Pentacles. The powerful, wealthy King Solomon can also be seen in the profile of the King of Pentacles.

Left-Right Symbolism in the Court Cards

The direction in which a court card character is facing will reveal that character's frame of reference. Left-right symbolism reveals the subconscious psychological level of the court characters. For example, see the growth from the Page of Swords to the Queen of Swords. The Page faces left, and although she is of the suit of Swords, an Air sign for intellect and thought, the Page of Swords is still very emotional. She likes to appear aggressive on the outside, but deep down she is still quite insecure and passive. When she matures into the Queen of Swords, however, she faces right, showing true assertiveness, a greater command of logic, and a stronger sense of righteousness.

The women of the Wands court, the Page and Queen, are facing right; they are in true essence more assertive than their male counterparts, the Knight and King, facing left, perhaps because the intense Fire energies in them cause them to be too temperamental. The Knight of Cups faces right for his faith and spiritual ascension, while the Knight of Pentacles faces right for his convention and righteousness. The Queen of Cups faces left, for her ties with the Moon and the High Priestess. What people rarely notice about Queen of Cups characters in life is their unorthodoxy; they are far from being creatures of conventionalism.

Noting the direction a court character faces, especially when a court card represents a facet of a Seeker's inner self, is indispensable in helping a Seeker gain insight into his or her subconscious proclivities.

In traditional tarot symbology, the left-right associations are based on Western thought: left indicating the inner realm of intuition, the unconscious mind, and the astral body, and right indicating the external realm of rational thought, the consciousness, and the physical body. Generally, the left and right associations[7] are as follows:

Facing Left	*Facing Right*
Moon	**Sun**
Yin	**Yang**
Emotion	**Logic**
Unorthodox	**Convention**
Skeptic	**Faith**
Unconscious	**Conscious**
Alternative	**Righteousness**
Human Feeling	**Divine Ascension**
Occult	**Canonical**

The symbology goes further, to indicate the distinction between the left-hand path and the right-

hand path, a notion derived from Native American ideology and mythos. The left hand and left direction represent the Seeker who takes the left-hand path, one who is motivated by the individual quest and self-fulfillment. It is about seeking honor for oneself. The right hand and right direction represent the right-hand path, or one who puts the community before the self. The right-hand path represents the greater good, tradition, sacrifice, and service. The right-hand path is about seeking honor for the state. Note that such a distinction differs from the Western esoteric tradition of left-hand path versus right-hand path: the left-hand path in Western mysticism suggests “black” magic or malice while the right-hand path suggests “white” magic or beneficence.[8]

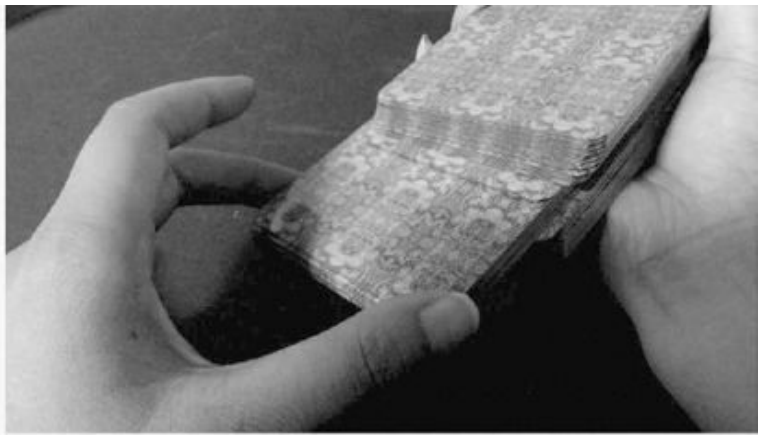
Chapter 13

On Shuffling, Cutting, and Drawing

Shuffling the Tarot Deck

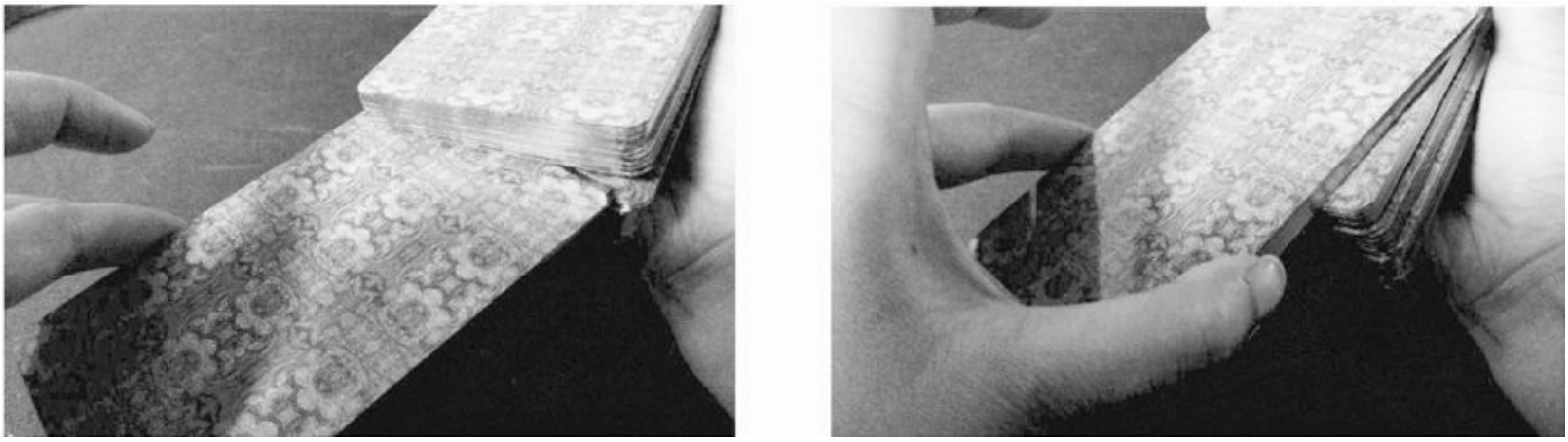
SHUFFLING THE DECK BEFORE a reading is the opportunity for both the practitioner and the Seeker to connect the conscious to the unconscious and form a bridge. The connection process is crucial if the Seeker wishes to access information in the collective unconscious, information that would not be present in the Seeker's conscious mind. To clear that bridge, concentration must be focused. To focus the concentration, whoever is handling the tarot deck should strive to harness the energies of peace, power, and openness. Relax and be calm. Clear your mind. Also, exude confidence. *Know* with conviction that your intuitive abilities are strong and present. Be open. Don't will the cards to any particular message. Don't fear or dread any particular message. Be receptive to whatever may come.

If the practitioner will be using a signifier card, start by identifying the signifier and showing it to the Seeker. Then return the signifier to the deck and shuffle thoroughly. I refuse to treat my tarot like a poker deck, so I do not bend the cards for the bridge and riffle. Instead, I hold the deck in one hand and with the other, remove a small pile from the bottom portion of the deck and place it to the top. Repeat a dozen or so times while personally attuning to the energies of peace, power, and openness. This is referred to as the traditional method of shuffling.



1. Hold the deck firmly in one hand.

2. With the other, slide out a chunk of the deck at random.



3. Place the chunk at the top of the deck.

4. Repeat several times to shuffle thoroughly.

First the practitioner shuffles the deck. Then the deck is given to the Seeker and the Seeker shuffles by the same method.[1] If card reversals are being observed, then every once in a while be sure to turn the cards upside down at random as you shuffle.

If time is of no consequence, then another way to shuffle is for the practitioner to distribute the cards into the number of piles of the Seeker's life path number. The life path number is the sum of the digits of the month, the day, and the year of birth respectively, then the sum of the digits of that sum, and then the sum of that sum, if needed, until the practitioner arrives at a digit between 1 and 9. For example, an individual born on December 26, 1978 would have the life path number 9 (12 + 26 + 1978 = 2016; 2 + 0 + 1 + 6 = 9). That individual would distribute the deck into nine separate piles, taking care to randomize upright and reversed cards into the piles. Individuals with a life path number 1 are born leaders, and therefore they should be given the deck and asked to distribute the cards into piles of any number of their choosing. To read further about the Life Path number, see Appendix G.

In the Digital Age, many practitioners are asked to perform tarot readings for Seekers over the Internet, typically by a written assessment sent via email. In such readings, I find the signifier card to be particularly instrumental in helping me attune to the Seeker's energies. When the Seeker is not present, the practitioner will shuffle on behalf of the Seeker, exercising empathy and intuition in the shuffling and cutting process to align the Seeker's energies as much as possible, albeit remotely. In such instances, shuffling by dividing the cards into the number of piles corresponding with the Seeker's Life Path number may be helpful.

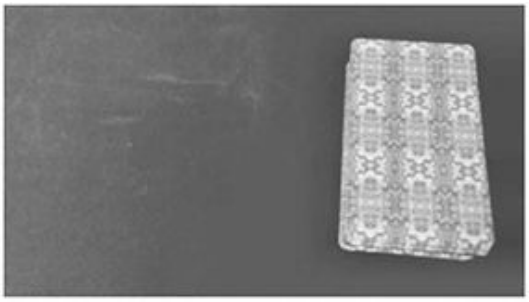
Not only does shuffling take place before a reading, but tarotist Richard Palmer recommends that the practitioner also shuffle the deck after a reading to scatter any residual energies left behind from that reading.[2] I have found that to be good practice. Before I store my cards away, I will usually give them one last good shuffle. Tarot grandmaster Christiana Gaudet recommends giving the deck of cards a firm tap against a tabletop, which helps to shake off residual energies after a Seeker's reading.[3] I have adopted Gaudet's practice and find it quite effective, especially in between back-to-back readings I might be doing for a tarot event.

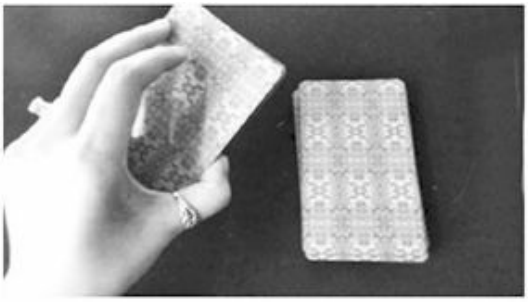
Devote time to the shuffling process, if for no other reason than meditative. The quiet pause from conversation and internal reflection will help calm the Seeker and give the practitioner a chance to ground his or her energies. It also ensures that the cards are thoroughly randomized and the order of the cards created from a previous reading won't affect the present one.

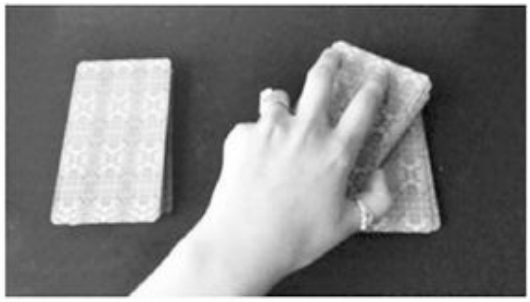
Cutting the Tarot Deck

After the deck has been shuffled thoroughly, the traditional method is to have the Seeker cut the deck. I was taught by purists of the craft to always cut the deck (and what's more, it must be cut with the left hand, not the right, because the left hand correlates with the intuitive side) before starting a reading, but I have also found that in contemporary times, few practitioners still adhere to the cutting method. Whether you the practitioner will be preserving the traditional method in your practice or adopting the modern method is up to you. I will explain cutting either way.

For the Seeker to cut the deck, the deck should be divided into four piles (or three, depending on the tradition followed), going from right to left.[4] The cutting method is similar to what is applied to the First Operation. The cards are always cut right to left for two reasons: first, it follows the direction that Hebrew is written in, which is significant to the strong Kabbalistic influences in modern-day tarot; and second, it symbolizes the regression from the conscious and external plane, governed by the right side, into the unconscious and internal plane, governed by the left.



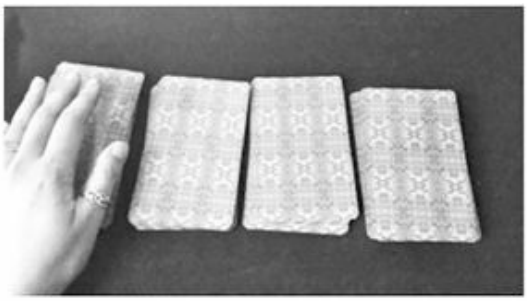


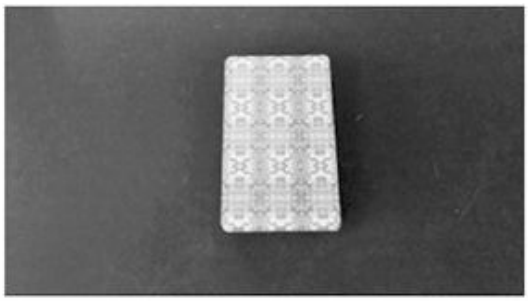


1. Set deck in front of Seeker

2. Seeker picks up half of deck and places it to the far left of the first pile.

3. Seeker picks up half of the remaining first pile, places it to the immediate left.





4. Seeker picks up half of the third pile, places it to its immediate left.

5. The deck should now be cut into four piles.

6. Seeker picks up the piles in a random order and returns it to a single pile.

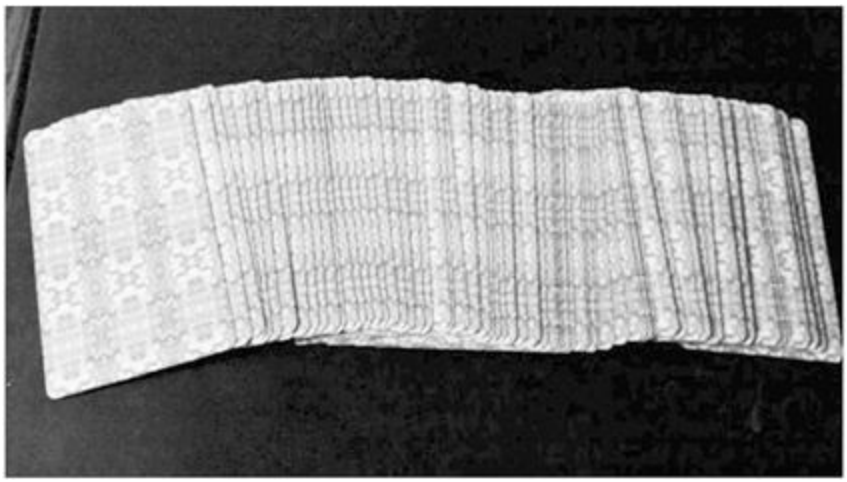
If the First Operation is being observed, then the practitioner will take the deck and proceed with the First Operation, in effect cutting the cards again.

After the First Operation, the signifier card is set down on the table as the anchor of the reading. I reshuffle the deck without the signifier and then hand it to the Seeker to also reshuffle. I explain to him or her that we are now beginning the reading and the Seeker should shuffle with confidence and know

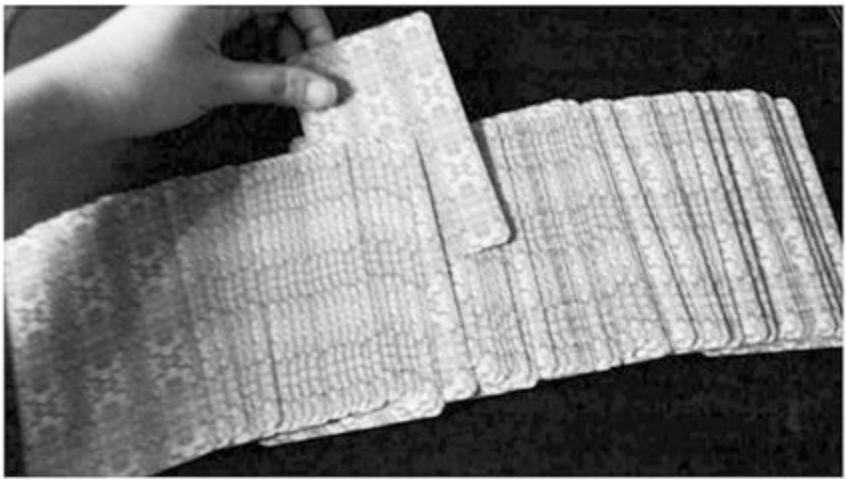
with conviction that his or her intuitive abilities are strong and present. The Seeker cuts the deck once more and when the cards are returned in a single pile to the practitioner, the reading begins.

Drawing Cards into the Spread

When a spread of less than five cards is being used, consider the Fan Approach for drawing cards.



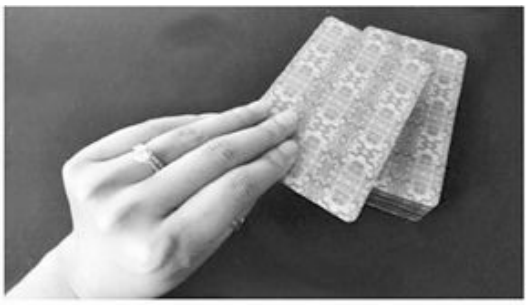
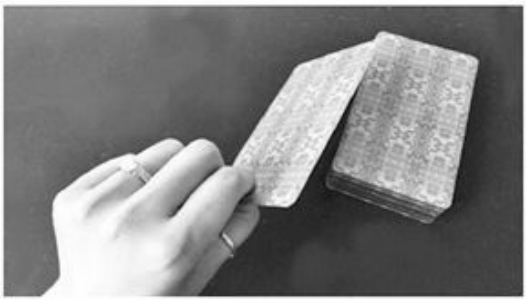
1. Fan out the cards as illustrated.



2. Have the Seeker pick up the cards at random. The practitioner takes the cards one by one from the Seeker and places them into the spread.

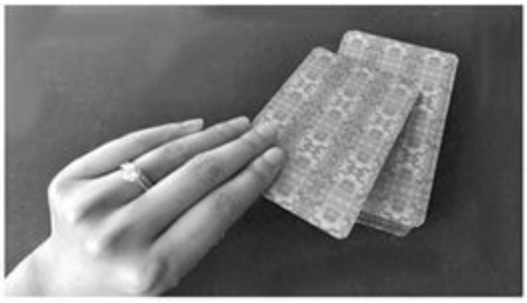
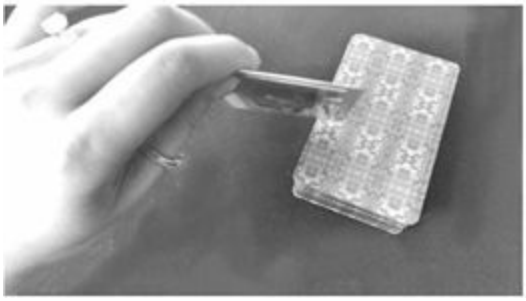
In spreads of more than five cards, draw the cards from the top of the deck one by one into the spread. Practitioners will differ in how they place the cards from the deck into the spread. Two methods are illustrated below, to show how relevant the draw is, especially if the practitioner is observing card reversals.

The Direct Flip Method

Per the Direct Flip method, the practitioner flips each card over on its long side. Per theTurn Over method, the practitioner flips each card over on its short side, toward the practitioner, so that the practitioner would see the card first, before the Seeker. Then the card is placed into the spread.

The Turn Over Method

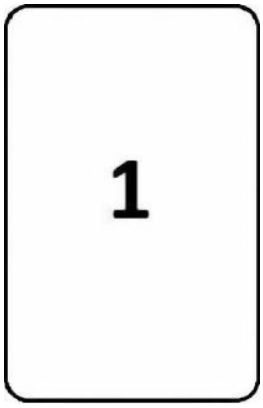
Whether the practitioner chooses to adopt the Direct Flip or Turn Over method, the key is to remain consistent. That way the tarot deck can become attuned to that practitioner's habit. If you prefer the Direct Flip, then always draw cards by the Direct Flip method. If you prefer the Turn Over, then always draw cards by the Turn Over method.

Chapter 14

The Fundamentals of Reading Spreads

ALL SPREADS SET FORTH in this chapter represent my approach only. They do not represent the right approach. For instance, there are many variations and interpretations of the Celtic Cross method, and three of the better-known versions are provided herein. Different readers will place cards down in a spread in different orders. Whether a card should be read as upright or as reversed—depending on whether it faces the tarot practitioner or the Seeker—also varies from practitioner to practitioner. Which way is up, which way is down, what is left and what is right are dependent on what you're accustomed to as the practitioner and the connection you have made with your cards. Personally I read the cards as they face me, because the tarot deck being used would be attuned to me and I, the practitioner, am the conduit for the Seeker. Thus the cards are read facing me, the practitioner. Many professional tarot readers, however, for the benefit of their clients, will set the cards down facing the client and then read accordingly. For a novice reader, that will definitely take some practice.

What you need to do is get into a consistent habit and attune your deck to your habits. That is how you establish your own spreads. Also, the spreads here are points of suggestion. Please consult other spreads, other order recommendations, and then practice various spreads. Through practice, experience, and some intuition, you can formulate spreads and orders that work best for you.



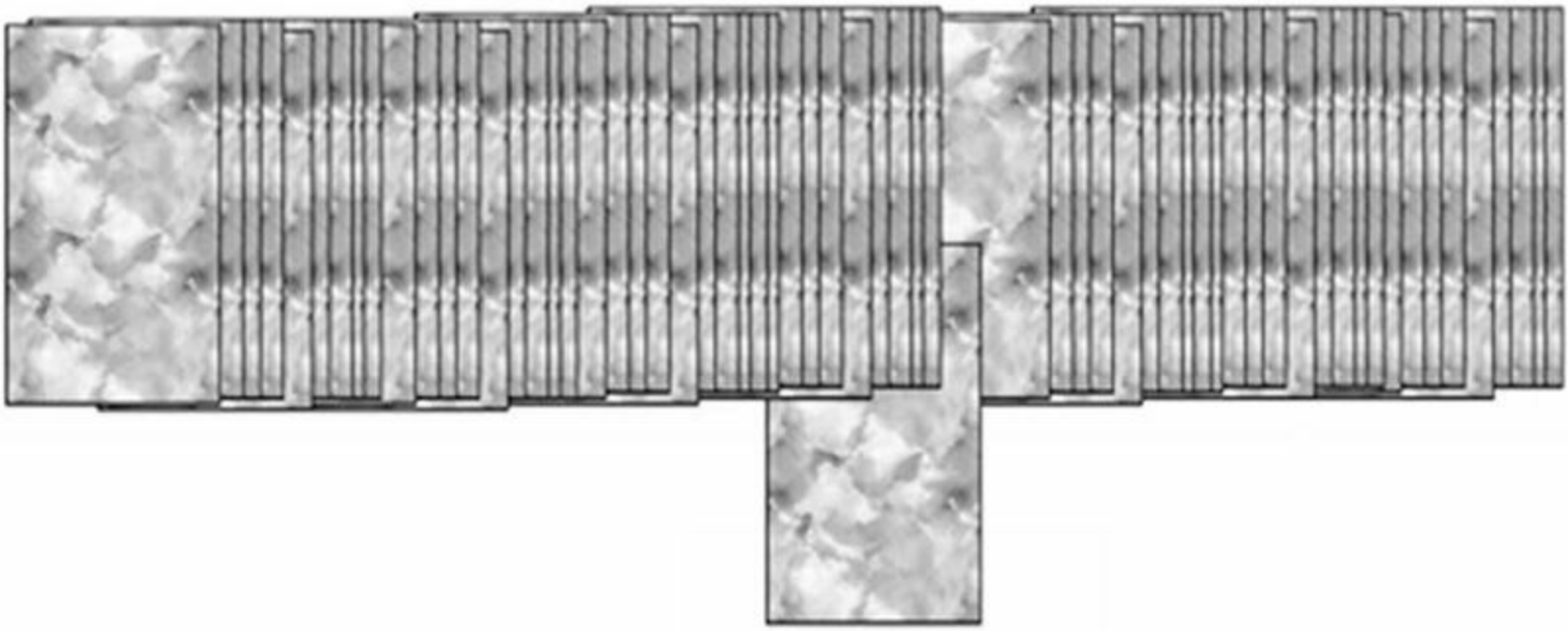
One-Card Draw

The one-card draw is suited for yes or no inquiries. Some practitioners take the approach of interpreting a card drawn upright as a "yes" answer and a card drawn in reverse to be a "no,"[1] but be careful not to rely solely on that oversimplified approach. The interpretation depends on what question was asked and how that question was phrased, and also of course on what card was drawn. A Three of Swords drawn upright may not be as affirmative or positive as a Four of Wands drawn in reverse. Thus, while the upright-yes/reversed-no rule of thumb is *one* guiding principle, it is only one of many. A more holistic approach must be taken. The one-card spread is also great for identifying the dominant force or energies in a situation.

One-card readings aim to strike at the heart of the matter. A specific question can be answered with a one-card reading. The card drawn also raises attention to particular issues, energies, or conditions that are pertinent and that the Seeker should pay attention to, regardless of what the answer is.

The Seeker should first shuffle the deck while concentrating on the question at hand. When the Seeker is satisfied, the deck should be handed to the practitioner. The practitioner then fans the cards out on a table and has the Seeker point at the card of his or her choosing. The practitioner then turns over the card that the Seeker pointed at and places it on the table.

The Fan Approach (see Chapter 13)



Another approach to the one-card reading for a Seeker uses a signifier card. Chapter 10 provides an overview on selecting signifier cards. Once the signifier card is selected, shuffle the deck with the signifier while concentrating on the Seeker's question. Then turn the deck face up toward you and look for the signifier. The card immediately behind the signifier card represents the answer to the question. The cards "behind" the signifier are in fact the cards "going forward," or what is to come to the Seeker. The cards "in front" or preceding the signifier are the cards of the past. Thus, the card immediately "behind" the signifier is the card you interpret for the question at hand.

Case Study: Melly

Melly requests a one-card reading from you. The only information you know about Melly is that she is female, in her early twenties, and an Earth sign, and she wants to know whether her current relationship with Pedro will result in marriage.

Based on her date of birth, you gather that Melly is a Taurus, an Earth sign, which corresponds to the suit of Pentacles. Her gender and year of birth may lead you to choose between the Page of Pentacles or Queen of Pentacles as the signifier card, depending on where you distinguish between a girl and a woman. You can adopt any method of determining the signifier card that suits you. Chapter 10 offers several approaches. Assume, for the purpose of this sample reading, you decide on the Page of Pentacles, based on her unmarried status.

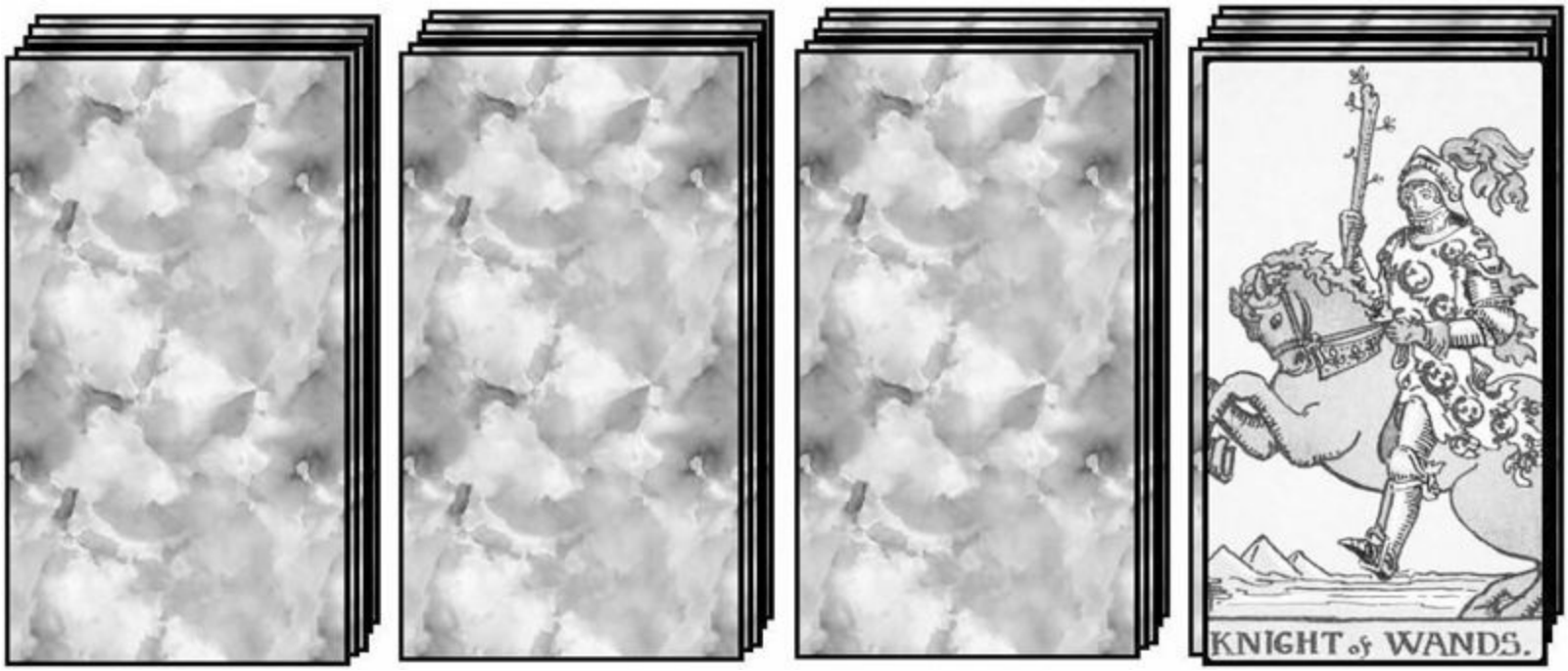
After shuffling the deck, you turn it face up and go searching for the Page of Pentacles. Once you find it, you note that the card immediately behind the Page is the Ten of Cups. That is about as positive of an indication you could get for Melly's question about Pedro. Melly and Pedro have the strong potential for a happily-ever-after.

When reading for a Seeker you do not know or have never met, using a signifier card will help anchor the reading to the Seeker.

Case Study: Joel

Joel is a male, in his twenties, and a Fire sign. He is an aspiring musician and songwriter in Los Angeles. Joel feels like he has hit a plateau in his career and artistic development. He has not been able to write any new songs or land any profitable gigs. He draws one card to help him decide on an action plan.

The First Operation can be performed as an optional preliminary step. Based on his date of birth, the signifier card selected is the Knight of Wands. His signifier appears in the I pile, corresponding to work/career, growth, and development. He construes this as a confirmation that the cards have connected his conscious to his unconscious successfully and he can proceed.



Some practitioners will reshuffle the entire deck to draw the one card. Others may opt to take the pile that the signifier appeared in for the First Operation and draw the card from that pile only. Joel decides to draw from the I pile only. He picks up the I pile, shuffles it, and draws the top card. It is the Six of Cups.

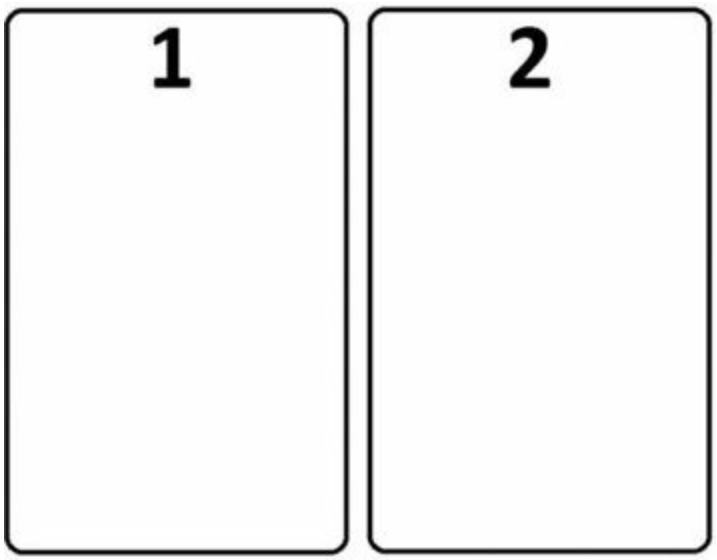
The Six of Cups is about nostalgia, about childhood memories and reminiscing. The suit of Cups

indicates the realm of emotions and relationships. The small boy and small girl pictured on the card remind Joel of his childhood sweetheart. The daffodils call to mind a field of wildflowers for him. Suddenly Joel is inspired to write a song about these childhood memories, about the girl, but to conceal the real story in a figurative one, using daffodils as a metaphor.

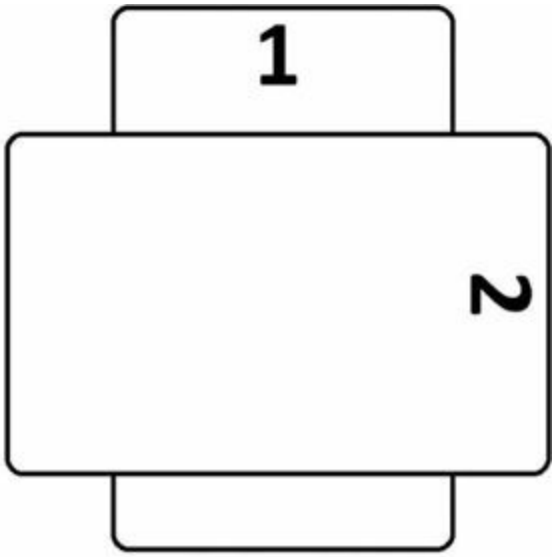
For artists especially, the signs and symbols of the tarot are a great way to trigger inspiration. His unconscious knew already what he should do to get over his artistic plateau, but he was unable to access that information consciously. The tarot helped bridge the two planes, and he proceeded to write a song that helped advance him to the next stage of his musical career.

Two-Card Spread

Two-card spreads also answer specific questions. There are two suggested methods for two-card spreads. First, to shuffle, use the Fan Approach described in the previous section. Have the Seeker select Card 1 and place it on the table as shown below, per the method being used. Then have the Seeker select Card 2.



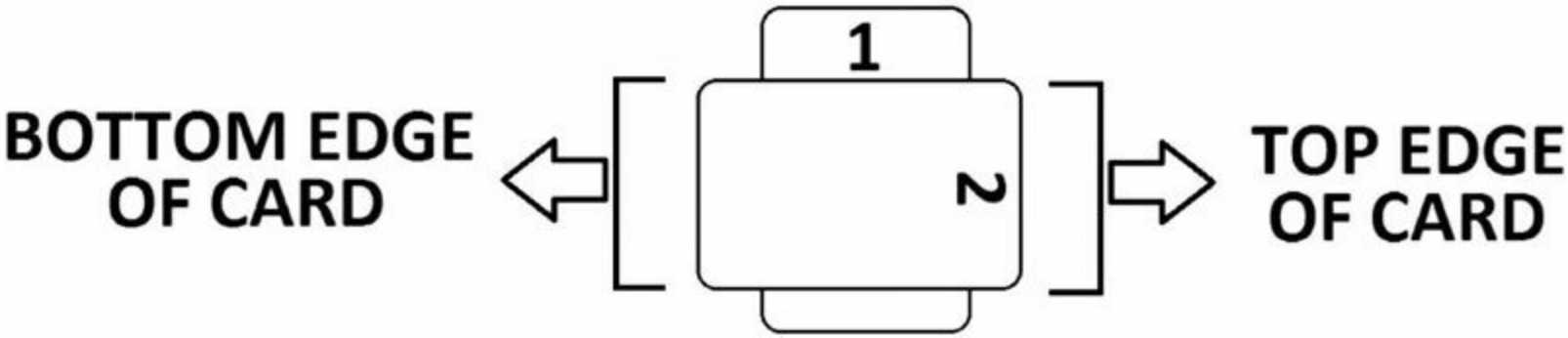
Method A



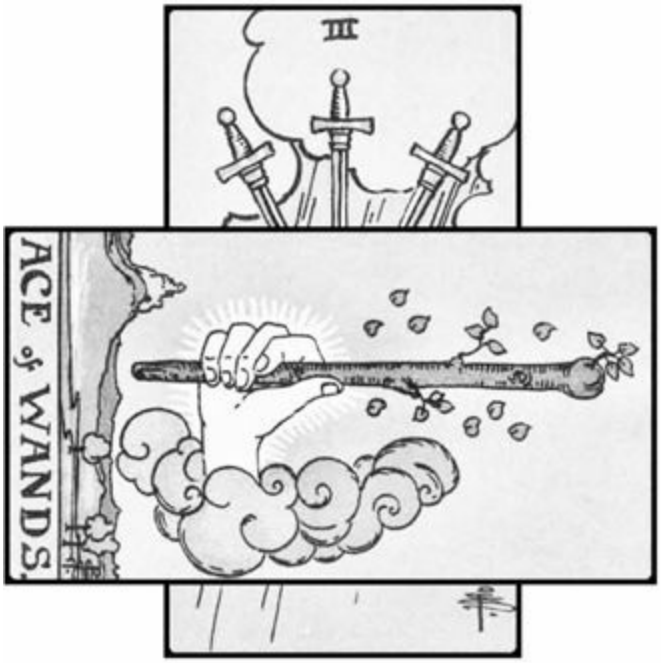
Method B

Think of the Method A two-card spread as simple addition. What does Card 1 plus Card 2 equal? That sum is the answer to the question.

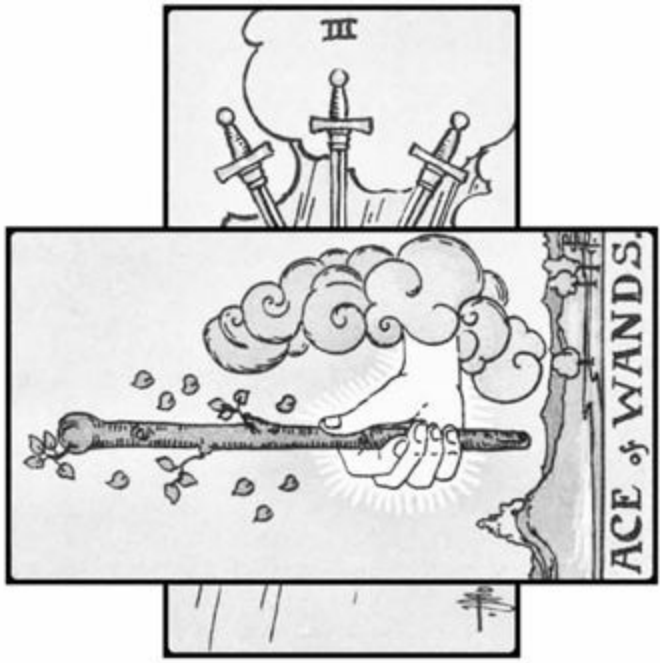
For the Method B two-card spread, Card 1 indicates the heart of the matter, the answer to the Seeker's inquiry. Card 2 can either indicate the obstacles blocking Card 1, warning the Seeker of possible challenges or conditions that may obfuscate the Seeker's goals, or it can indicate what the Seeker can anticipate up ahead, a forecast of what is to come after the events of Card 1. Thus, the two cards are a set of cause and effect. Which indication Card 2 takes on in a reading will depend on the Seeker, the nature of the inquiry, and the situation.



To determine whether Card 2 is upright or reverse, consider the left edge as it faces you to be the bottom edge of the card and the right edge as it faces you to be the top edge.



Card 2 is upright.



Card 2 is reversed.

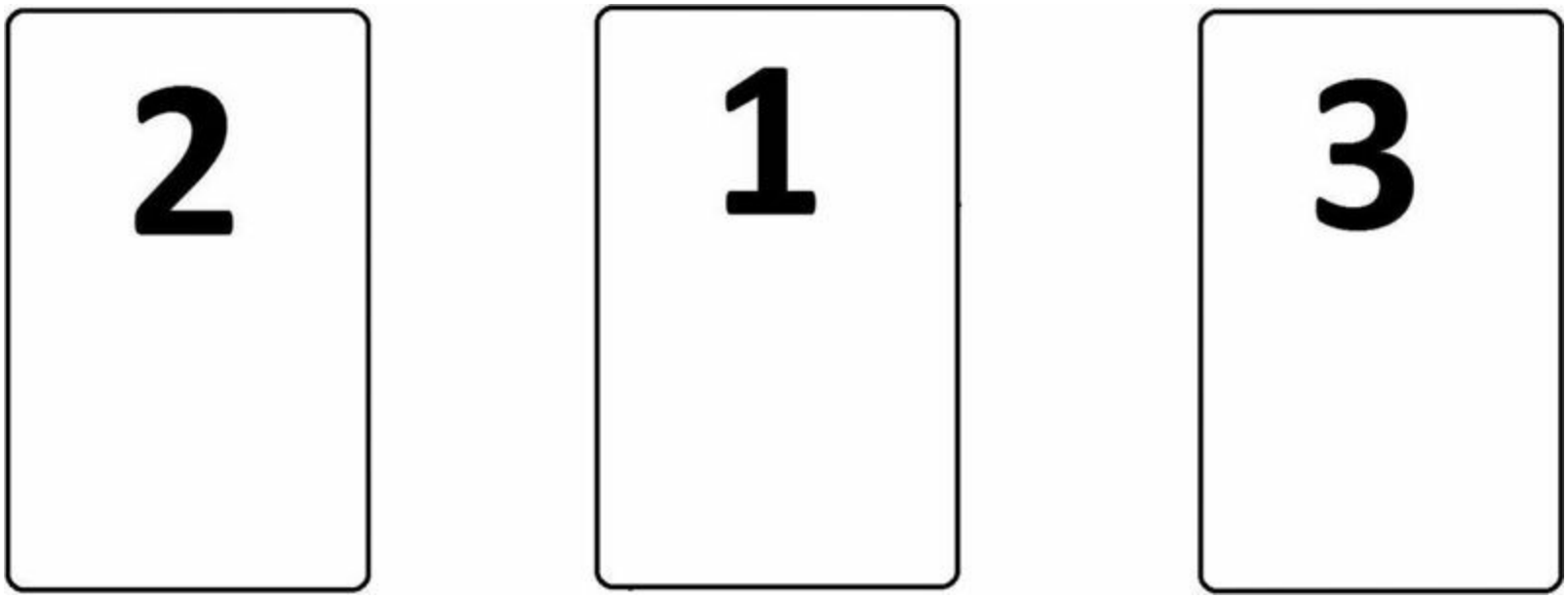
As illustrated above, Card 2 is upright in the left illustration because the left edge as it faces you is the bottom edge of the card. Despite recent losses or disappointment indicated by the Three of Swords, the Seeker will start a new journey soon, perhaps a new venture that will reclaim a sense of purpose in the Seeker's life. The Seeker will throw herself into her work for now and the result will be fruitful.

Card 2 in the right illustration is reversed. In contrast to the previous reading, in addition to the recent losses or disappointment there will be more hardships to overcome and setbacks in the Seeker's new venture. There may be continued complications that seem to block or prevent the Seeker from moving beyond the hurt from the Three of Swords. Somehow, the pain from the Three of Swords and her inability to advance forward in the new venture are interconnected, and that tension has to be resolved before she can succeed.

Chapter 15 provides several case study examples of two-card readings, in particular how to apply elemental dignities to synthesize the two cards into one cohesive message to the Seeker.

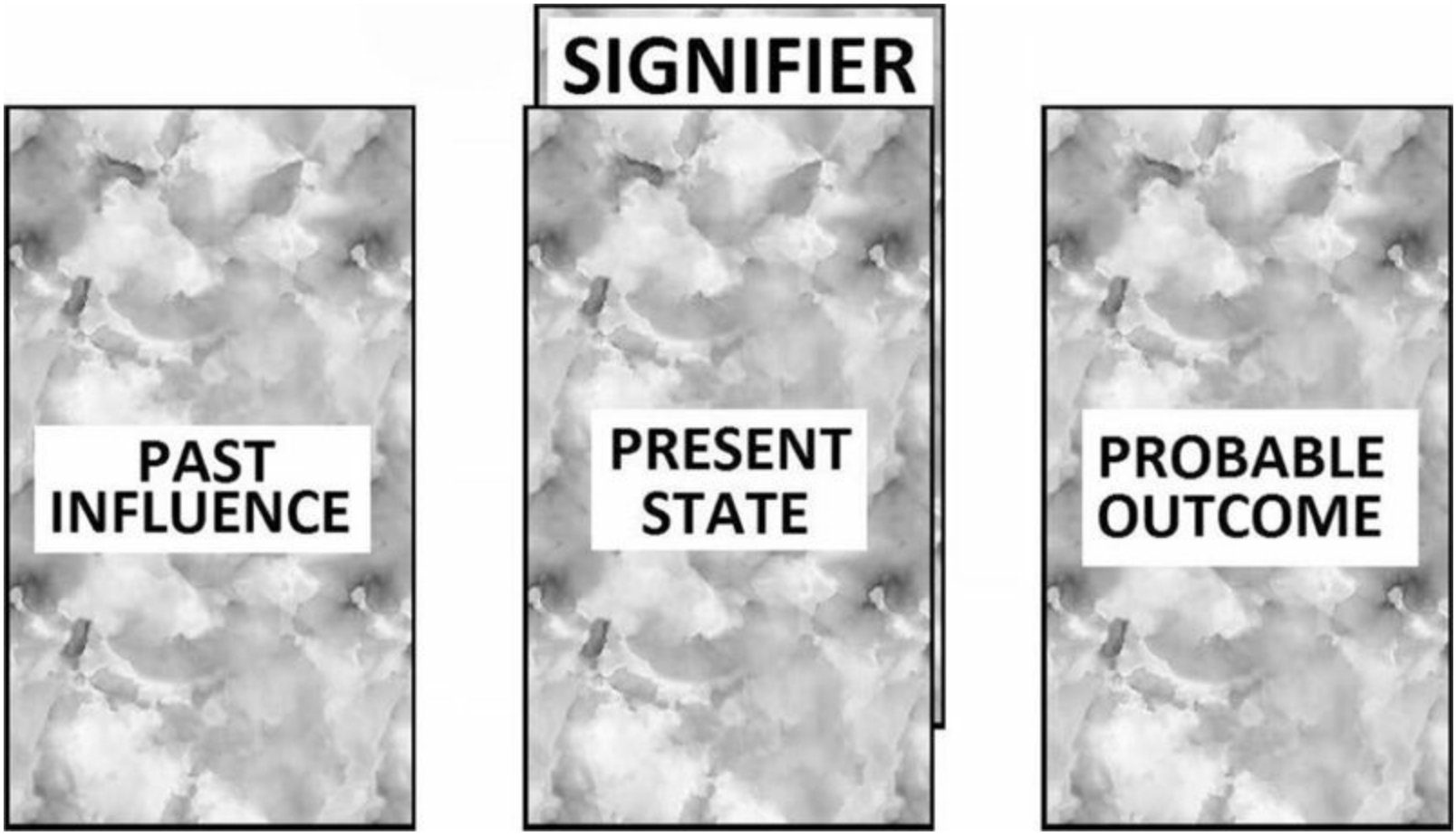
Three-Card Spread

Three-card spreads are concise at informing the Seeker of the present situation, past influences on the present, and the most likely future outcome. It is a quick summary of the near past, the present, and the near future. There are also other meanings that can be given to a three-card spread, which will be discussed in this section.



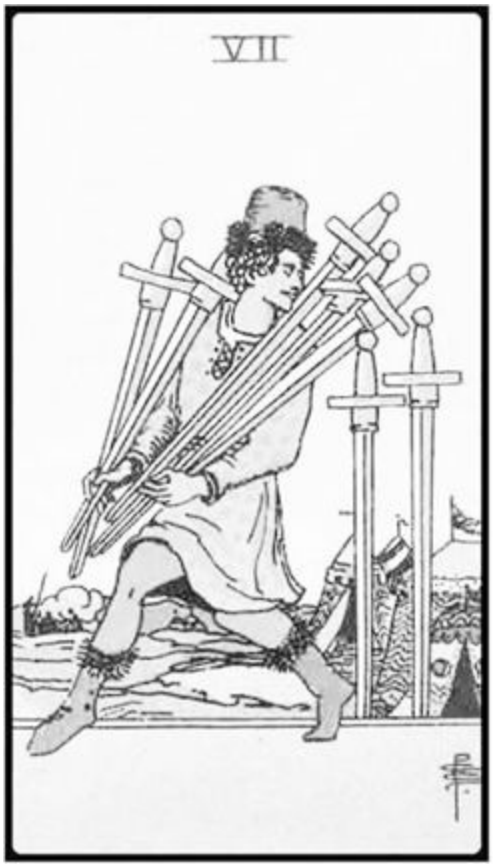
In three-card spreads, my approach is to first draw the card denoting the present. Thus, my Card 1 is always the present in every spread. In the three-card spread, Card 1 is the first card drawn. Card 2 is placed to the left of Card 1, representing past influences on the present matter. Card 3 is placed to the right of Card 1, representing the future outcome.

Note that when the signifier card is not shown in a spread illustration, it is assumed that the practitioner will place the signifier card down first, and then Card 1 over the signifier, like so:



Another popular approach is to read the three cards as one would the three acts of a play. Card 2 represents Act I of the Seeker's situation; Card 1 represents Act II; Card 3 represents Act III. Firs the practitioner should examine the overall landscape of the spread. How this can be done will be discussed later in this chapter. The practitioner should tell the Seeker, "This is a story about …" and explain what the overall general remarks are about the cards. Then the practitioner should study and note to him- or herself the story told in each separate card. Bridge them together in the same way one would the scenes of a play.

The three cards could also be used to signify the mind, body, and spirit, left to right. Card 2 represents the intellectual movement within the Seeker, his or her thoughts and attitudes. Card 1 represents actions and conduct, or the physical world. Card 3 represents the cards' spiritual guidance for the Seeker's situation.



Henrietta is dissatisfied with her rate of progress (or lack thereof) in life. She had expected to be well on her way to a lucrative career in writing and publishing by now. After all, she has an MFA. Instead, she is a copywriter doing contract jobs.

A three-card spread is used to read about Henrietta's present situation and consider what next step she can take to dig herself out of her rut. No signifier card was used. The three cards drawn and illustrated are as follows: the Three of Pentacles in reverse for the present; the Seven of Swords for the past; and the Eight of Cups in reverse for the future.

The Three of Pentacles often appears in readings for those in creative fields. However, it appears in reverse to Henrietta, which indicates current mediocrity. She has not been able to achieve the recognition she craves in her field, and the more she is ignored the more desperate she feels; that desperation has in turn had a detrimental effect on her work. The Three of Pentacles here confirms how Henrietta has been feeling.

The Seven of Swords suggests someone who enjoys attention, who likes to diverge from the norm. The card here can also suggest a tendency to fib or tell white lies. She is still haunted by the immature actions she took in the past that were deceptive. There is also a sense of restlessness here. The karmic effects of those past actions are taking a toll now, and the Seven of Swords here is an indication to Henrietta to make amends and resolve the past so that she can progress forward with a clean slate. Until she makes peace with that, she won't be able to move past her present state of mediocrity.

The Eight of Cups in reverse as applied here is about the inability to understand the higher purpose of Henrietta's work pursuits. When the Eight of Cups is in reverse, there is a sense of aimlessness. The card here suggests she should abandon the work she has done

to date, none of which comes close to representing Henrietta's best, and begin the search for higher ground. If she does not heed the message here, the result could be that she resorts to the drinking and partying of her college days to try to escape her feelings of inadequacy, and in doing so, strays even farther from her goals.

Henrietta had a complete first draft of a novel she had been working on since her MFA days. She was proud of that draft, believing many of the passages to be witty and clever, though after submitting it to numerous agents and publishers she received zero positive feedback. The Eight of Cups was a hard message for Henrietta to receive, because the suggestion was to scrap her old work and begin something entirely new. Henrietta resisted, as it seemed much easier to just continue plugging away at the draft. Yet the message rang true with her gut intuition and she knew that the draft was too superficial, too mired in wordplay to be a good, solid story. Working further on it would be no different from beating a dead horse.

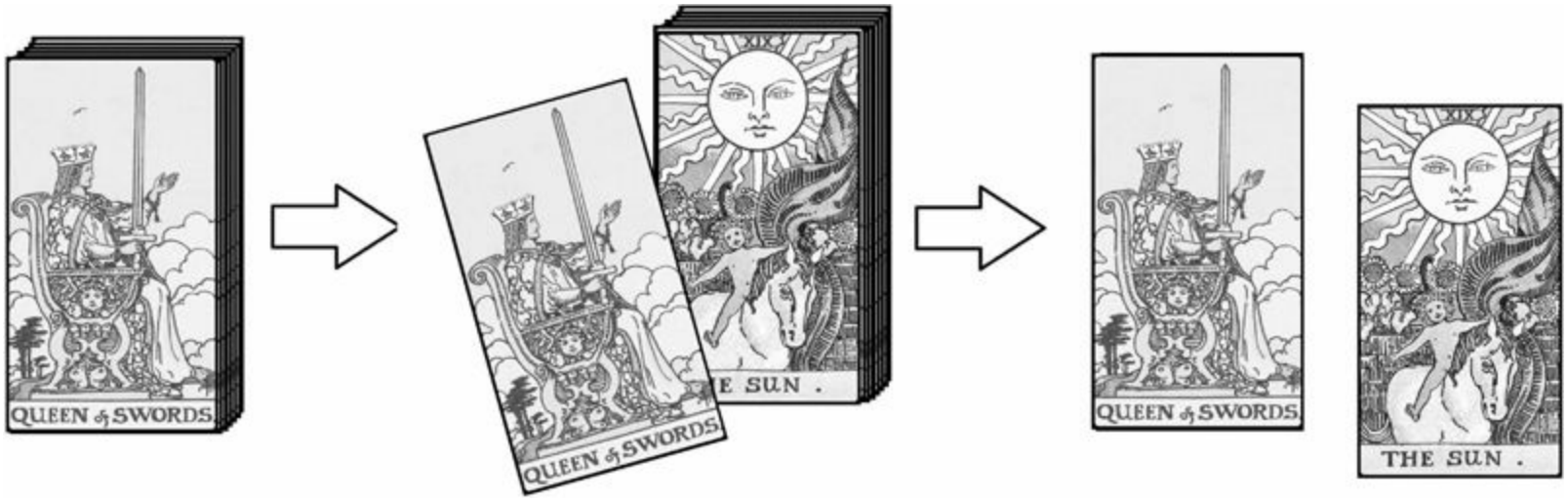
For Henrietta, the three-card reading helped her resolve to set aside the working novel manuscript she had and start afresh. A whole new storyline came to her, which became a short story that was accepted by a top-tier literary journal, and eventually became the first chapter of her book. As a result of her actions, Henrietta managed to evade the negative aspects of the Eight of Cups forecast and instead, she accepted the advice and lived up to the upright meaning of the card.

Beginner tarot practitioners should use the three-card spread until it becomes second nature. Once the three-card spread is mastered, the beginner practitioner can move on to more complex spreads to study.

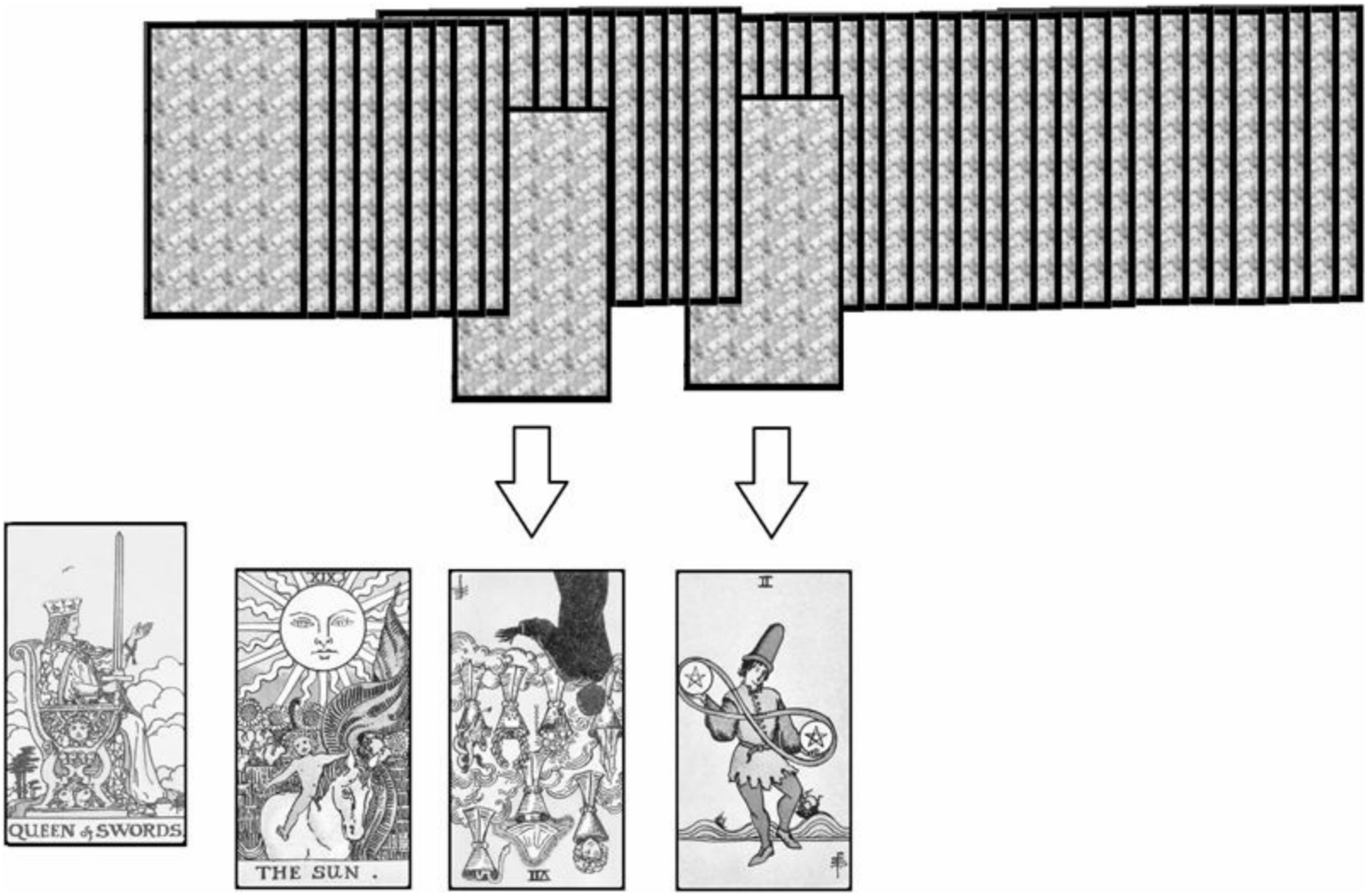
Alternative Three-Card Spread

An alternative three-card spread will utilize the First Operation to not only identify the subtopic that the Seeker needs to focus on within an inquiry, but will also use the First Operation to draw the first card.

When the signifier is located via the First Operation, the cards preceding the signifier are taken as a pile and placed at the bottom of the pile in hand. The signifier card should then be the topmost card.



The card immediately following the signifier—appearing behind the signifier card—is drawn out as Card 1. That card is interpreted as the thesis of the answer to the Seeker's question. Set down the signifier and Card 1, and the remaining deck should be placed face-down.

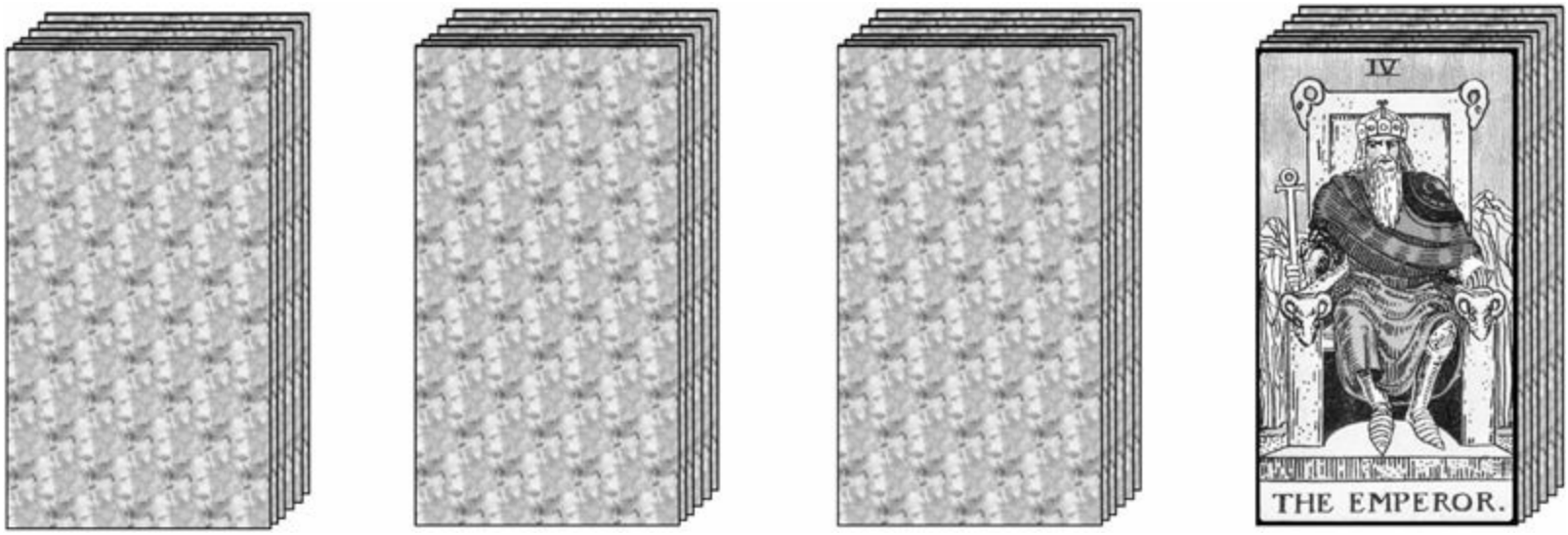


Fan the cards out and have the Seeker select two more cards. The first card drawn from the far becomes Card 2; the second card drawn becomes Card 3. They are placed to the right side of Card 1 so that there is now a row of cards: the signifier, and Cards 1, 2, and 3. While Card 1 was the thesis, Cards 2 and 3 are the argument, the most relevant factors for success, or the energies surrounding the Seeker's situation that will most likely affect the future.

Case Study: Sadhil

Sadhil is a male in his thirties, and he has an inquiry related to work. He wants to know what his potential for great professional success is, and what it will take of him to reach that potential. Sadhil is also an Aries and has a strong energetic presence. Intuitively, Key 4: The Emperor was selected for his signifier, first because his inquiry is related to work and The Emperor card can correspond with that subject matter, but also because of his sun sign.

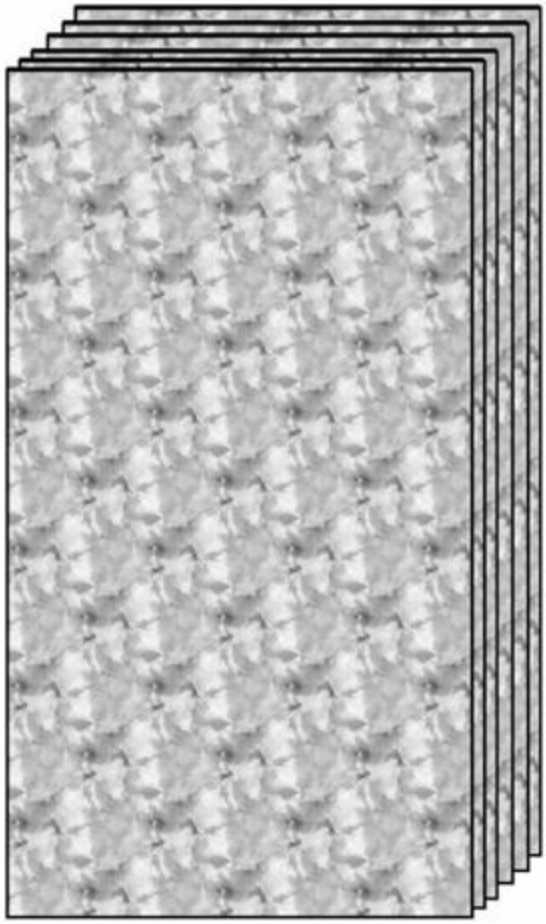
The First Operation is performed to draw the first card of the three-card spread. The signifier card (The Emperor) was located in the I pile.



The card appearing immediately after The Emperor card is the Five of Wands. The result of the First Operation is aligned precisely with Sadhil's inquiry about his work/career projections. As the practitioner becomes more experienced with the tarot, he or she will find such synchronicities to be commonplace.

The remaining three piles are set aside and the focus is on the I pile. All cards that had appeared before the signifier was located should be placed to the back of the pile so that now the signifier card is at the top. Set down the signifier, then to the card's immediate

right, set down the first card drawn, which in Sadhil's case is the Five of Wands. Then set down the remaining pile, face down.



Using the Fan Approach, spread out the remaining pile and have the Seeker select two cards at random. These will be Cards 2 and 3 respectively. Set the two cards in order as they were drawn to the immediate right of the signifier and Card 1.

Card 1

Card 2

Card 3

The signifier card is set aside and the three cards drawn are read. Card 1 is the direct answer to Sadhil's question, the thesis. Sadhil had asked about his potential for professional success and what it would take for him to reach that potential. The Five of Wands suggests a competitive, cutthroat personality who will try to outdo others. Sadhil's ambitions will clash with the ambitions of others. To succeed, Sadhil will try to outshine, rather than work collaboratively.

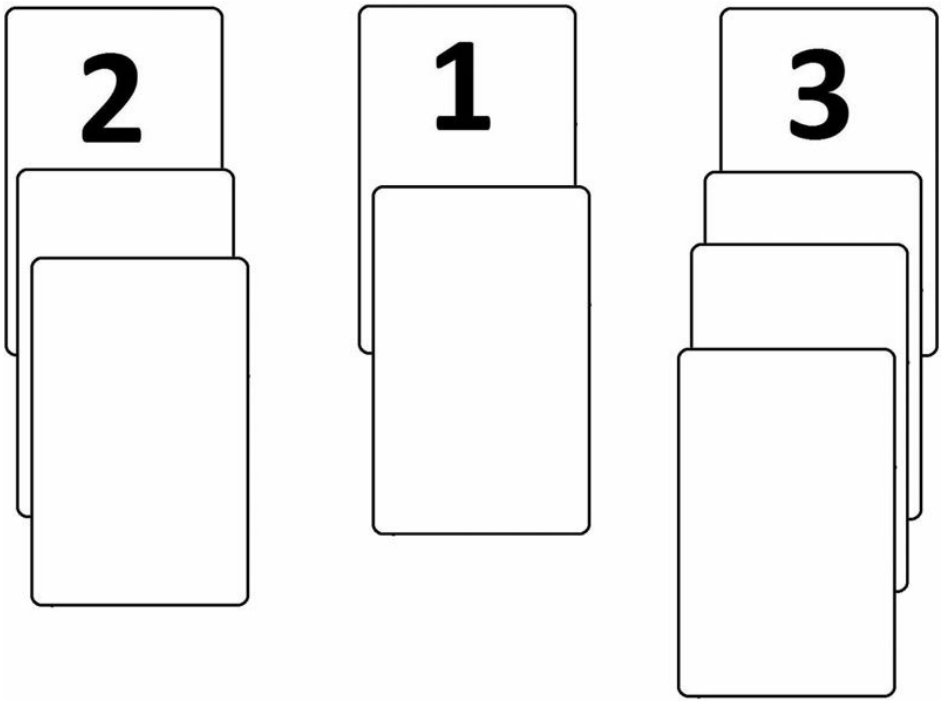
Yet Card 2 suggests that Sadhil will succeed, but that to reach his greatest potential he may need to adjust his personality. The Four of Wands is about harmony, prosperity, and peace. In a reading about a Seeker's career, the Four of Wands suggests work–life balance. It is about getting along with others so that all parties can rejoice together. Even though Sadhil is going to compete to get to the top in a very cutthroat profession, the Four of Wands here represents the true way for him to reach success.

However, in Sadhil's specific situation, complacency will do more harm than good. His nature is why he will reach the top of the ladder. Card 3, the Knight of Wands, represents Sadhil. The astrological sign Aries is associated with the card, for starters, and the card suggests an impetuous, competitive, and hotheaded individual. Sadhil likes to stir up controversy. He thrives on challenges. However, he is also intensely motivated. The facet of his personality that is the Knight of Wands must dominate in his career endeavors, because it is that specific personality that will enable him to reach the highest echelons of success. Note further how all three cards are from the suit of Wands. That suggests very strong Fire energies throughout Sadhil's life. The animal that best represents him is the Lion. Sadhil's potential for success is going to be to the level that will bring a great amount of prosperity to his family and will yield full satisfaction, as indicated by the Four of Wands. The reason

for his success will be his Knight of Wands personality. Ultimately, per the Five of Wands, Sadhil's competitive nature will motivate him to clash against others in his industry. His potential will be high, because Sadhil is the type who is not afraid of a little fight. He is neither passive nor complacent, and for those reasons he will throw his name into the hat for every competition, and one by one win them all until he reaches the Four of Wands.

While overall Sadhil's reading is incredibly positive and would make any Seeker happy, the practitioner should note that the Four of Wands is about subjective success—a sense of personal fulfillment. However, cards such as The Sun, The World, or even the Six of Wands, Nine of Cups, Ace of Swords, or any of the higher numbered Pentacles, are notably missing. In the context of Sadhil's world, he will be a great success. However, in the context of the world at large, the cards do not indicate fame, fortune, or the building of an empire. Thus, while Sadhil will lead a fulfilled, fortunate life and will win more times than he loses, exceptional greatness may remain elusive.

Expanding on the Three-Card Spread

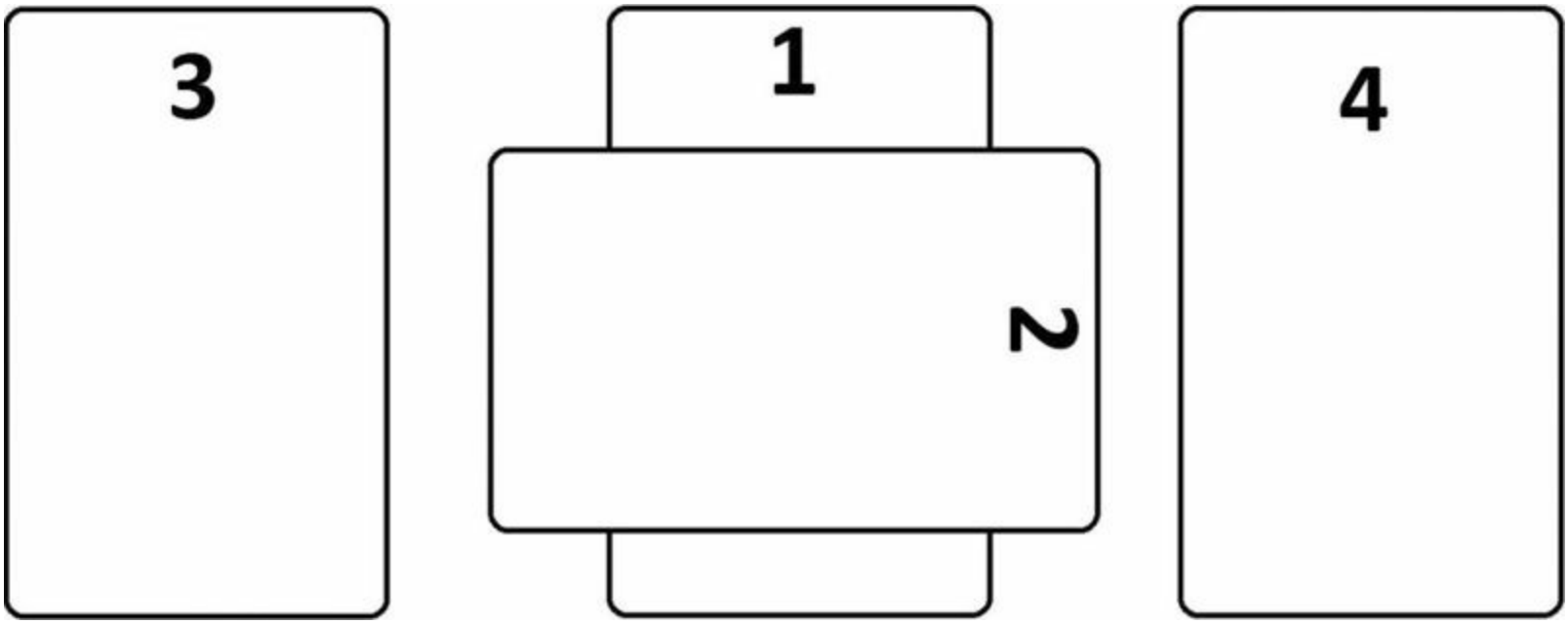


The basic three-card layout is well suited for expanding into multiple card spreads that will provide greater details for the first three cards. After drawing the three cards and interpreting the spread, a Seeker can ask follow-up questions on those three cards or inquire about details. Subsequent cards are drawn and placed over and below the card that the new additional card is developing on. For instance, a Seeker has a follow-up question on the reading given for the “past” position card. If the practitioner wishes to answer the follow-up question, he or she can draw an additional card and place it below the “past” position card and interpret accordingly. The practice can be done for any of the three cards, present, past, and probable future respectively.

Four-Card Spread

The four-card spread builds on the three-card spread, with an additional card that helps flesh out the indications of Card 1. A cross is formed between Cards 1 and 2, which helps to identify the crux of the matter at hand.

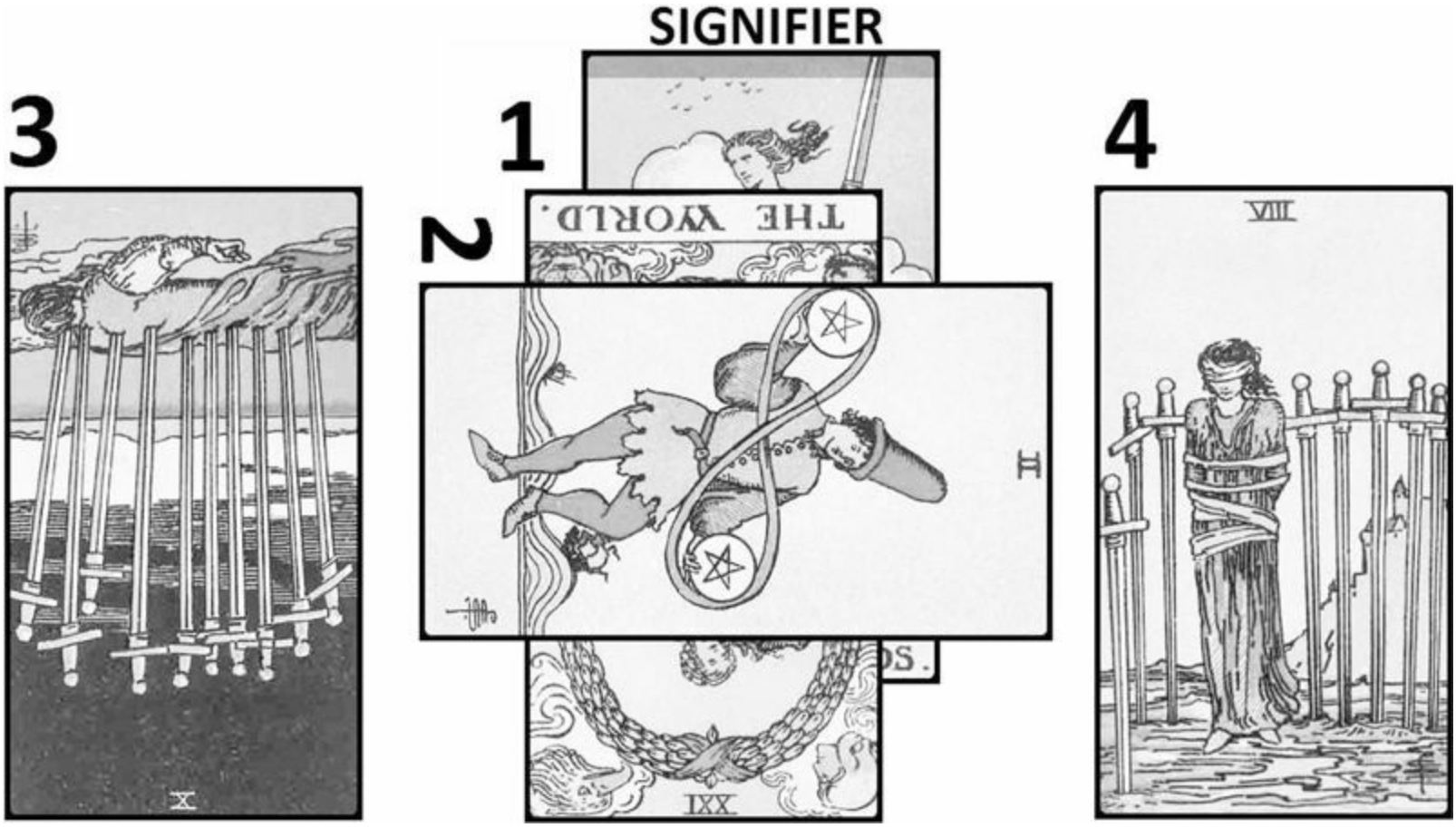
For the four-card spread, after shuffling, the Traditional Approach for drawing the cards should be applied. Four-card spreads can answer both general and specific questions. If the practitioner opts to use signifier cards for the Seeker, the signifier card should be placed on the table first, then Card 1 placed directly on top of it.



Card 1 goes on top of the signifier. Card 1 represents the current state, or the "heart of the matter." Card 2 is the challenge or obstacle that must be faced, or it can indicate what is immediately ahead as a result of Card 1. Card 3 represents past influences on the present situation. Card 4 represents the most likely future outcome, or the "answer" card.

Card #	*Position Meaning*	*Card Drawn*
1	Present Influence; Heart of the Matter	Key 21, The World, Reversed
2	Challenges/Obstacles; What Crosses Seeker	Two of Pentacles
3	Past Influences	Ten of Swords, Reversed
4	Probable Outcome; Forecast	Eight of Swords

Madison wants to know about her career prospects. She is female and an Air sign. She comes to you for a tarot reading and the foregoing is all the information you have about her. You opt for a four-card reading and select the Page of Swords as the signifier. The reading result is illustrated in the above table and the cards are as follows:



While a long, in-depth reading can be derived out of this spread, the summary of the story is a woman with incredible force and potential, as suggested by The World card, but that achievement of her greatness would be delayed, due to the card's reversal, and those achievements could be in any number of pursuits because of her many talents and skill sets, as suggested by the Two of Pentacles. The cause-and-effect of greatest relevance to Madison is represented by the cross of The World card reversed and the Two of Pentacles.

However, she has been the target of much jealousy and betrayals from others in the past because others envied her innate abilities. In the past, achievement seemed to come naturally to her, where others had to work for it. There was retaliation and Madison was

perhaps injured significantly from the backlash. While the Ten of Swords in reverse indicates that Madison has risen from the defeat and has moved on with her life, the stings still cause her to flinch even today. If she does not make peace with that part of her past, she is not going to be at her most effective in her career going forward. The Eight of Swords here is connected karmically to the Ten of Swords. She cannot embody the upright meaning of The World card that is her birthright unless she deals with what the Ten of Swords from her past was to her. If she cannot reconcile that, she will continue to feel bound by her circumstances and the delay of The World card's promise could be indefinite.

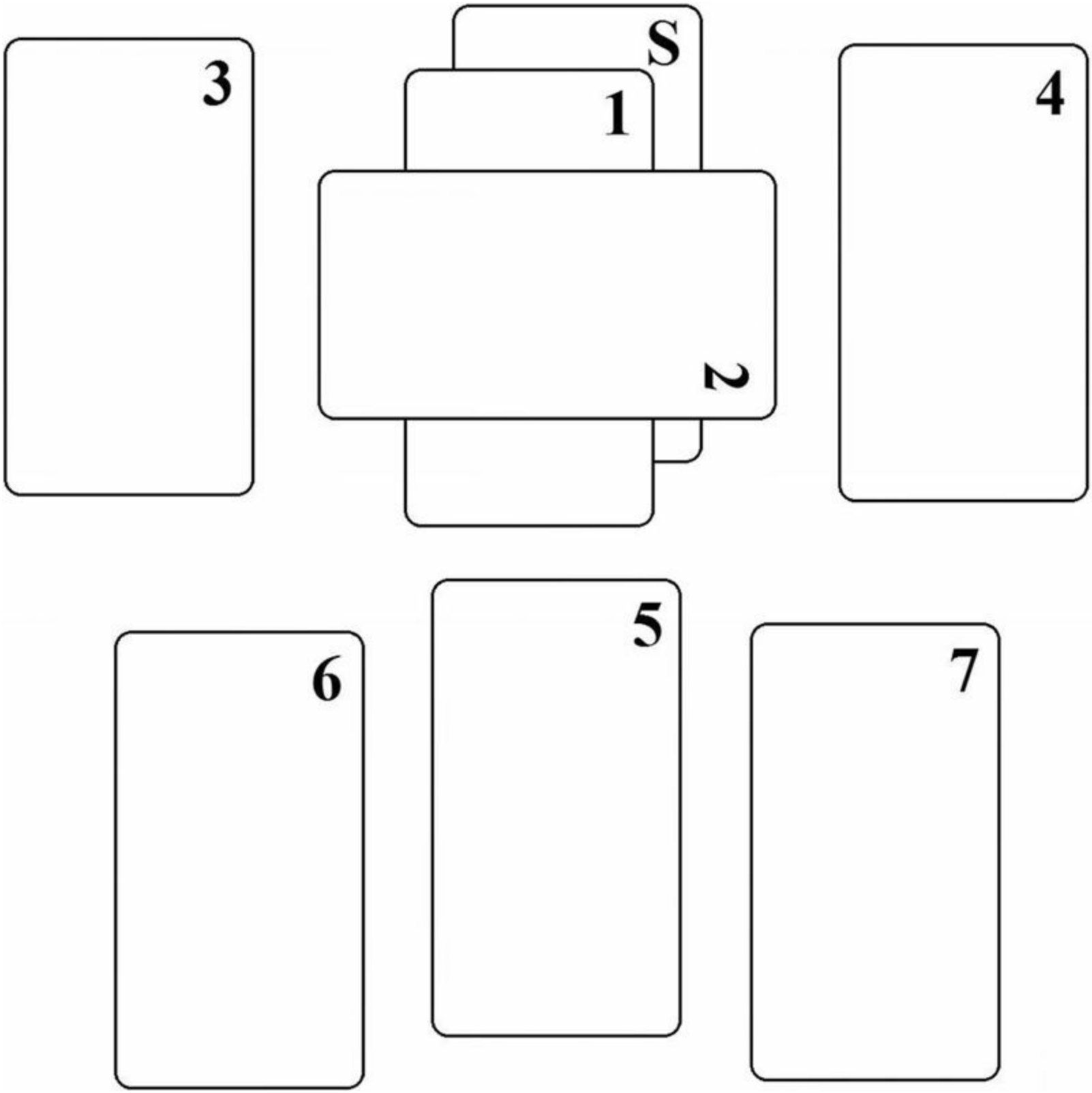
The Eight of Swords also suggests that in spite of her many talents, Madison seems to be unable to see perceptively when it comes to herself. The Eight of Swords suggests that through minor adjustments—symbolized by the ease with which the blindfolded woman depicted on the card could free herself from her captive circumstances if she used the blades surrounding her to cut herself loose—Madison could shoot straight up to the highest echelons of achievement in her field and attain the fulfillment from her career that she wants. Oddly, her creativity extends to so many fields around her and even to helping others, but when it comes to herself she lacks the perception to see past what appear to be her physical limitations.

Note how the reading would leave Madison with many follow-up questions. What is it that binds and blindfolds her in the Eight of Swords? Though the Two of Pentacles indicates that she possesses many skill sets, which one is the one that will cause The World card to be upright figuratively in her life and help her manifest that fulfillment? Yes, perhaps people have hurt her in the past and upon receipt of the tarot reading, Madison could even name names. One of those individuals, in fact, has recently reentered her life. Should she forgive and forget? Or is that person so toxic that she should cut that person out of her life completely?

At this time it is perfectly permissible for the tarot practitioner to perform a follow-up reading if one is being requested. Although a Seeker should never consult the tarot for the same question twice, consulting the tarot for follow-ups can be incredibly empowering to the Seeker.

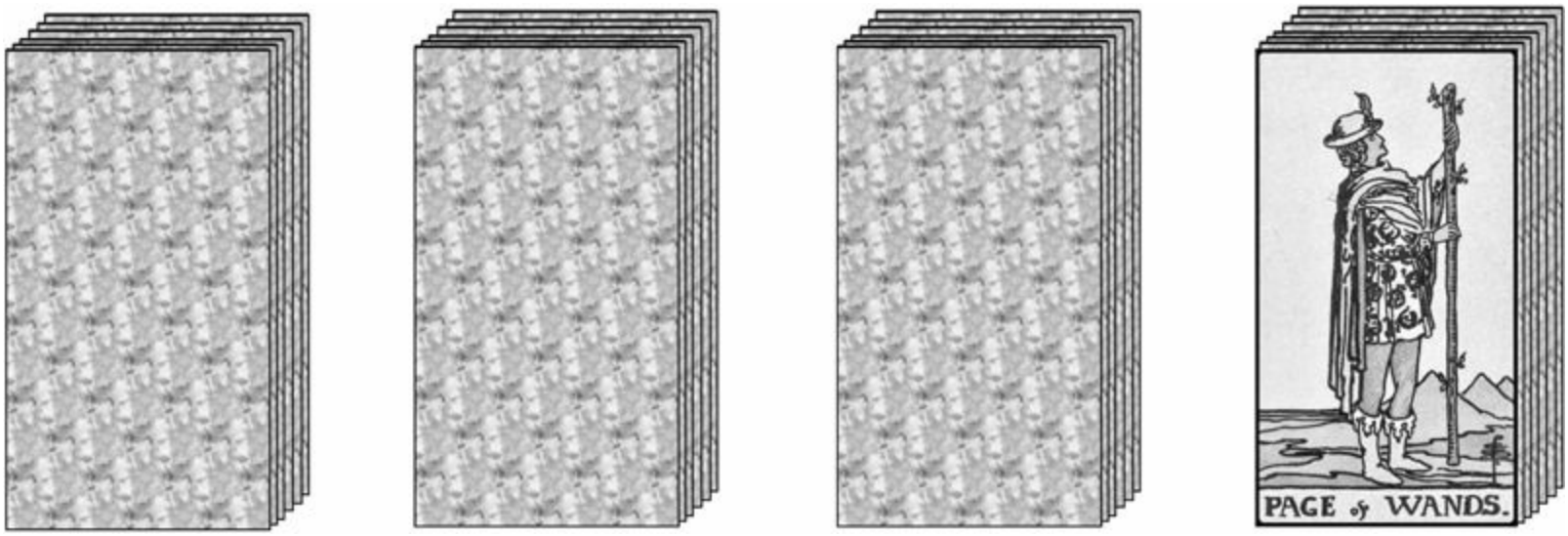
Combination Spreads

Two or more spreads from this chapter can be synthesized into combination spreads. For example, the four-card spread and the three-card spread can be combined. The best practice would be to start such a reading with the First Operation. After the First Operation, an overview reading of the Seeker's inquiry (general or specific) may be assessed through the four-card spread. Then return to the result of the First Operation and perform a three-card spread to identify the present, past, and prospective future influences that will be most relevant to the Seeker in the specific issue divined from the First Operation.



Case Study: Margaret

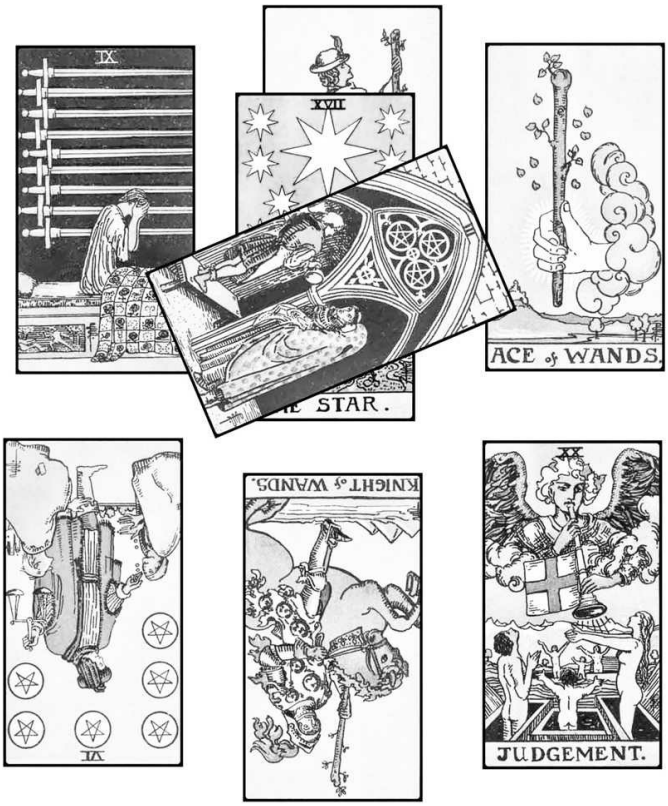
Margaret is a single female in her early twenties and she wants to know what might be on the horizon for her in matters of the heart. Margaret is a Fire sign, so the Page of Wands is selected as her signifier. The First Operation is performed, with the following result:



The signifier card appears in the I pile. Although Margaret is asking about love and relationships, the results of the First Operation seem to suggest that what Margaret should be focusing on right now is her career goals, not her love life. Note that the traditional approach would be to stop here and not perform a reading for Margaret.[2] However, the modern approach would be to reconcile the First Operation with the subsequent reading to be performed for the Seeker, which this case study will attempt to demonstrate.

Since there is a disconnect between the Seeker's question and the result of the First Operation, a combination spread can be used to ameliorate the situation. Start with a spread to answer the question at hand. Then append to that spread a second spread that will reveal to the Seeker why he or she should focus on the area that the First Operation indicated, rather than the area that the Seeker is asking about.

In Margaret's case, the reading starts with a four-card spread. While Margaret is shuffling and cutting, have her concentrate on the original question at hand. Then the practitioner draws the cards. Immediately after, hand the deck back to Margaret and have her shuffle and cut again, this time asking her to concentrate on why she should focus on her career goals and personal development, i.e., the I pile, rather than love, which is what her conscious has been more concerned about. Then draw a three-card spread below the four-card spread, as follows:



The top four-card spread will answer Margaret's question at hand, and the bottom three-card spread will answer why her signifier appeared in the I pile, in other words why is it more important right now for her to focus on her career than to find love. In essence, the combination spread will help the Seeker reconcile her conscious mind with her unconscious. Her conscious mind wants to focus on love, but her unconscious is urging her to place that focus on her career and personal development.

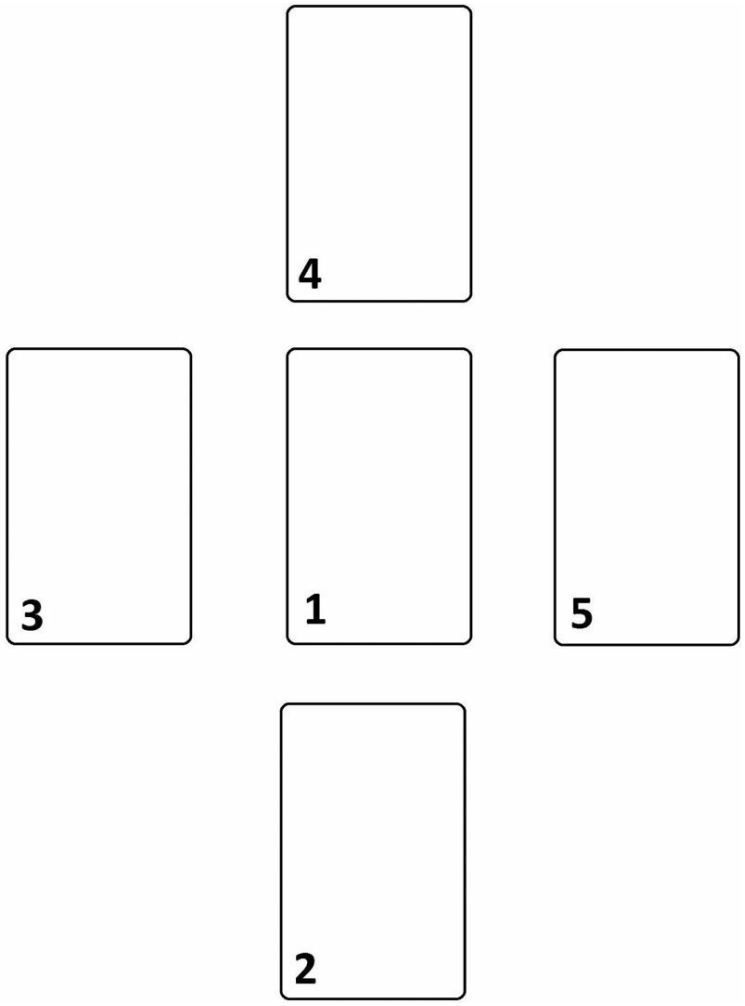
Here, the four-card spread does seem to answer why Margaret's unconscious is urging her to focus on her career. The Ace of Wands not only suggests a new job, but it also suggests that she will find a potential love interest by way of her new job. The way the signifier card faces the Ace of Wands also suggests that this new job will be a rewarding and enjoyable one for Margaret. This is an opportunity she will want to seize. Therefore, she needs to be on the active lookout for the opportunity, so that when it knocks she can answer. If she continues to focus on love, she will not only miss out on a love opportunity, but she will also miss out on a life-changing career opportunity as well. That is why the First Operation indicated for her to focus on her career. That way she will be less likely to miss the great opportunity that is coming her way.

Note that the foregoing discussion of Margaret's reading does not represent a complete reading assessment that a practitioner would provide to this Seeker. The discussion here is to explain how combination spreads work. In an actual reading for Margaret, every card in the spread would be explained in detail to her.

Any two spreads discussed in this chapter can be combined into a combination spread. The author's preferred approach is to combine the four-card spread and the three-card spread when there has been a disconnect between the First Operation result and the Seeker's specific question.

The Simple Cross

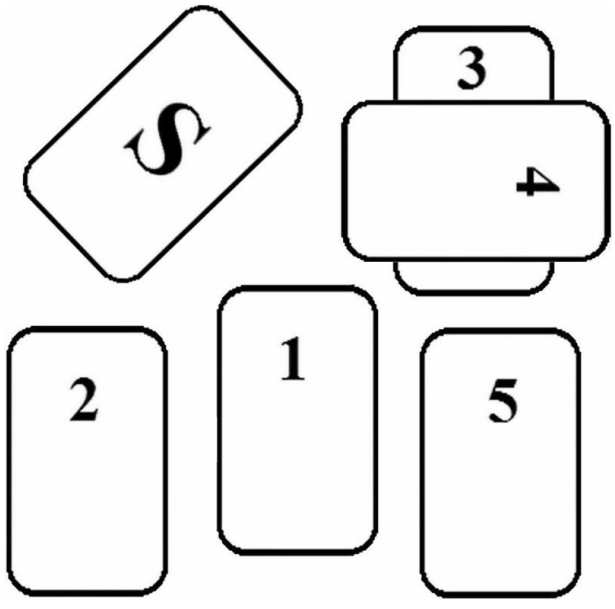
For five-card spreads, after shuffling, the traditional approach for drawing the cards should be applied. Like the four-card spread, the signifier card, if used, should be placed on the table first, then Card 1 placed on top of it.



The Simple Cross spread is a versatile and easy-to-read spread that will be indispensable to practitioners, especially novices. Start by placing Card 1 over the signifier card. Card 1 represents the current state, or the "heart of the matter." Card 2 represents the roots or foundation, which may include past experiences or events. Card 3 represents past influences on the present situation. Card 4 is the speculative card, representing objectives, aspirations, or higher issues that need to be considered. Card 5 represents the most likely future outcome. For an example on how the Simple Cross might be applied, see "Case Study: Cora" in Chapter 19.

The Essential Keys Spread

If I find myself in a party setting where many individuals are requesting tarot readings one after the other, I'll opt for the Essential Keys spread, which is only five cards, and rather than answering a specific question, it offers a holistic snapshot of the Seeker's character and life trajectory. With the Essential Keys spread I can touch upon the main points that the Seeker needs to know about where he or she is at right now and—most important—I can do that in about five to ten minutes.



A signifier card is optional. If time is of the essence, then skip the signifier. If there is time for the signifier, talk about the personality correspondences for the Seeker's sign. For example, if the Seeker is a Libra and thus an Air sign, provide a few key highlights about the Seeker's innate characteristics as an Air sign, e.g., born warriors or fighters, often engaging in dissent, prone to quick bursts of focus or interest in something, and then they lose that focus and become distracted; they're the thinkers and intellectuals of society. They thrive on knowledge and information. They're also great communicators or orators, with the gift of words. Be sure to remind the Seeker that nurture, the environment, and the decisions the Seeker has made could have altered those innate characteristics.

Card 1 represents the Seeker's present character or present situation. This card indicates the Self, who the Seeker is. Card 2 represents where the Seeker comes from, and the past that still has an influence over the present.

Unlike a three-card past, present, future layout, place Card 3 slightly above and to the right of Card 1, then cross it with Card 4. Card 3 represents the Seeker's abilities. This is what the Seeker is good at, e.g., trade skills, talents, innate gifts, knowledge acquired, experiences that position the Seeker for success, etc. Card 4 crosses Card 3 and it represents the Seeker's passions, interests, loves. Note whether the two cards drawn for Cards 3 and 4 respectively seem to complement or oppose one another. Are they aligned in harmony? Or is there tension between the Seeker's skills and the Seeker's passions? This cross of cards will reveal whether the Seeker is happy or whether there is a greater endeavor that the Seeker secretly wishes to pursue but has to date been reluctant to be proactive about.

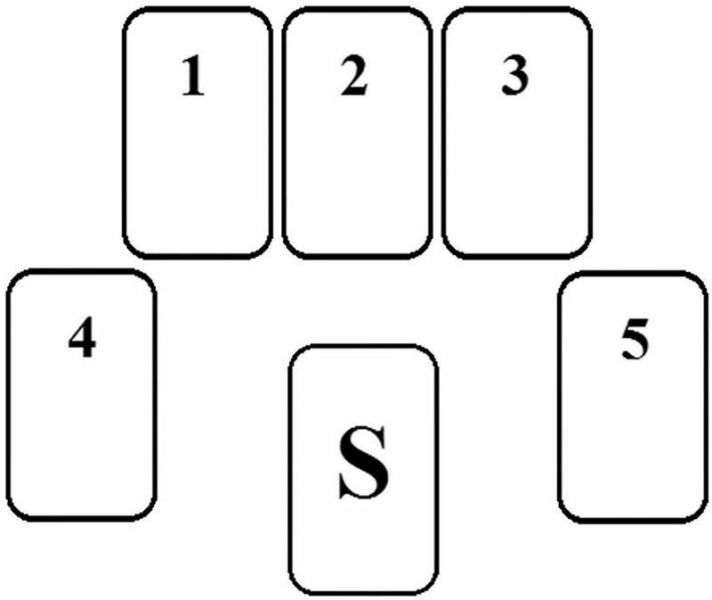
Card 5 represents the most probable outcome based on the Seeker's present life trajectory. This card reveals where the Seeker is headed. To conclude, I will note any patterns, repetitions, or

dominating elements and provide some insight to the Seeker on their significance.

Note, however, that the Essential Keys spread is broad and will most likely reveal only the most basic and general information about the Seeker. Thus, I reserve it for parties, get-togethers with friends or family, conferences, or fairs where there are a lot of people waiting to get their tarot cards read. Instead of diving deeply into the intricacies of each card, I'll touch on the keywords only. I don't take specific inquiries when using the Essential Keys spread. I let the Seekers know that the reading to come will be general and we'll follow where the cards lead.

Fixed-Term Analysis Spread

From time to time a Seeker will want to know general information for a fixed term of time, such as what is to come in the coming month, the coming three months, or the coming year. The Fixed Term spread helps to answer such inquiries. While shuffling, both practitioner and Seeker should concentrate on the inquiry at hand, specifically the given period of time the Seeker is asking about. Through that intent and concentration, the cards will be programmed to respond to the given period of time.



Lay out the spread in the numerical order as noted in the above diagram. Card 1 represents an intellectual issue, or matter of the mind that is going to be most pressing during the given term. Card 2 represents a matter of the heart, something that will elicit an emotional reaction from the Seeker. Card 3 represents matters of the physical body, which can include career concerns, social activities, or an actual event to take place during the given term.

Card 4 denotes the past influences that the Seeker is entering the given term with, the past that is still going to be relevant during the given term. Card 5 represents the Seeker exiting the given term and what ongoing matters will persist beyond the given term that the Seeker must pay attention to.

Pritha is a Water sign in her late twenties. She wants to consult the tarot for a roadmap of the coming month. Note that in this particular case study, the practitioner opted not to observe card reversals. The deck is shuffled with all cards upright and thus all cards in the spread will appear upright.

The Knight of Cups appears in the Card 1 position, which can take on either a literal or figurative meaning for Pritha. Here, the practitioner's intuition leads her to interpret the Knight as taking on a literal meaning, and the Knight is an actual young man in Pritha's life, one who is strikingly similar in personality to herself. Perhaps he is even a Water sign like her. This young man will occupy much of Pritha's intellectual and mental space in the coming month. Since he seems to be more of a resident in her mind than in her heart, the cards suggest that Pritha still needs to figure out where this young man fits into her life. The positioning of the other cards suggests that there isn't presently a neat little space for him to occupy. She needs to figure out what his role will be. Note how the knight depicted on the card seems to be facing Card 2. That suggests strong connections between the energies represented by the two cards.

The Three of Cups in the Card 2 position represents her heart in the coming month. There is celebration, girlfriends, emotional bonding, and sisterly love. Genuine camaraderie and good friends will fill her emotional cavities. It's a good month when it comes to matters of friendship

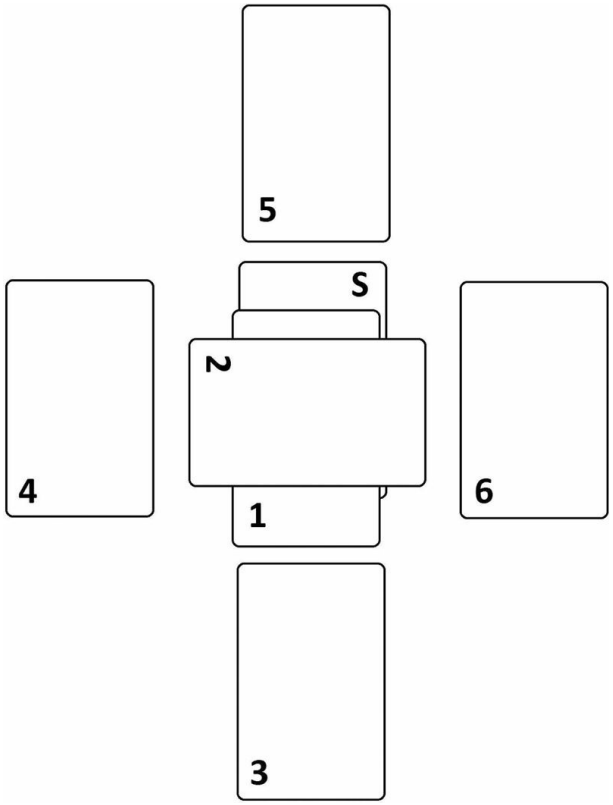
and alliances.

The Eight of Pentacles in the Card 3 position will likely relate to Pritha's work. She is still an apprentice of sorts, diligently studying her particular professional field. This is the card of aspirations, one reminding her to pay close attention to details, to be methodical in her performance, and that all continues to be fluid when it comes to her career path. She is on the right track and the card here is an affirmation that Pritha shows great promise in her field.

Card 4 here is the Queen of Pentacles, suggesting strong, lingering Earth energies and the continued nurturing of a commercial endeavor, most likely one with a strong entrepreneurial flavor. Here, the practitioner intuited that the court card embodies a figurative meaning, unlike the first card, the Knight. The practitioner can take the time here to remind Pritha that resourcefulness and her innate intelligence will be crucial components to her endeavor's success. Be careful and wary of self-pride, however, in particular that of beauty, material possessions, and her appearance of success to others. Remind Pritha that the Queen of Pentacles is a noble, charitable woman, and that she should be attentive to embody those character traits.

Card 5 tells Pritha what the most probable outcome of the month will be. The World card is highly optimistic and positive. She will be triumphant in all undertakings this month and will exit into the coming month feeling fulfilled and satisfied with herself. There will be a successful synthesis of the mental, the emotional, and the physical in her life. Since the elemental dignity of The World card is consistent with the Queen of Pentacles (both are Earth), matters that correspond with the Earth element will be well resolved during this month and there will be a strong sense of closure to those matters before the month's end.

The Dyadic Cross



The Dyadic Cross is a multipurpose and intuitive spread for either general or specific questions. Experienced tarot practitioners will note that it is essentially the cross portion of the traditional ten-card Celtic Cross spread, which this chapter will review later. The spread is one cross within a larger cross, as illustrated in the diagram on the subsequent page. It is one of the easiest spreads to remember the position meanings for. The smaller cross of two cards at the center is the present moment for the Seeker: what the Seeker's present state of mind is and what immediately crosses the Seeker's path. Then the larger cross of four cards represents the linear chronology of past to probable future outcome and the vertical cross-section of the Seeker's life at the moment: the Seeker's hopes, speculations, fears, what occupies that part of his or her life that is not yet part of the Seeker's reality and foundation; what is latent in the unconscious that plays a role in the present. Intuitively the physical position of the cards relative to the position of the signifier represents exactly what the card indicates.

It utilizes a signifier card, which is placed down first. Then Card 1, as illustrated in the above diagram, is placed on top of the signifier. Card 1 represents the present influences and state of mind of the Seeker. It indicates the heart of the matter. In a specific inquiry, this card is a nutshell summary of the most pertinent energies surrounding the issue.

Card 2 crosses the Seeker's path. It can represent challenges or obstacles that the Seeker might face, or what the Seeker can expect to cross his or her path in the immediate future. Visually, Card 2 appears to be in the Seeker's way, as it crosses the signifier. That visual representation is symbolic of the energies of Card 2's relation to Card 1 and the signifier.

Card 3 represents the foundation of the matter at hand, or the Seeker's roots. It represents what is at the bottom of the issue, the motivation, and the backstory. If Cards 1 and 2 are the "what," then Card 3 is the "why." Card 3 also represents latent influences and aspects of the Seeker's unconscious that affect the present and the current course that the Seeker is taking.

Card 4 represents the past influences or past energies still present and still affecting the matter at hand. Card 5 represents aspirations or speculations of the Seeker. It can also represent the alternative future outcome, what could happen if the Seeker decides not to stay the course. Card 5 represents what is still in the realm of thought, what has not materialized into the Seeker's reality but could potentially. The card could indicate hopes, fears, and what-ifs.

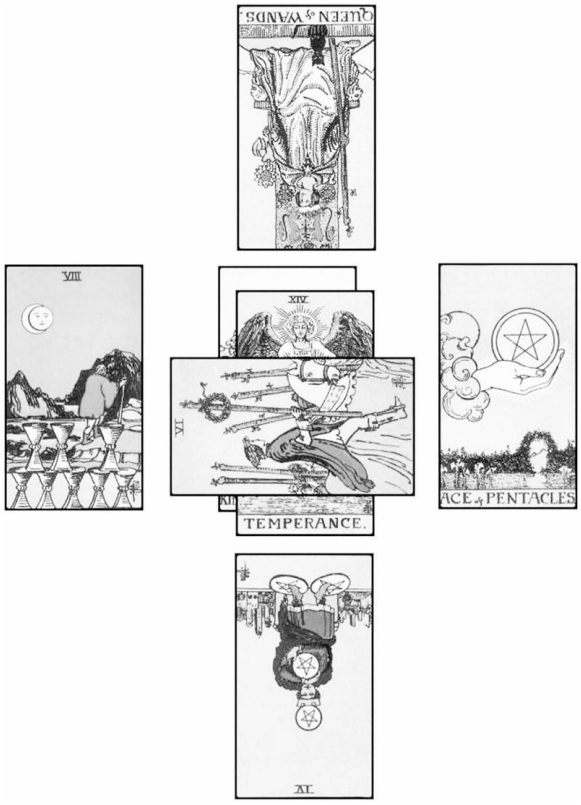
Card 6 represents what will most likely happen if the Seeker stays the current course. Card 6 is about the immediate future and the most probable outcome of the situation. It is directly linked to and karmically connected with Card 4, the past. Read Cards 4 and 6 as being related in a linear manner, and Cards 3 and 5 being related synchronously.

The Dyadic Cross is one of the simplest yet most effective and comprehensive spreads that the novice practitioner can learn. If only one spread is to be mastered, then it should be the Dyadic Cross.

Case Study: Desmond

Desmond is a thirty-five-year-old man and an Earth sign. He would like a reading about his marriage prospects. You select the King of Pentacles for his signifier based on his date of birth (a Virgo, or Earth sign, corresponding with the suit of Pentacles). For Seekers in their thirties, it is often difficult to decide whether to use the Page/Knight or the Queen/King. A general rule is to use a Page/Knight for the bachelorettes and bachelors and the Queen/King for married folk or those who have attained a level of maturity in their careers or livelihood. Here, Desmond is a fellow who has achieved much in his career for his age and possesses a world-weary disposition. Thus, the King of Pentacles rather than the Knight was selected, even though he is a bachelor.

Note immediately how few cards relating to love, emotions, and relationships are in his spread. The Ace of Pentacles and the Four of Pentacles stand out, confirming Desmond's approach to money. His approach to money may very well have a big effect on why his love life has been on standby.



Key 14: Temperance covers him and confirms his current desire to seek out greater balance in his life, which is why he is now finally more concerned with his love life than he might have been before, when he was too busy burying himself in his career. What crosses his signifier and Temperance is the Six of Wands, reversed, which suggests postponement. As the tarot practitioner, you note to yourself that marriage prospects do not look great for the immediate future. You should then start thinking about how best to phrase that information to Desmond to render the reading empowering.

The Four of Pentacles in reverse below him suggests someone who is secretly afraid for his financial situation. There are many obstacles, insecurities, and past recessions when it comes to his money issues. Perhaps in the past he went through a scary period of

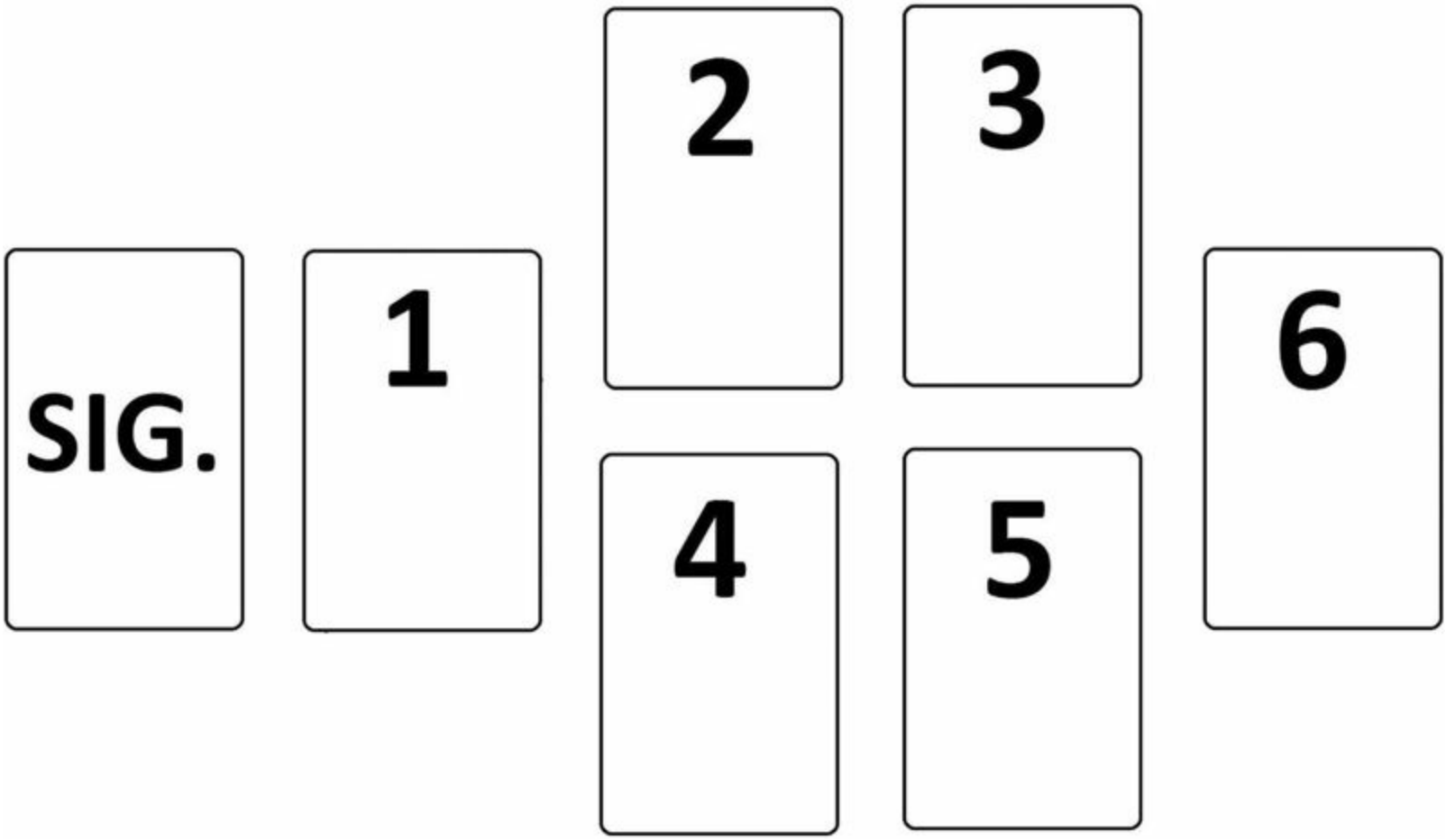
unemployment and much of his present action is in reaction to that. There is a great deal of conservatism and frugality about this fellow, which emanates from the Four of Pentacles.

The Eight of Cups here appears upright, unlike the reversal of the card in Henrietta's three-card reading presented earlier in this chapter. Also, the Eight of Cups appeared in reverse in the future position for Henrietta, while it appears upright and in the past for Desmond. Here, the Eight of Cups suggests abandonment, detachment, and a spiritual journey. Desmond has been walking Siddhartha's path, an ascetic one at that. This might be a good time to ask Desmond whether he has in fact been single for quite a long time. The Eight of Cups as it appears in the card position in the spread, for the question at hand, suggests someone who has not had many romantic relationships. This is someone who has not been emotionally involved with others.

The Queen of Wands in reverse indicates a woman whom Desmond might be speculating about. Recall that in interpreting court cards, you start by analyzing the figurative and literal possibilities. Since Desmond is male, the figurative possibilities are less likely than the literal, which would indicate an actual woman, one with strong Fire energies. She could be an Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. She could be working in the creative fields, or with her hands in health, a shop trade, or as part of the working class. In reverse, however, she is not likely to be the marriage prospect that Desmond is looking for. Her impact on Desmond is most likely negative. That or the negative character attributions for the Queen of Wands dominate in her over the positive. In either scenario, warn Desmond to proceed cautiously with this Queen of Wands.

Finally, the Ace of Pentacles suggests further advancement in his career and asset acquisitions, but continued delay in the marriage arena. As the practitioner, you can highlight to him the bonus that is coming. As for his original question, urge Desmond to continue his search, and broaden that search. The present variables in his life and his current state of mind are not placing him in the right position for marriage. There is much more work, internally and externally, to be done.

The Six Points (or Six Controversies) Spread



The number six holds deep spiritual significance for many religious faiths and represents the bridge between the higher realm and the lower realm of the universal consciousness. The number six is also associated with choices and the need to find balance between give and take, and yin and yang. It encompasses the theory of binary forces of life and also trinities. Mathematically, the number six is a perfect number and also a harmonic divisor. In this spread, it is used to extrapolate the six points or six controversies of a specific issue that the Seeker is concerned about.

By "controversy," what I mean here is a point of tension that obstructs the Seeker from the desired outcome. Thus, the six controversies are an answer key for the Seeker that represent why there is flux in a specific area of the Seeker's life. Thus, this spread is used for specific inquiries. It is less suitable for general inquiries. That said, if a Seeker is feeling lost, aimless, or stuck in life, this spread may help to pinpoint the six roadblocks that the Seeker needs to clear immediately to advance forward.

I use the names "Six Points" and "Six Controversies" interchangeably. Sometimes I'll refer to the spread as "Six Points" when I want to take a gentler approach with a Seeker. However, I feel the name "Six Controversies" is a more accurate descriptive of how this spread functions. They represent points of contention or strife in the Seeker's situation, or conflicts: the Seeker's conflict with him- or herself, the Seeker's conflict with another person, or the Seeker's conflict with his or her community or environment. They are the six knots that the Seeker must loosen to move forward.

Unlike other spreads, where each card position has an assigned meaning, the Six Points Spread should be read cohesively and intuitively. The six cards collaborate with one another to express a narrative. Chapter 15, which discusses how to read a spread landscape, will be indispensable to you

in interpreting this spread. Although there may be only six cards here, the spread is deceptive in its appearance of simplicity. This is a more advanced spread that should be attempted only after mastering the other foundational spreads in the chapter.

Case Study: Olivia

Olivia is a female in her fifties and an Earth sign. She is married with several children and is currently going through a divorce. Olivia and another man have been flirting with each other, and she consults the tarot for counsel on how she might proceed with this other man. You, the practitioner, select the Queen of Pentacles for the signifier and use the Six Points spread to help Olivia identify the six prospective roadblocks ahead.

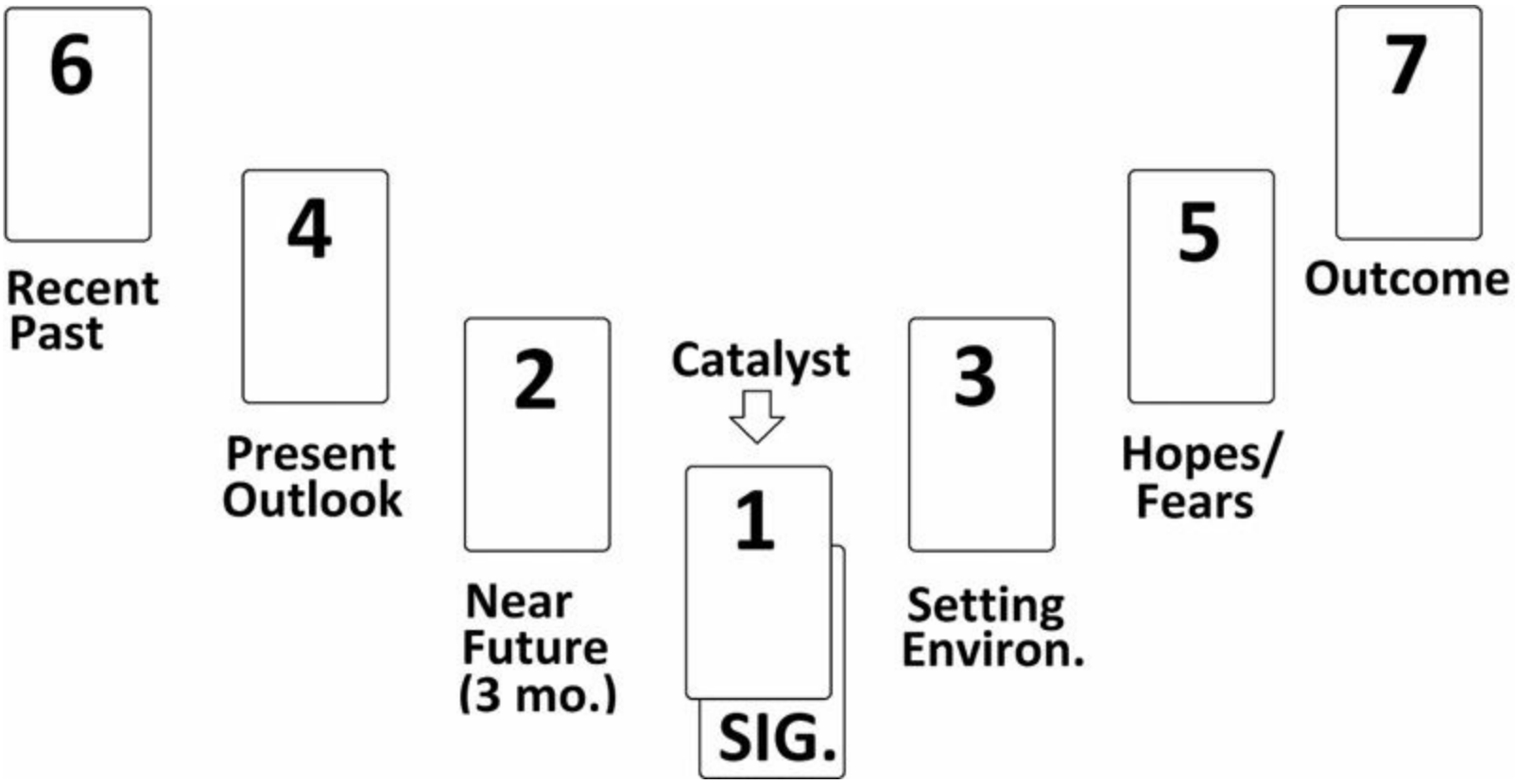
The first card drawn is the Ten of Pentacles in reverse, which suggests disengagement from family, ostracism, and internal rifts in a family that otherwise enjoys high prestige in society. Olivia's pursuit of this other man, whom we will call John, is going to cause her to feel ostracized from her family. She is probably from a well-to-do family, one that is quite conservative, and as a result they may frown upon her decision to follow her heart. (As with many of the case studies in this book, Olivia is based on an actual reading. It turned out that once her ex-husband discovered her friendship with John, even though there was no foul play, so to speak, he grew very jealous and threatened to file for full custody of their children. His mother, Olivia's mother-in-law, also became involved and favored his full custody of the children.)

The Ten of Pentacles reversed segues into Key13: Death. You empathize with Olivia,

who is likely going through a painful time in her life, perhaps one of the worst. Relations with John would bring about profound transformations in Olivia's life and she will need to be fully prepared to bear the growing pains. The Two of Cups in reverse then suggests potential imbalances in a relationship with John, much quarreling and misunderstandings. Intuitively, you feel the two pages take on a literal meaning in Olivia's reading and represent actual women who are younger than Olivia. You might ask Olivia whether John seems to exhibit any philandering tendencies, because the spread here seems to suggest that if she pursues a relationship with John, two of the six major interferences the two of them will tackle involve other women. Key 4: The Emperor represents authority, paternity, and government. In Olivia's case, The Emperor most likely represents an actual man of authority in her life. It could be a father figure. (As I found out later, John was many years older than Olivia. From that, it might be induced that The Emperor represents John himself.) Another possible reading is that Olivia's pursuit of John would cause tensions between herself and her father. Either way, pursuing John will likely introduce many significant challenges into Olivia's life, though that is not a judgment on whether she should pursue him or not. If she is to pursue him, however, she should brace herself for caustic troubles ahead.

V Formation or Horseshoe Spread

V Formation

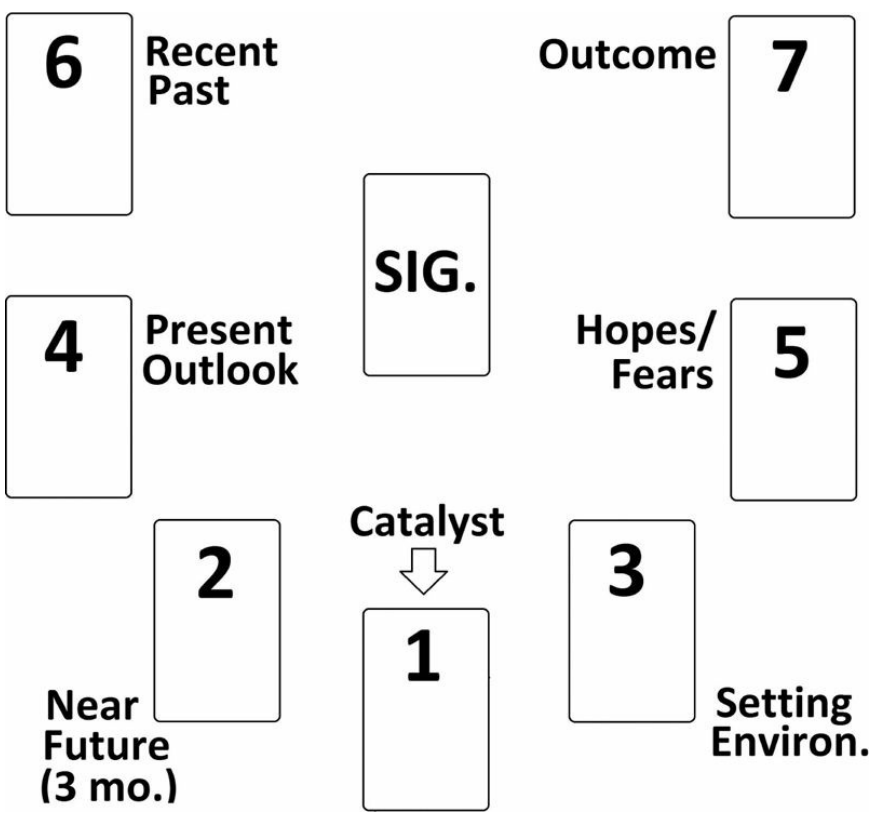


The V Formation or Horseshoe is appropriate for specific questions. If a Seeker comes to you with a specific concern, consider this spread. As each card is drawn, place them down in the order numbered above. Card 1 is placed in the center, then 2 and 3 to its left and right, 4 and 5, and continue until a "V" or a "U" shape (depending on the practitioner's preference; I prefer the "V") is formed. The seven-card "V"-shape layout is called the "V Formation," while the "U"-shape layout is often referred to as the "Horseshoe Spread."

However, when reading the cards, start with Card 6 and read left to right, but stop before 1. Skip Card 1 and go to Card 3 and read Cards 3, 5, and 7 consecutively. Then, at the end of the reading, return to Card 1. Card 6 represents the Seeker's recent past. This could be the past three years or Seeker's life. These are the past influences on the Seeker's question, or the past incidences leading up to the present that is triggering the Seeker's question. Card 4 represents the present outlook for the Seeker. Card 2 represents the near future, or what will likely occur in the next three months. Then skip Card 1 to read Card 3. Card 3 represents the Seeker's setting and environment and how that setting influences the specific question at hand. Card 5 represents the Seeker's hopes and fears about the situation. Card 7 is suggestive of the most likely outcome. Now return to Card 1, which represents the most important point of the issue that the Seeker must keep in mind. This card represents the Seeker's most powerful asset from within. It is also the catalyst for change.

When using the V Formation, the signifier card is commonly placed with Card 1.

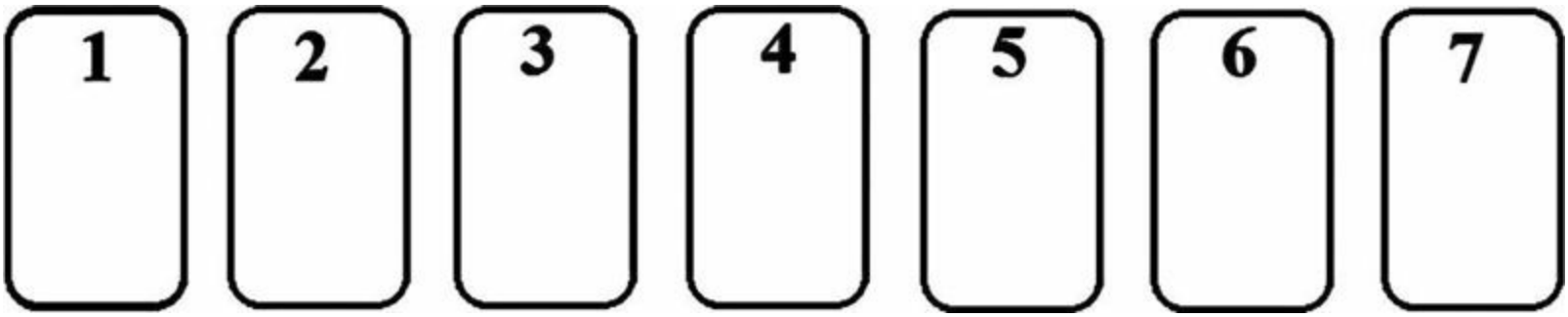
Horseshoe Spread



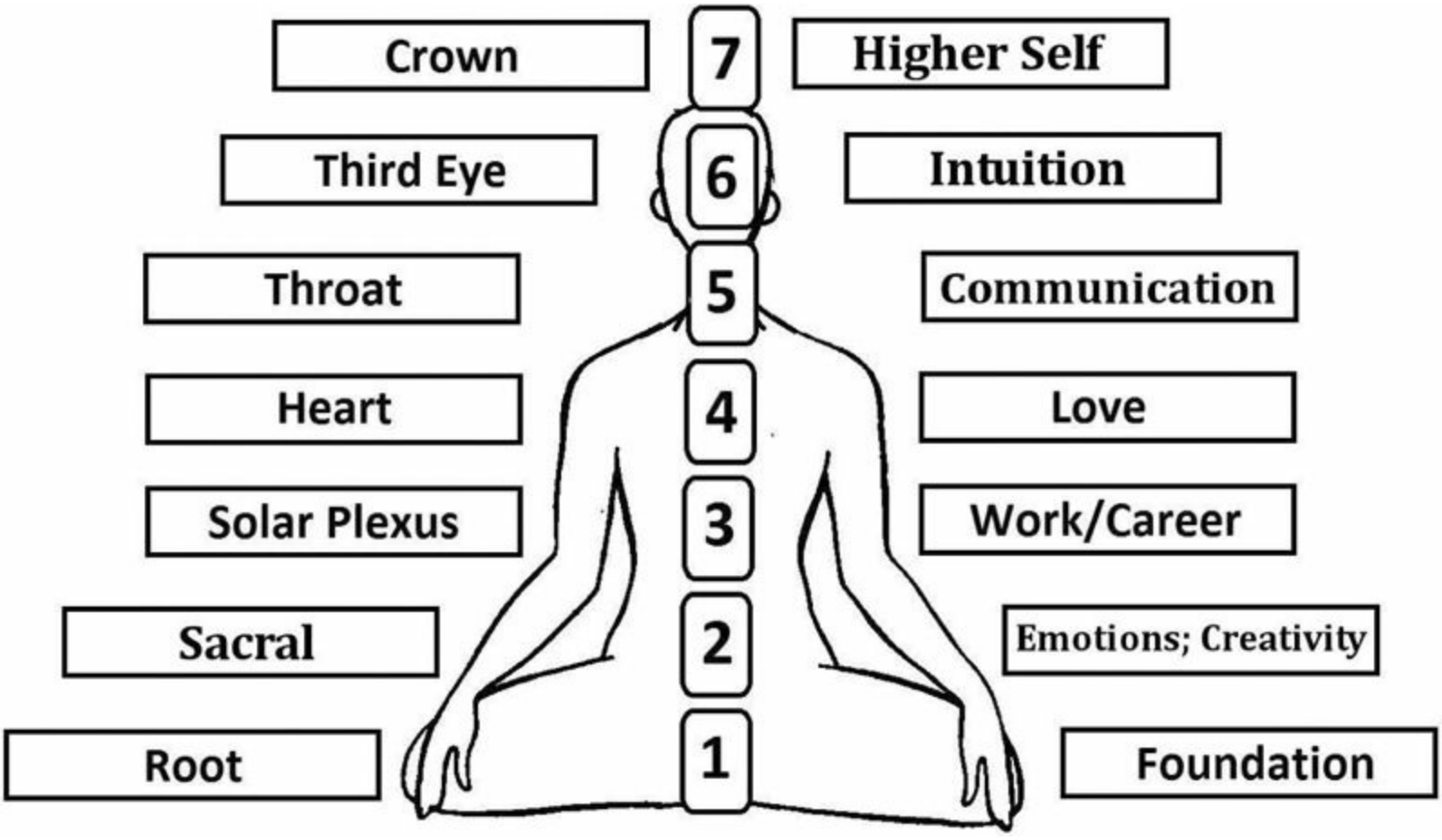
When using the Horseshoe Spread, the signifier card is commonly placed at the center. Ther position Card 1 slightly below the signifier and proceed.

The Seven Chakras Spread

The Seven Chakras spread is best suited for general life readings. It is not tailored to answer specific questions. If the Seeker has no specific question in mind and is simply looking for an overall "big picture" understanding of his or her life, then this seven-card spread works well in place of the V Formation or Horseshoe.



The spread is based in part on the seven chakras pursuant to Hindu metaphysical doctrine.[3] Although visually the seven chakras are presented in a vertical layout, it is perhaps easier to present the cards in a horizontal spread, as illustrated in the above diagram.



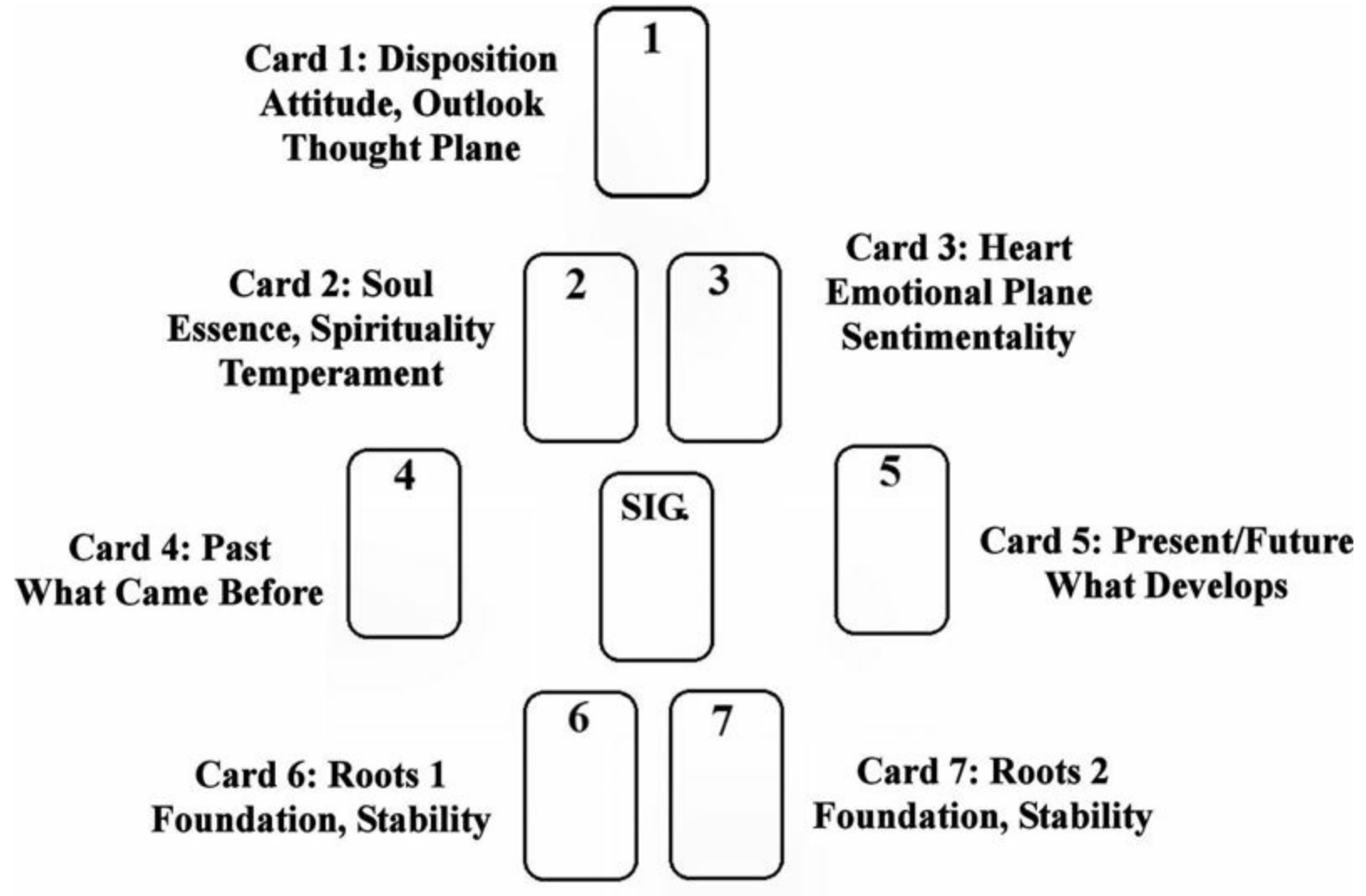
Card 1 corresponds with the Root chakra and denotes the stability of the Seeker's present. This is the foundation card. This is what roots the Seeker. Here, use the card to gauge the Seeker's leadership and combat skills, personal sense of security or stability, sense of belonging, and general energy and vitality. Card 2 corresponds with the Sacral chakra. Card 2 will indicate the Seeker's emotional plane, creativity, any artistic endeavors. Here the practitioner can take a look at the Seeker's hopes

and fears as well. The Sacral chakra also relates to sex and sexuality. Card 3 corresponds with the Solar Plexus, and is used to represent the Seeker's career issues. Card 3 canhelp the practitioner get a sense of the Seeker's level of achievement and persistence. The Solar Plexus chakra relates to the ego, personal power, the wheel of force, and how much drive the Seeker possesses for success in his or her career. Card 4 corresponds with the Heart and indicates love and relationships, though it might also speak more generally about the Seeker's compassion for humanity, sense of charity and benevolence. In essence, Card 4 gives a sense of how kind the Seeker is, and in that way it can help a practitioner gauge the Seeker's approach to love and relationships. Card 5 corresponds with the Throat chakra, and denotes expression, community, and communication. Here, the practitioner can get a sense of the Seeker's knowledge and education, how the Seeker expresses his or her views, and how the Seeker generally communicates with the world. This card position is the Seeker's relationship to others and how the Seeker expresses or communicates that relationship. This card also denotes the Seeker's position in society.

Card 6 corresponds with the Third Eye, which represents spirituality and faith issues. Card 6 will give a sense of how the Seeker thinks: the Seeker's clarity of thought, insights, wisdom, reason, and intuition. Card 7 is the Crown chakra, which notes the Seeker's karma. This is about achieving a higher consciousness. Does the Seeker have unfinished business to resolve? What is the Seeker's most likely future outcome? Card 7 addresses these issues and assists the Seeker in thinking about his or her life through a higher thought plane. The Crown chakra gives a sense of how the Seeker connects to God, higher divinity, or the god principle. This is the card that denotes the Seeker's higher self. In practical application, Card 7 indicates the Seeker in his or her best possible manifestation.

The Personality Tree

The Personality Tree serves the same purposes as a psychological personality test or analysis. After the Seeker has shuffled the cards, the practitioner will lay them down in numerological order as shown in the next illustration. The "SIG." card in the spread diagram can be the position of the signifier, or where the Adjustment Card or the Shadow Card is placed. Adjustment Cards and Shadow Cards will be discussed at the end of this chapter.



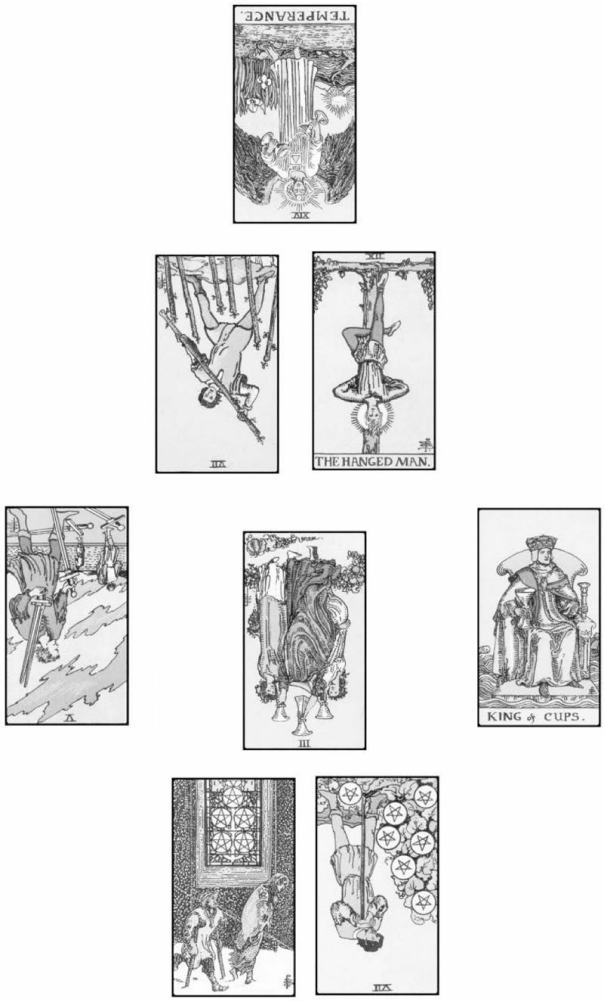
Card 1 represents the Seeker's attitudes and the intellectual facets the Seeker contributes to the matter. This is the Seeker's approach to knowledge, information, his or her methods of reasoning, experiences, and outlook on life. Card 2 is the Seeker's spirituality and philosophy. What philosophy does the Seeker subscribe to? How spiritual is the Seeker? What does the Seeker's soul look like? Card 3 is the Seeker's emotional outlook. Is the Seeker deeply in touch with emotions? If yes, there may be Cups. If the Seeker is sharp and somewhat cold, there may be Swords. Card 4 represents the Seeker's past influences on his or her personal development. Card 5 represents the present influences that are beginning to mold the Seeker's personal development. Cards 6 and 7 together represent the Seeker's foundation or roots. These are the forces that ground the Seeker.

Another approach is to look at the spread as if it resembled a person. Card 1 addresses Seeker's head; Cards 2 and 3 should be read like a sum and represent Seeker's heart and soul. Cards 4 and 5 represent the Seeker's hands, which symbolize his or her actions, goals, aspirations, objectives, etc.

Cards 6 and 7 are the Seeker's feet, representing the foundation of his or her personal development and where the Seeker is headed based on his or her personality.

Case Study: Humphrey

The following personality tree was rendered for Humphrey, a young male in his early thirties, a bachelor, and still in the early development stages of his career in law. Although no signifier card was used for the personality tree, note that Humphrey is the Knight of Swords.



Per the reading, Humphrey seems to be a fellow who has a tendency to pursue everything in excess, as suggested by Key 14: Temperance, reversed. He may find himself struggling with obesity, for instance. His essence is one that is still underdeveloped and unstable. To date, he still often feels torn in multiple directions at once and he suffers from indecision, as suggested by the Seven of Wands, reversed. He doesn't know who he is yet. Here, though, Key 12: The Hanged Man reveals his emotional plane: when push comes to shove, he is willing to sacrifice himself for a greater good and for his loved ones. The other facet of The Hanged Man also applies to Humphrey, however, and the card echoes with suspension, of going nowhere, confirming the indecisiveness of the Seven of Wands. Emotionally, in his relationships, he is often the scapegoat.

The Five of Swords, reversed, suggests a frequent state of penance or recompense. He finds himself constantly saying sorry for one thing or another, but here the card also suggests that Humphrey is often in a position of power or advantage, where he could potentially take advantage of others if he wanted. People trust him easily. The King of Cups here suggests a figurative reflection of himself: he's caring and diplomatic, and in all his

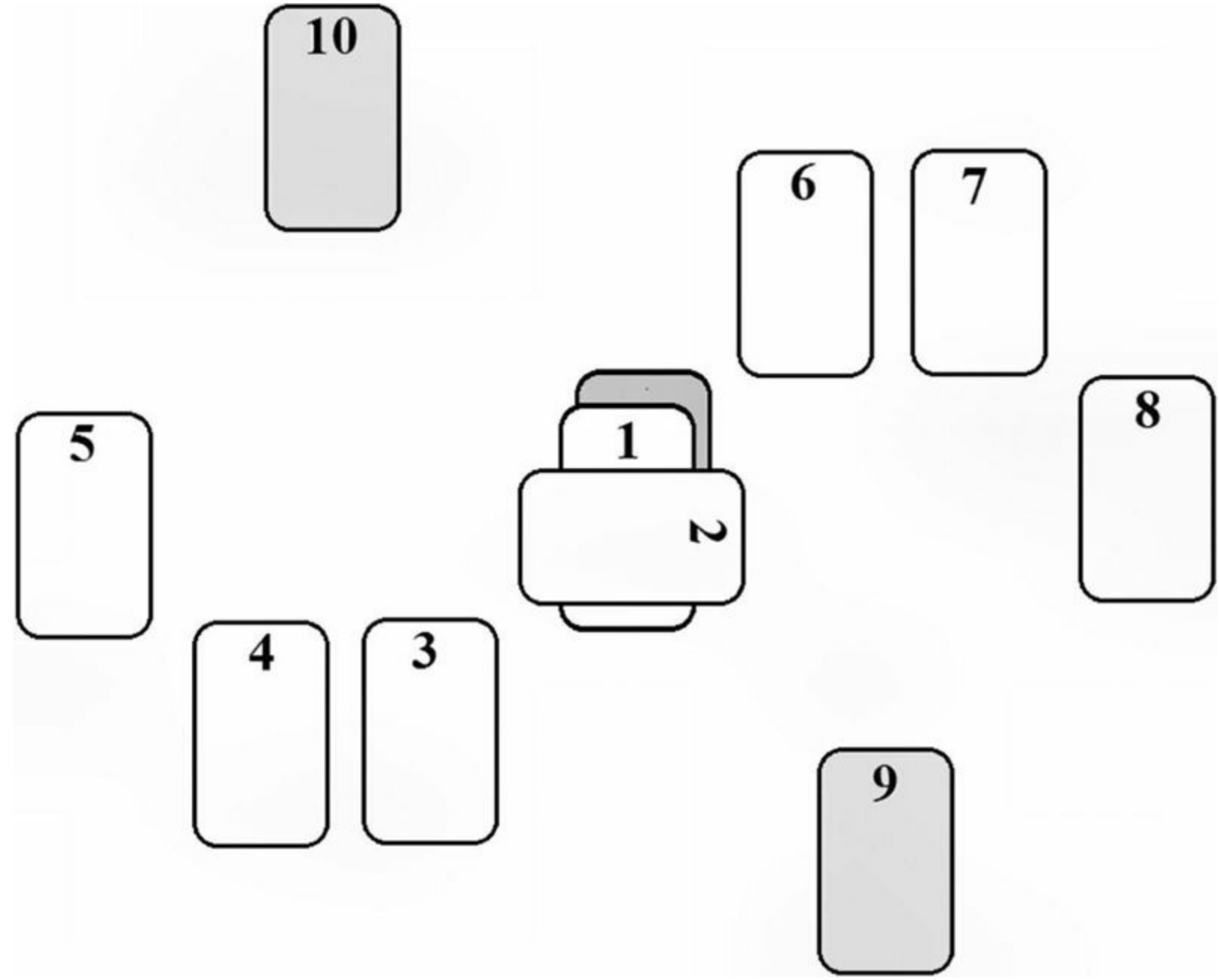
actions people can see that caring and diplomatic side of him. The Five of Pentacles warns that Humphrey's life tends to be rooted in hardships and money is often an issue. The Seven of Pentacles, reversed, suggests that much of the work he puts in fails to bear fruit. So to succeed, Humphrey needs to work twice, even three times harder than others.

The final card drawn for Humphrey's reading, the "SIG." card in the Personality Tree diagram, was the Adjustment Card, discussed later in this chapter. The Adjustment Card is used to identify what factor a Seeker must change about him- or herself to yield a more fruitful and positive future. Here, the card drawn for Humphrey was the Three of Cups, reversed. Humphrey will face many walls as he struggles to find his way through life, due in no small part to his, well, partying. He tends to be hedonistic, indulgent, and even a sensualist. Perhaps there is a bit of a player streak in him, too. After all, one facet of him is the King of Cups, an attractive man ruled by emotion. Humphrey needs to settle down and be more serious with his approach if he wants to succeed. Otherwise, he will find himself suspended like The Hanged Man and will continue to suffer from internal imbalance, often manifested externally with the need to overindulge himself, perhaps as a way of subconsciously overcompensating for a sense of lacking.

Note that confirmation bias is an oft-cited critique to renderings such as the Personality Tree (and to tarot readings in general). Reading personality traits out of a spread can be overbroad, i.e., "The Temperance card in reverse suggests a lack of balance in your life." There is no denying that such a statement could apply to everyone. A Seeker like Humphrey, if he believed in tarot's efficacy, might just take that broad statement and in his mind apply it specifically to himself, such as his obesity or overeating issue, and with that, validate the reading as accurate. However, if that simple act reminds him of his health concern and induces him to make healthy changes to his life, then wasn't the reading worth it, confirmation bias or not?

The Insight Spread

The Insight Spread, inspired by the S curve or sigmoid function, uses between eight and ten cards. A signifier card is used and the first card drawn, Card 1, is placed over it.



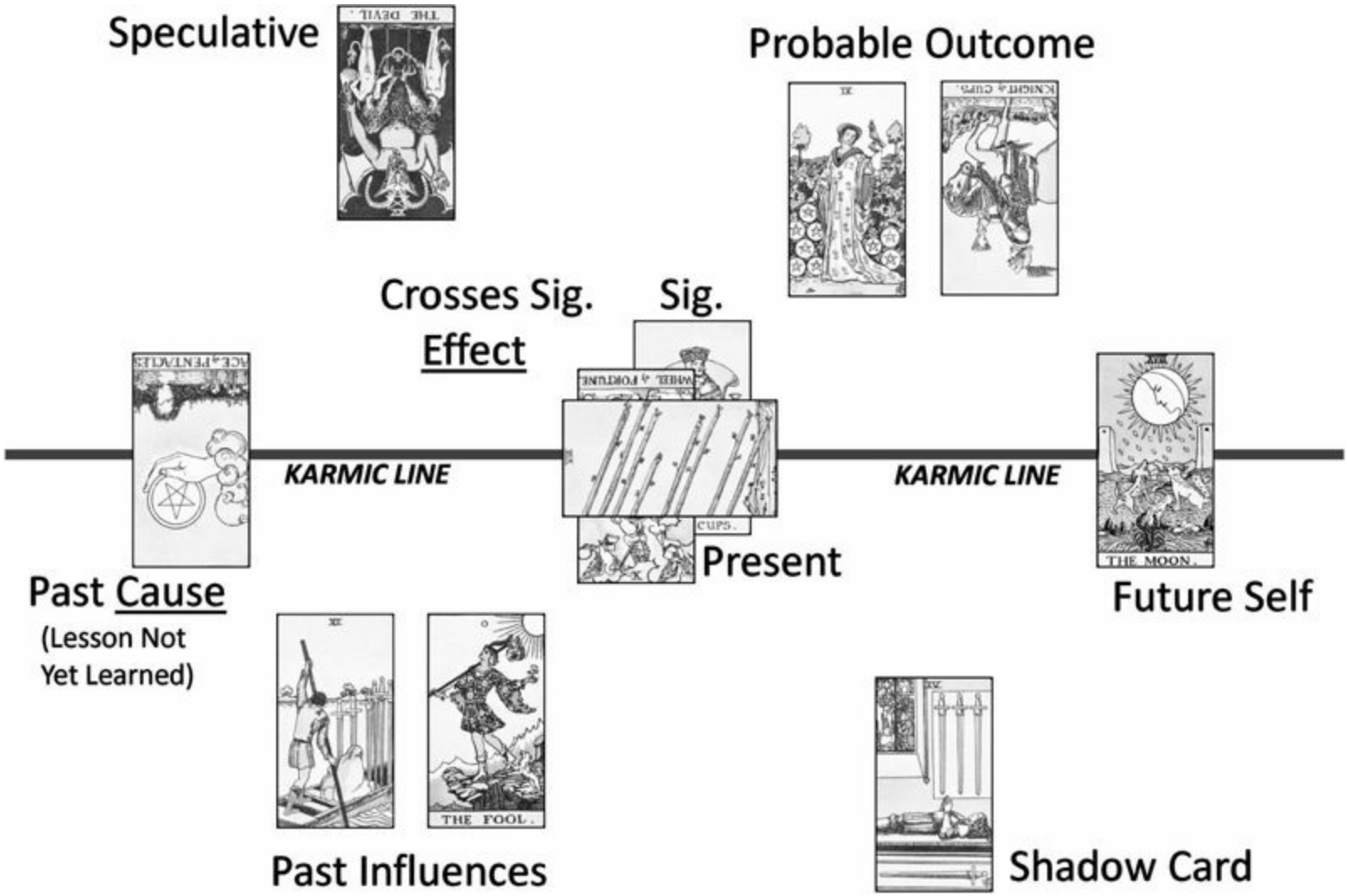
Card 1 indicates the situation or energies presently occupying the Seeker's life. Card 1 represents the most prevalent forces in the present. Card 2 indicates what crosses the Seeker's path, the challenges the Seeker currently faces, and the obstacles the Seeker must overcome in the immediate future. Cards 3 and 4 represent past influences that still have a hold on the Seeker. These two cards are read as a pair. Examine how they complement or conflict with each other, strengthen or weaken. Card 5 represents lessons not yet learned. These could be the skeletons in the Seeker's closet, unresolved matters from the past, or the mistakes that the Seeker seems to make over and over again. They represent a recurring theme that continues in the Seeker's life that has a spiritual significance. Cards 6 and 7 represent the most probable outcome, or coming future. If they are negative, they represent continued obstacles the Seeker must face to reach the desired result. If they are positive,

they represent the reinforcing energies that support the Seeker toward his or her goals. Card 8 represents the Seeker's future self. It embodies the characteristics the Seeker will take on or the life the Seeker will lead based on the past and present influences.

The practitioner can stop here for an eight-card reading, or additional cards may be drawn. Cards 9 and 10 are optional and set down last in the Insight reading. Card 9 is the shadow card. Card 10, when positive, represents the Seeker's hopes, dreams, and aspirations. When negative, it represents the Seeker's fears. It suggests an internal conflict that the Seeker must resolve to attain the desired outcome. The Insight Spread works well for both general and specific inquiries. For an additional example on how the Insight Spread might be applied, see "Case Study: Laney" in Chapter 18.

Case Study: Anthony

Anthony is a man in his thirties and a Water sign. He is using the Insight Spread to read for himself. Anthony has been unemployed for almost a year, though he has sent out hundreds of job applications. His concerns are not limited to his work prospects, however. As a result of the unemployment, many areas of his life have suffered. Thus, he uses the Insight Spread with the hope that he might be able to get a clearer idea of what is going on.

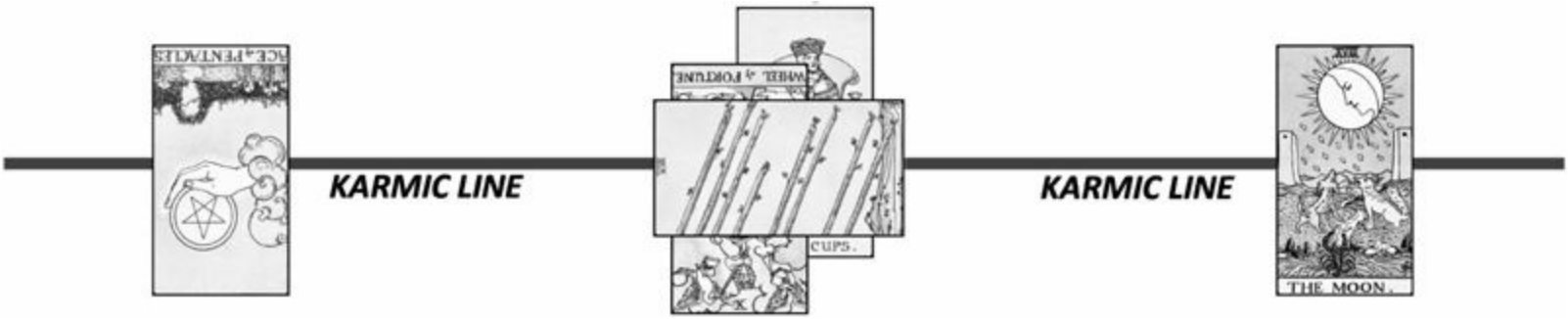


Signifier	King of Cups		
Card 1	10: Wheel of Fortune, Rev.	*Card 6*	9 of Pentacles
Card 2	8 of Wands, Rev.	*Card 7*	Knight of Cups, Rev.
Card 3	0: The Fool	*Card 8*	18: The Moon
Card 4	6 of Swords	*Card 9*	4 of Swords
Card 5	Ace of Pentacles, Rev.	*Card 10*	15: The Devil, Rev.

The signifier, the King of Cups, is placed down first. Note immediately the four Major Arcana cards in the spread. That suggests that there are strong external forces at play in Anthony's life at the moment, most of which will feel beyond his control. There is a strong

sense of helplessness.

His present state is represented here by Key 10: The Wheel of Fortune in reverse, confirming the flux he feels and his struggles. Due to the strong external forces against him in his environment, Anthony is effectively swimming upstream. The Eight of Wands reversed, which is crossing him, suggests altercations as a result of his present state. He's been losing his temper and arguing over matters he otherwise would have shrugged off. In many ways his unemployment has changed his disposition for the worse. That negative change is rendering it even more difficult for Anthony to rise out of his circumstances. He cannot act with such rashness. He'll have to keep his character in check.



Note the karmic line that can be drawn across the center meridian of the spread. The Ace of Pentacles, reversed, connects to the Eight of Wands, reversed, which connects to Key 18: The Moon. It seems like his present financial disappointments are a necessarypain he needs to endure to learn a greater karmic lesson, one related to his disposition of impatience and rushing to shoot out his arrows before he has taken good aim. I might interpret The Moon card in this position as indicating a phase.

What's more, his future shows prosperity and financial independence in the Nine of Pentacles. Note that since the Knight of Cups appears in reverse next to the Nine of Pentacles, which depicts a refined woman, a practitioner might read the two cards intuitively as indicating a woman who is older than Anthony and who takes on a benefactor position to him (i.e., he becomes the Knight of Cups, rather than the King, which was his signifier, when he is with this woman). Perhaps the outcome will be positive and Anthony will gain employment from a female boss. There is also the possibility that this pairing of cards could indicate an older female benefactor who doesn't necessarily employ Anthony, but rather is having romantic relations with him.

The two cards in his past, Key 0: The Fool and the Six of Swords respectively, suggest a man who has made many foolish choices in his life, leading to error and the current state of flux he finds himself in. The Six of Swords suggests journey or travel, and paired with The Fool, might indicate a man who has tried to physically (and geographically) run away from his problems.

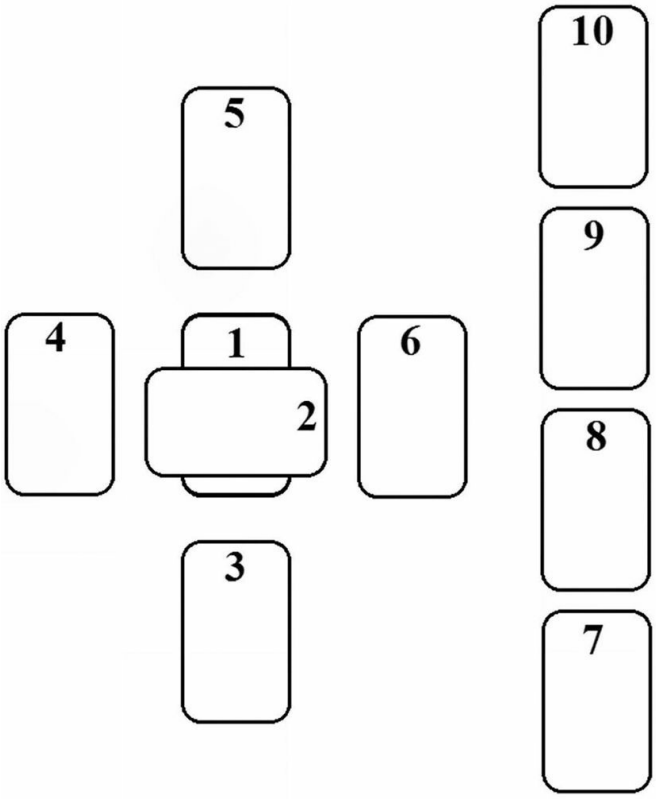
Although Anthony has not yet started down the path of self-destruction, the speculative position of Key 15: The Devil is a warning that he has the propensity to go down that path if the unemployment persists. True to his past patterns, he will try to escape his problems rather than confront them. Anthony needs to be highly conscious of his actions and make sure he does not start down any addictive or destructive paths. He must keep in check his inner demons, which are likely to cause even more pain in his life if he does not exercise

self-restraint.

Finally, the shadow card here, the Four of Swords, suggests what Anthony knows deep down is the correct action to take: he needs recovery time and repose. He needs to get away from his loved ones, at least in the short term, to improve himself and stop being a burden on them. The Four of Swords is directly related to The Devil card. If he goes down the path of The Devil, he will definitely become that burden. Ultimately, Anthony can be assured that his current state is a passing phase, one that he is going through because he has to so that his soul might learn a greater karmic lesson at play.

The Celtic Cross

Gray's Keltic Cross



The Celtic Cross spread[4] is to tarot what Beethoven's Minuet in G is to learning violin, Czerny or Burgmüller études to piano studies, or the sonnet to poetry. It might almost be laughable for someone to call him- or herself a tarot practitioner and not know one variation of the Celtic Cross. It is a beginner spread taught in every respectable tarot instructional curriculum.

The variation shown here is my approach, which is based on the Keltic Cross method ofEden Gray. Eden Gray is the pseudonym of Priscilla Pardridge (1901–1999), who wrote some of the most influential tarot divination books of the late twentieth century.[5] However, her method differs from the traditional Golden Dawn ordering of cards, which will also be explained in this section.

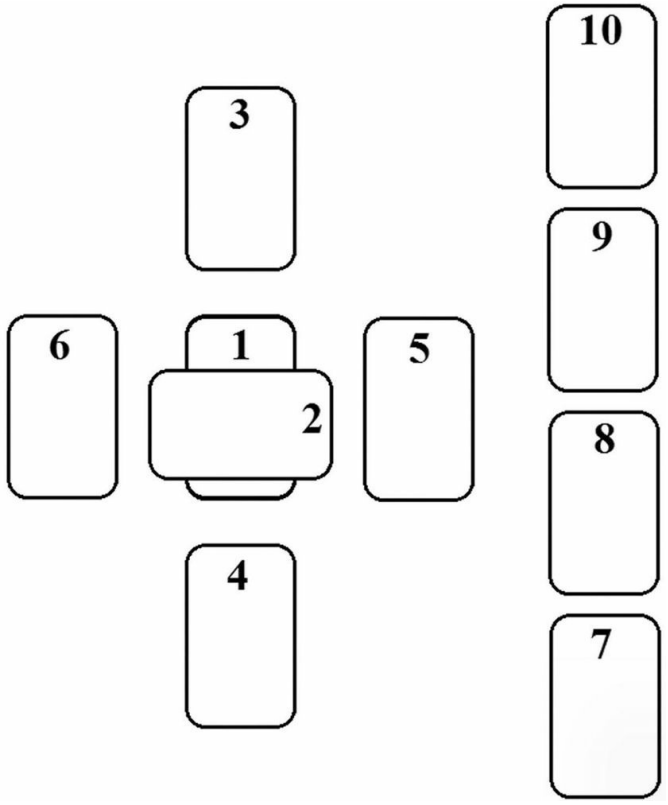
To start, place Card 1 over the signifier card. Card 1 represents the current state, or "heart of the matter." It represents the current state of mind of the person you are reading for. Card 2 represents obstacles faced, or immediate challenges that lie ahead or need to be overcome. Card 2 could also indicate reinforcing factors causing the Seeker's troubles. Consider the Seeker's question and the other cards in the spread to determine which meaning Card 2 takes on. Card 3 represents the roots or foundation, which may include past experiences or events that anchor or hold down the present. Card 4 represents past influences on the present situation. Card 5 is the speculative card, representing objectives, aspirations, or higher issues that need to be considered. It may represent the ideal. Card 6 represents the most likely future outcome.

Card 7 represents the self. It indicates the Seeker's own attitudes toward the current situation, or the energies that the Seeker brings to his or her own situation. Card 8 represents the Seeker's position in society, among friends, or the environmental, social, or external influences on the matter at hand. Card 9 represents the Seeker's hopes and fears, such as internal conflicts affecting the present

situation. Card 10 represents the result of the combined forces of the other cards. It is the final outcome of the present situation based on the sum of the other cards' energies, forces, and influences.

Again, my approach is based on Eden Gray's Keltic Cross method, which can be found in her book *Mastering the Tarot* (1971). Gray's Keltic Cross differs from earlier Celtic Cross tutelage, however. In A. E. Waite's *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1911), he ordered the cards as follows:

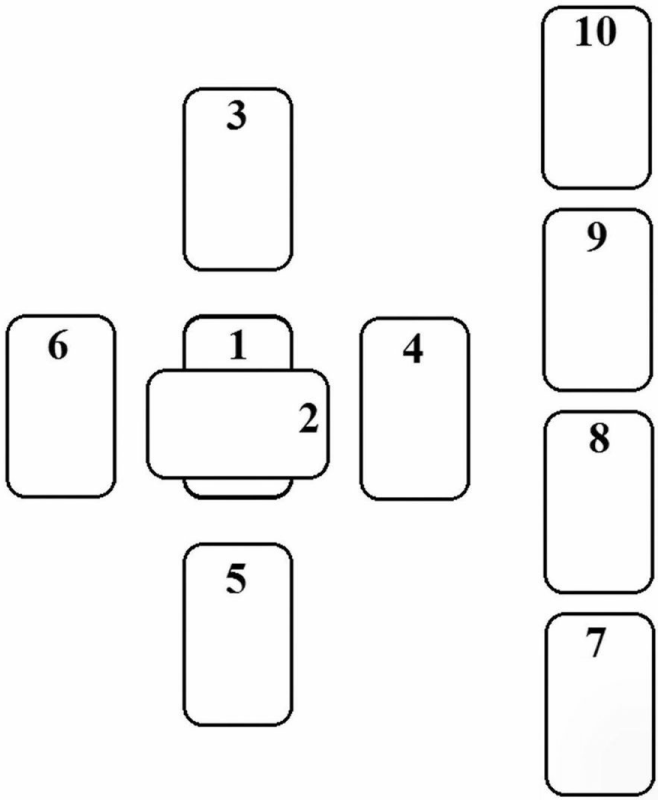
Waite Celtic Cross



Gray's Keltic Cross approach makes chronological sense. It lays down the foundation (Gray, Card 3) and past influences (Gray, Card 4) first, and then proceeds into the future, the probable outcome. Waite's Celtic Cross approach is based on the Catholic sign of the cross, and therefore the speculative card (Waite, Card 3) is set down first, then the foundation (Waite, Card 4), and then the future and past respectively (Waite, Card 5 and Waite, Card 6).

In the later tarot text by Aleister Crowley, the Celtic Cross differs from Waite's. The Crowley order of cards (also referred to as the Thoth approach) is as follows:[6]

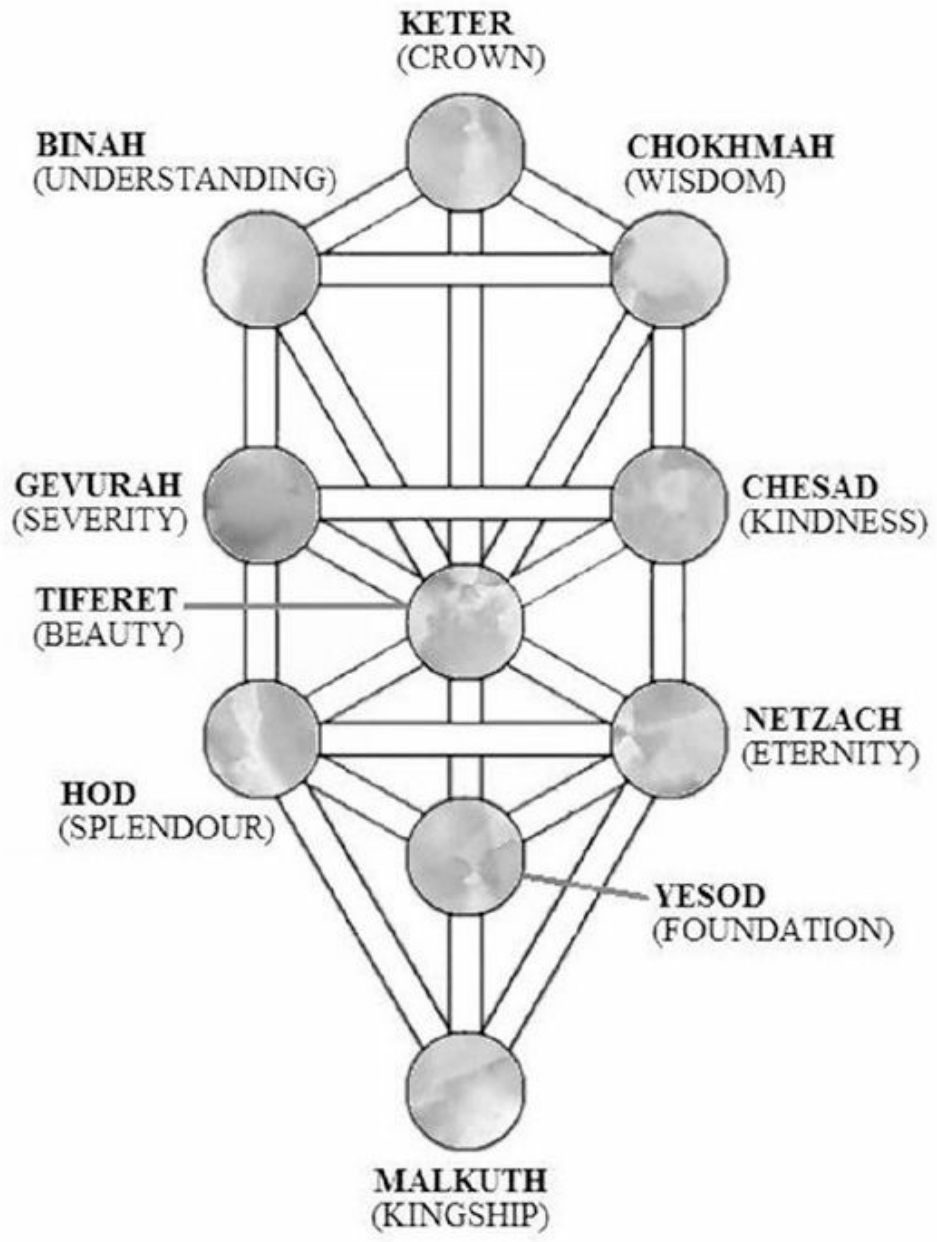
Crowley Celtic Cross

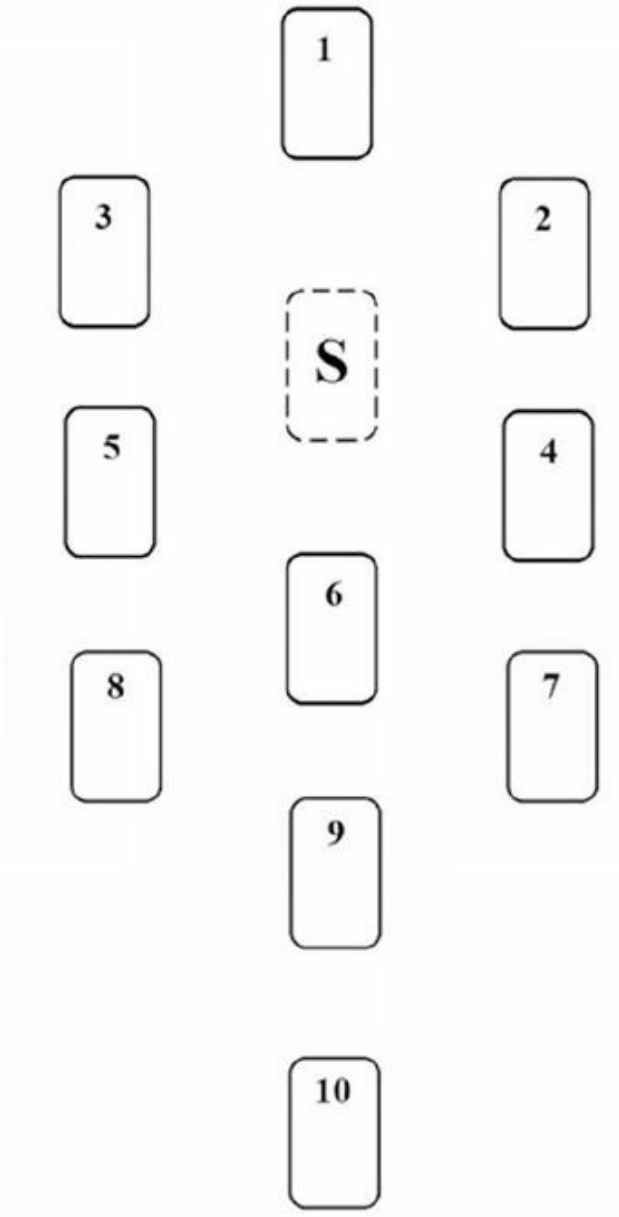


Per Crowley's Celtic Cross, the speculative card (both Waite, Card 3, and Crowley, Card 3) is se down first, but then unlike the Waite version, which follows the sign of the cross, the Crowley version sets the cards down clockwise around the signifier. Also, Crowley's Card 3 (Gray, Card 5) represents the Seeker's ultimate goals or the Seeker's destiny line. It suggests the higher purpose for the Seeker's present life path. That card position interpretation differs slightly from my reading approach.

I am biased in favor of the Gray approach, perhaps because it is the one I learned first. The Waite approach is considered the classic tradition, especially as applied to the Rider-Waite-Smith system. The Crowley approach is often associated with the Thoth system, and from my observations of present tarot trends, it has become the most popular. You, the practitioner, should consider all variations and adopt the one that feels intuitive to you.

The Tree of Life





The Tree of Life tarot spread is inspired by the ten emanations of the sephirot, a fundamental credo of the Kabbalah. The sephirot is believed to be a diagram of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, which represents a divine deity's creation and synthesis of the physical to the metaphysical realms. Starting from the crown, Keter embodies the super consciousness. Chokhmah and Binah embody the conscious intellect level; and the remaining emanations, the conscious emotional level.[7]

There are several variations on the Tree of Life spread. This book shows only one approach. Also, while the sephirot spread may seem ancient, it is most likely a twentieth-century conception. The form of the spread will be in the shape of the sephirot, each card at one of the ten emanation points. Place the signifier card down first to guide your formation of the Tree of Life spread. Then place the cards down in numerical order as illustrated.

Start by placing Card 1 above the signifier card. Card 1 represents the Seeker's goals and what he or she wants out of the situation at hand. If it is a general reading, then Card 1 represents the Seeker's greater goals or aspirations in life. Card 2 is placed to the right of the signifier card. Card 2 represents a choice that the Seeker may make that could yield positivity in the Seeker's life. Card 2

could also suggest the Seeker's obligations in the matter.

Card 3 is placed to the left of the signifier. Card 3 represents a choice the Seeker may make that could yield negativity. Card 3 could also suggest obstacles. Card 4 represents the benefits or positive aspects of the matter at hand or of the choice the Seeker faces. Card 5 represents the drawbacks or negative aspects of the matter at hand or of the choice the Seeker faces.

Moving to the center or trunk of the tree, Card 6 represents the most likely outcome of the situation at hand. In a general reading, Card 6 represents the Seeker's near future.

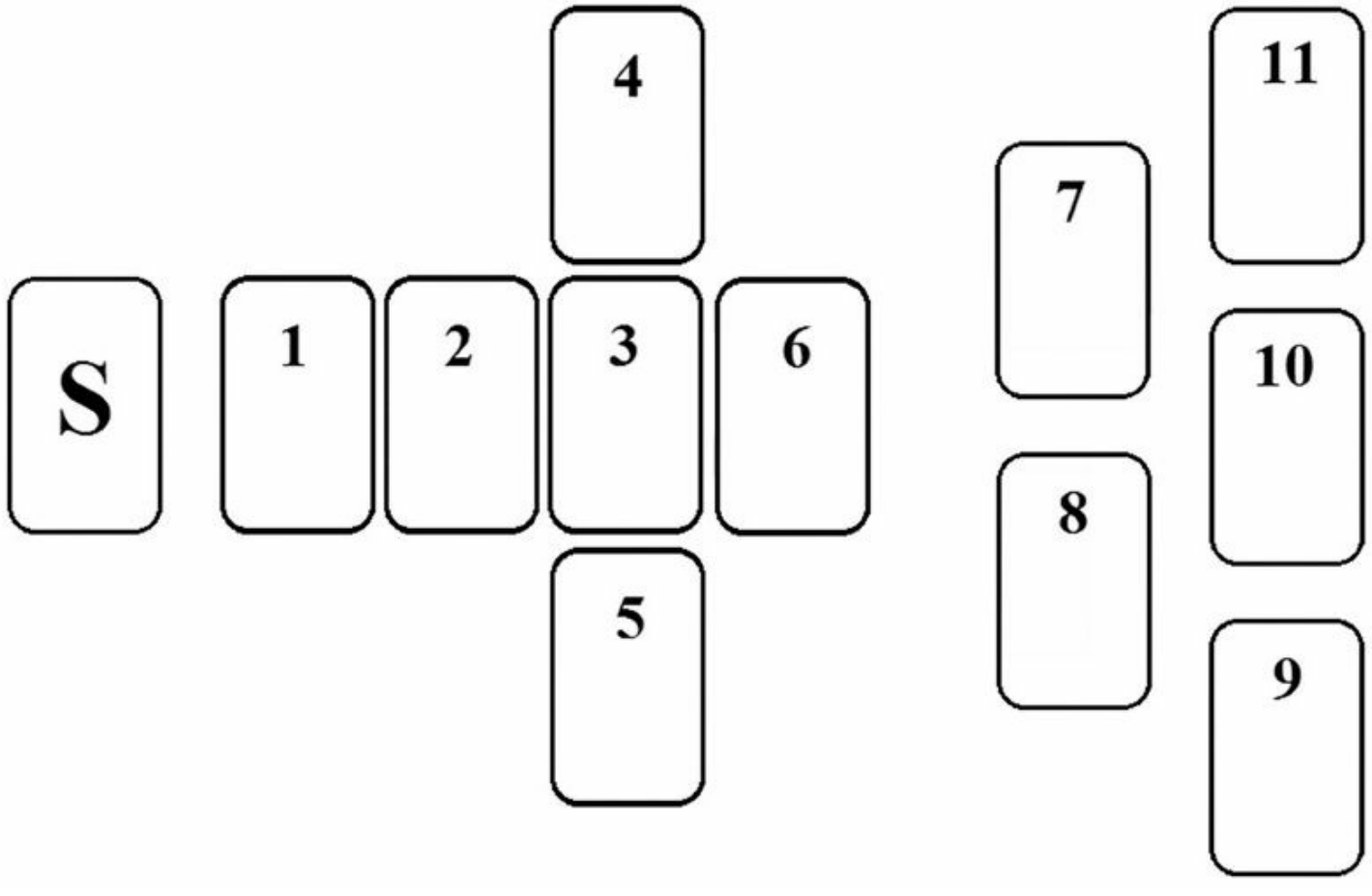
Card 7 represents the Seeker's emotional state or the emotions that influence the matter at hand. Card 8 represents the Seeker's analytical state or the logical points of the matter. Card 9 represents the Seeker's attitude toward the current situation or the energies from within that the Seeker brings to the situation. Card 10 represents the world around the Seeker, or external influences. This could be people, events, environments, etc. that surround the Seeker.

The Pneuma Crossing: Eleven-Card Spread

The Pneuma Crossing is a spread I have been using with great frequency, as I have found i impressively versatile and insightful. Its revelations have resonated with every Seeker for whom I have used it. I call it the Pneuma Crossing because the spread provides a glimpse into the intersection where past, present, probable future, universal qi, personal qi, and the Seeker's personality all come together for one holistic collage. Understanding the synthesis created by that intersection empowers the Seeker to advance forward positively, to connect to his or her own soul, and to better understand the spirit self. The spread captures and concisely expresses the breath of a Seeker's life.

The spread itself relies on the number 11 for its efficacy. The number 11 is considered the most spiritually intuitive number and vibrates with the wavelengths of spiritual awakening and inner wisdom. For instance, 11:11 is considered the numerical vibration that can open a gateway between the conscious physical world and the unconscious spiritual world. It is the number most closely associated with the metaphysical realm, of light workers (from any faith) and guardian spirits. Eleven is the number of super-intelligence and higher ideals.

A signifier card is optional. If used, set it down first and place Card 1 to its immediate right. If the practitioner does not include signifiers in his or her approach, then proceed straight to Card 1. Lay the cards into the following spread, in the following order:



Cards 1, 2, 3, and 6 form a linear chronology of the Seeker's life, a timeline: Card 1 represents the far removed past, providing context for the Seeker's present trajectory; Card 2 represents the recent past, or what has already come to pass and is still having an impact on the present and probable future; Card 3 is the present; and Card 6 is the most probable outcome for the Seeker's situation,

based on current variables (which, of course, are always subject to change).

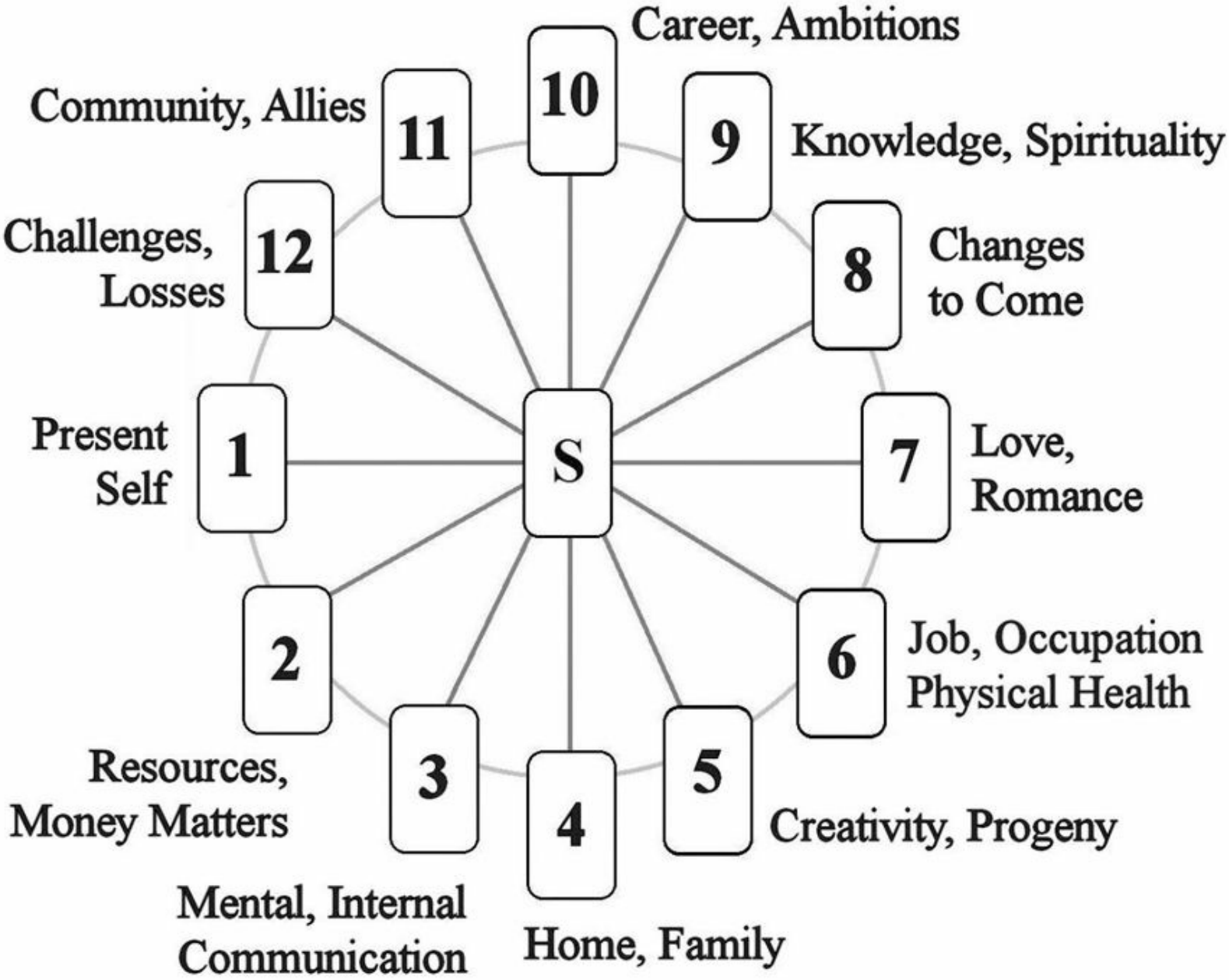
Card 4 above represents known issues and what occupies the Seeker's consciousness. Card 5 below represents latent issues and what occupies the Seeker's unconscious, what needs to be raised to the surface, or what the Seeker must confront and reconcile with in order to progress.

Cards 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 represent the five components of circumstance in their respective order: force majeure, karma, disposition, education, and action. These five components provide in-depth insight and analysis into overriding superior forces that profoundly affect the Seeker's life trajectory (i.e., force majeure); the chain of cause and effect that represents the Seeker's narrative cycle (i.e., karma); the Seeker's fundamental character (i.e., disposition); the Seeker's body of knowledge and experiences (i.e., education); and the Seeker's expressions by conduct and words that most often determine the Seeker's success or failure (i.e., action). For more about the five components, see Chapter 18.

Zodiac Spread

The following spread is a simple twelve-card spread based loosely on the tropical zodiac used in Hellenistic astrology. To be clear, this zodiac spread is not a true horoscope method.[8] For the purpose of this spread, the basic astrological interpretation of the twelve houses in astrology are used.

Why astrology and tarot? The designers of the first Rider-Waite-Smith–based decks were strongly influenced by astrology, as evidenced by the rich and recurring use of astrological symbolism in the early esoteric decks. Although the two practices, tarot and astrology, are distinct studies and separate from each other, understanding of one will enrich the practice of the other, especially when reading with the Rider-Waite-Smith system.



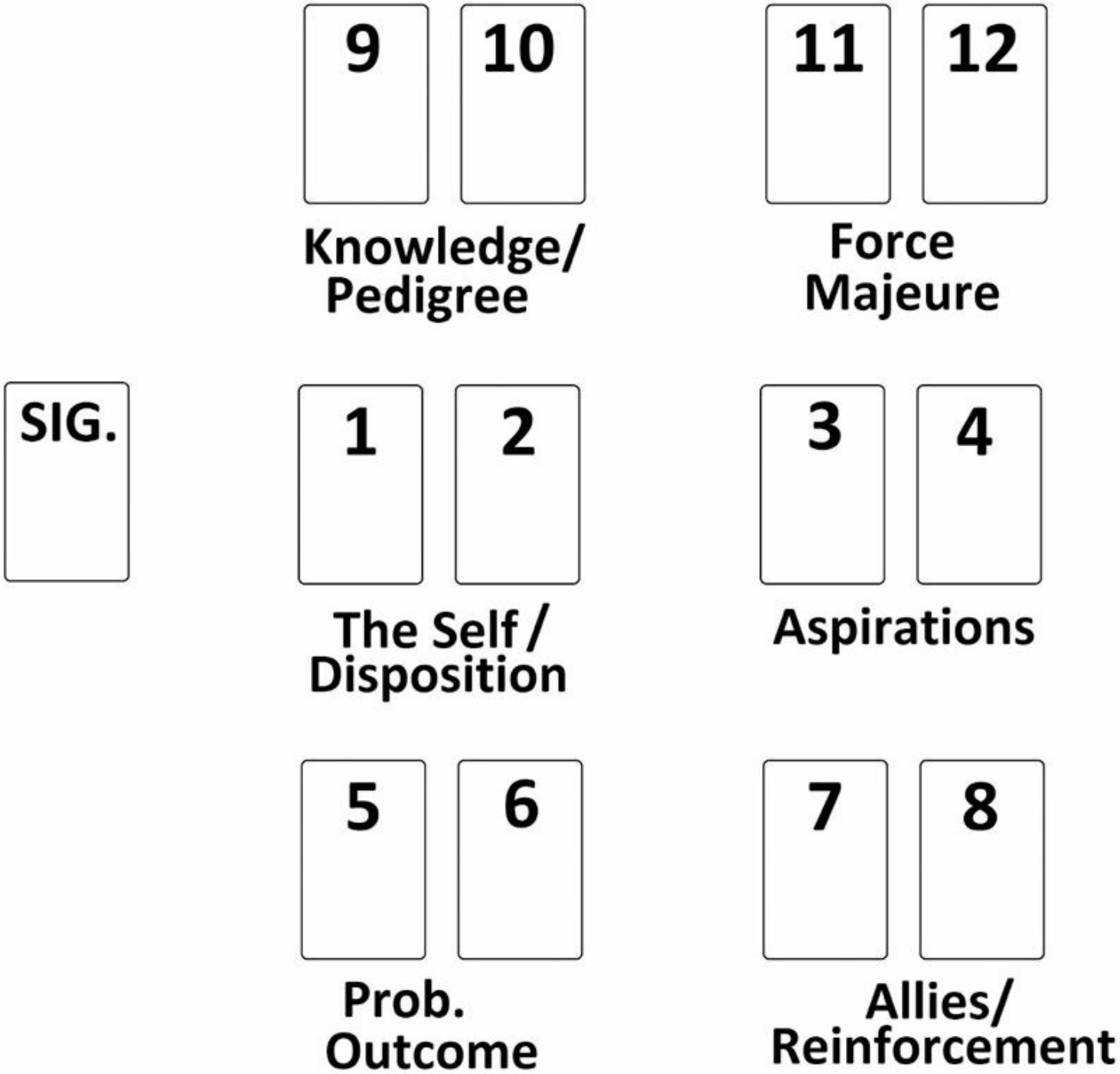
The simple twelve-card zodiac spread is an easy introduction to astrological spreads. It is best applied to general readings, to acquire a general snapshot or profile of the Seeker's life at the moment. For those familiar with astrology, the twelve-card zodiac spread can be likened to a natal chart reading.

The twelve-card zodiac spread is not the most space-efficient spread, so be sure to prepare enough room for the above-illustrated layout. Start by placing the signifier card down at the center. Move left of the signifier card and place down Card 1. Card 1 reveals the Seeker's prevailing personality trait, attitude, or outlook. This is the card about the Seeker's disposition, Self, and identity. Card 2 reveals the Seeker's material situation and delves into the Seeker's financial concerns, wealth, resources, acquisitions, or fiscal approach. Card 3 reveals the mental development of the Seeker, communication style, mental development, and at times can even reveal matters from childhood. Card 4 addresses the Seeker's inner domestic sphere, home and family matters. Card 5 is about happiness, the Seeker's pursuit of happiness and philosophy about what happiness is. It reveals what makes the Seeker happy, or what will bring contentment to the Seeker. It can also indicate progeny, creative projections, any matters relating to creation, recreation, or procreation.

Card 6 is about day-to-day work, the Seeker's occupation (though to be distinguished from the Seeker's career trajectory or highest professional potential, which is indicated in Card 10). It reveals the circumstances of the Seeker's daily work and can also touch on health issues. Card 7 reveals those who balance the Seeker—allies or particular forces and energies. It is often seen as the marriage and relationships card, whom we choose to commit ourselves to. Card 8 is the passion and sex card. It reveals the Seeker's sexuality. It also indicates issues of power and risk, changes, crises, and transformations. Card 9 suggests the philosophy, spirituality, or the general outlook that the Seeker needs to adopt to ensure success. It could indicate matters relating to higher education or travel abroad. Card 10 reveals self-esteem matters and the Seeker's ambitions and social status. While Card 6 referred to the Seeker's present job and day-to-day occupational tasks, Card 10 is about the bigger picture, the greater career trajectory that the Seeker is capable of. Card 11 reveals the Seeker's hopes and aspirations. It can also indicate matters relating to the Seeker's relationship to his or her community, or friendships. Finally, Card 12 reveals the latent energies or forces in the Seeker's unconscious that he or she needs to allow to surface to the conscious if success is to be had. This card can also represent the Seeker's latent powers or potential. Thus, in that sense, it also reveals challenges and obstacles that the Seeker must overcome to achieve success and contentment. Issues relating to loss and hardship that the Seeker must confront would likely be found here in Card 12.

Twelve-Card Specific Question Spread

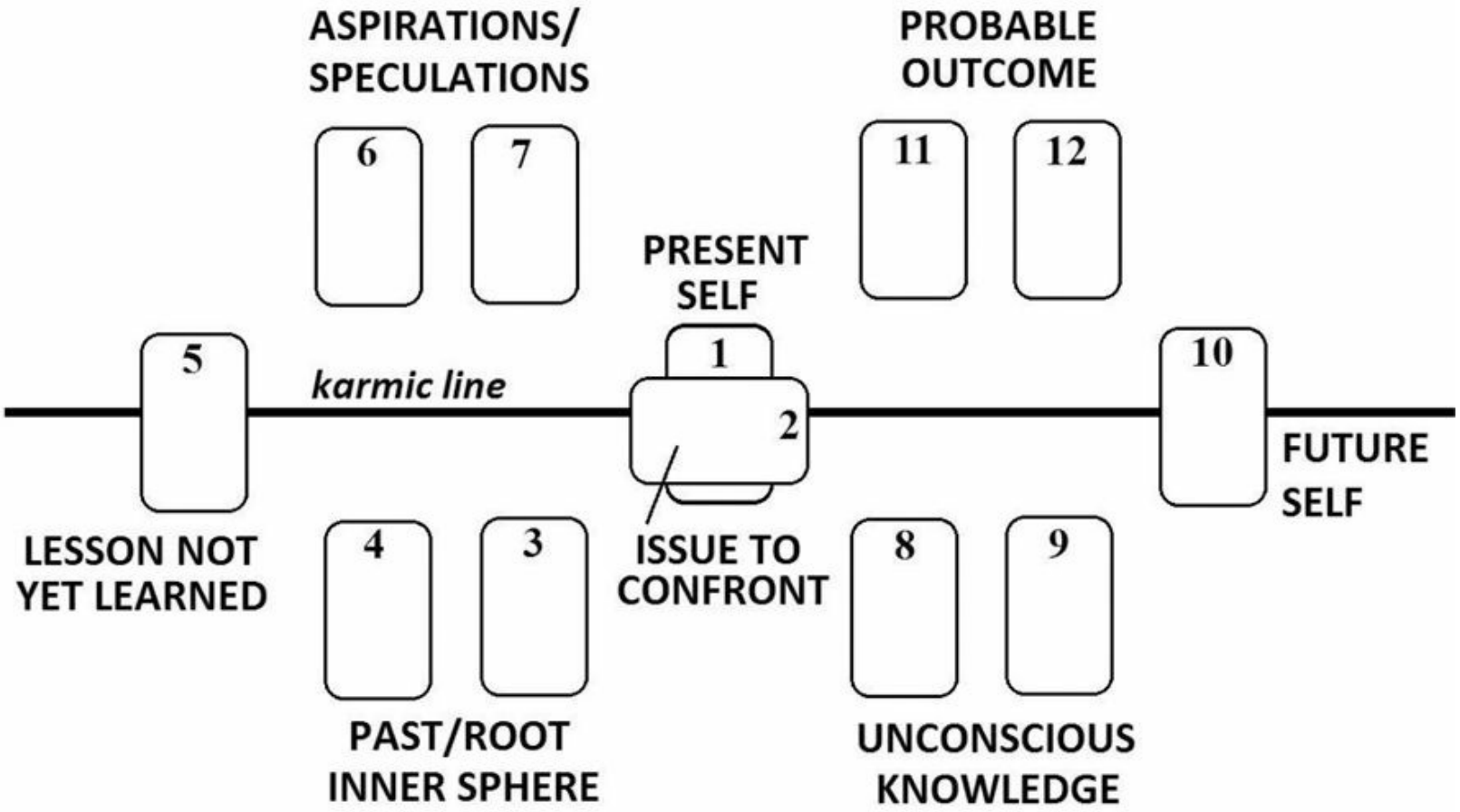
The zodiac spread provided in the previous section is not practicable for answering specific questions. If a twelve-card spread is preferred and the tarot is consulted for a specific question, the following spread may be used.



Each pairing of cards in the accompanying spread illustration should be read as a Method A two-card spread, as a sum. Cards 1 and 2 reveal the present positive influences that affect the question at hand. Cards 3 and 4 reveal the present negative influences. Cards 5 and 6 reveal the past positive influences. Cards 7 and 8 reveal the past negative influences. Cards 9, 10, 11, and 12 reveal the most probable future outcome, the answer to the Seeker's question. Cards 9 and 10 assure the Seeker of the silver lining, the positive impact of the outcome; Cards 11 and 12 warn the Seeker of the negative impact. Examined as a whole landscape, the twelve cards will answer the Seeker's question.

The Lemniscate Spread

The Lemniscate Spread is an extension of the Insight Spread, forming the infinity symbol with a tota of twelve cards. It works for both general and specific inquiries.



Card 1 represents the heart of the matter, or what covers Seeker in the present. Card 2 represents challenges and obstacles presently in the Seeker's way. They can be the energies that block the Seeker or events to come, what will cross the Seeker's path. Cards 3 and 4 are read together to form the foundation or inner sphere of the Seeker. They represent past influences that are seeping into the present and may affect the future or the outcome of the Seeker's situation. Card 5, as in the Insight Spread, represents lessons not yet learned. It indicates the recurring theme in the Seeker's life of spiritual significance: what the Seeker must ultimately resolve internally. It can indicate the core of the Seeker's past. For those who believe in reincarnation, it can also indicate past life influences. Cards 6 and 7 are speculative cards. They suggest the hopes and aspirations of the Seeker, if positive, or the Seeker's fears, if negative. The "speculative future" means the alternative outcome in the Seeker's situation.

Cards 8 and 9 are read together to represent the latent forces that will affect the outcome of the situation. They could also represent the future inner self of the Seeker. Card 10 is the Seeker's future self, who the Seeker will become. Cards 11 and 12 are read together to reveal the most probable outcome of the situation. They could also represent the future outer sphere of the Seeker.

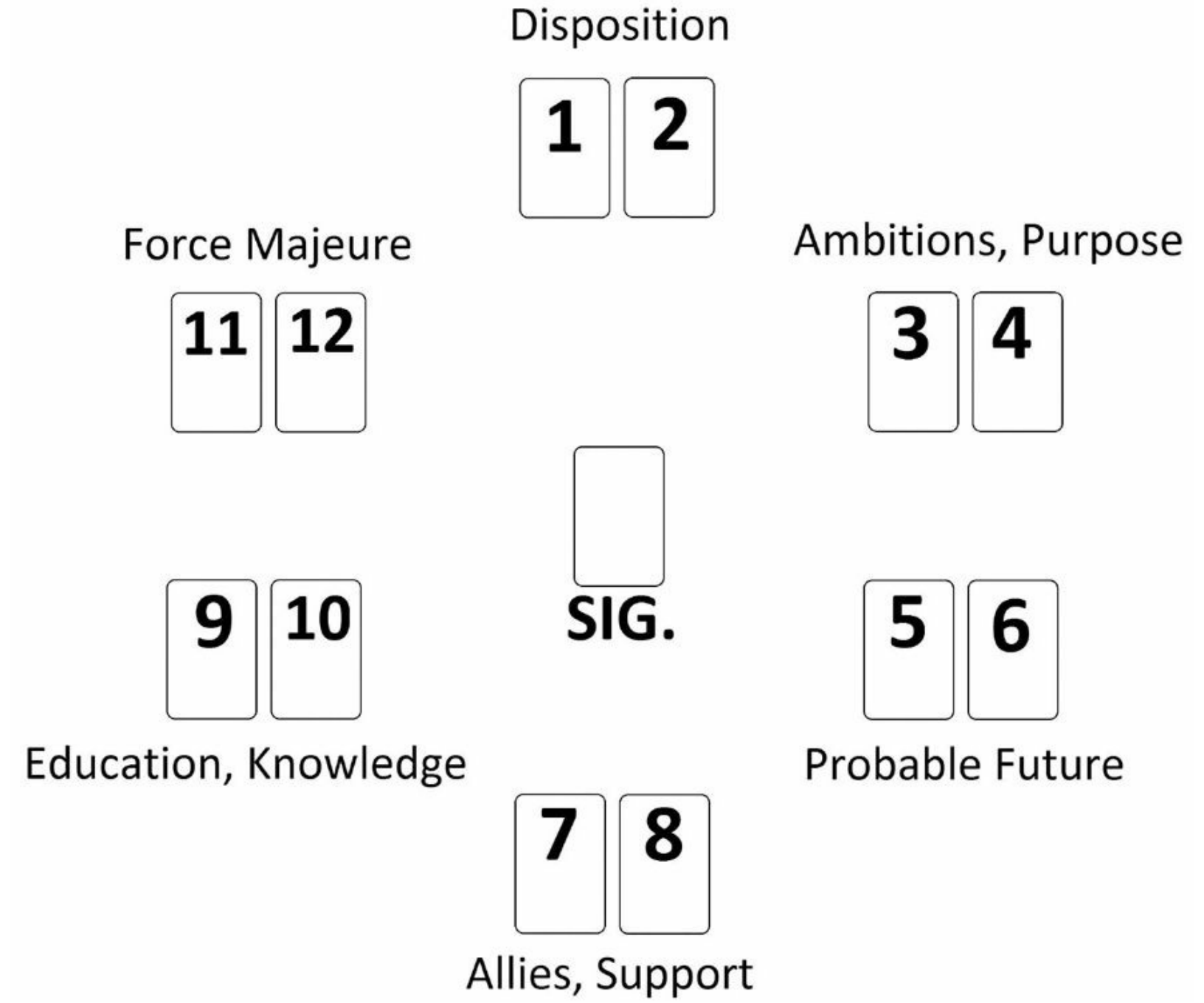
There is a simplified way to remember the position meanings of the Lemniscate Spread. The leftmost loop embodies the Seeker's past. The rightmost loop embodies the Seeker's future. The center cross of cards represents the present that connects the past and future. Always start at the center, covering the signifier card. The center cross and midpoint represent the present. The card

literally covering the signifier represents what covers the Seeker; the sideways card blocking the signifier represents what crosses the Seeker's path.

In the leftmost loop for the past, the bottom cards ground the Seeker: they represent past influences and the Seeker's foundation. The leftmost card of the entire spread represents lessons not yet learned, recurring themes in the Seeker's life, or past life influences. The top cards in the past loop represent the speculative future, the alternative outcome, hopes, or fears. In the rightmost loop for the future, the bottom cards are latent forces, the rightmost card of the spread is the Seeker's future self, and the top cards are external forces or, like in the Insight Spread, indicate the most probable outcome.

The Six Faiths

The six articles of faith that the following spread is inspired by are: (1) faith in the supreme being; (2) faith in the prophet; (3) faith in divine judgment; (4) faith in angels, messengers of the supreme being; (5) faith in divine books; and (6) faith in fate, destiny, or the wheel of fortune. In this twelve-card spread, two cards correspond with each article of faith. Read each pair of cards as a sum, per the Method A two-card spread. The faiths are represented in pairs to symbolize the duality and dichotomy of all cosmic forces. Some will feel more comfortable laying the six faiths spread clockwise. Others will feel more comfortable laying it counter-clockwise. Either way, the card numbers will correspond as shown in the next illustration. However, whichever way the practitioner chooses, the practitioner should remain consistent. Here, the diagram illustrates the reading clockwise.



Cards 1 and 2 reflect the self, how the Seeker views him- or herself, or the prevailing attitudes the

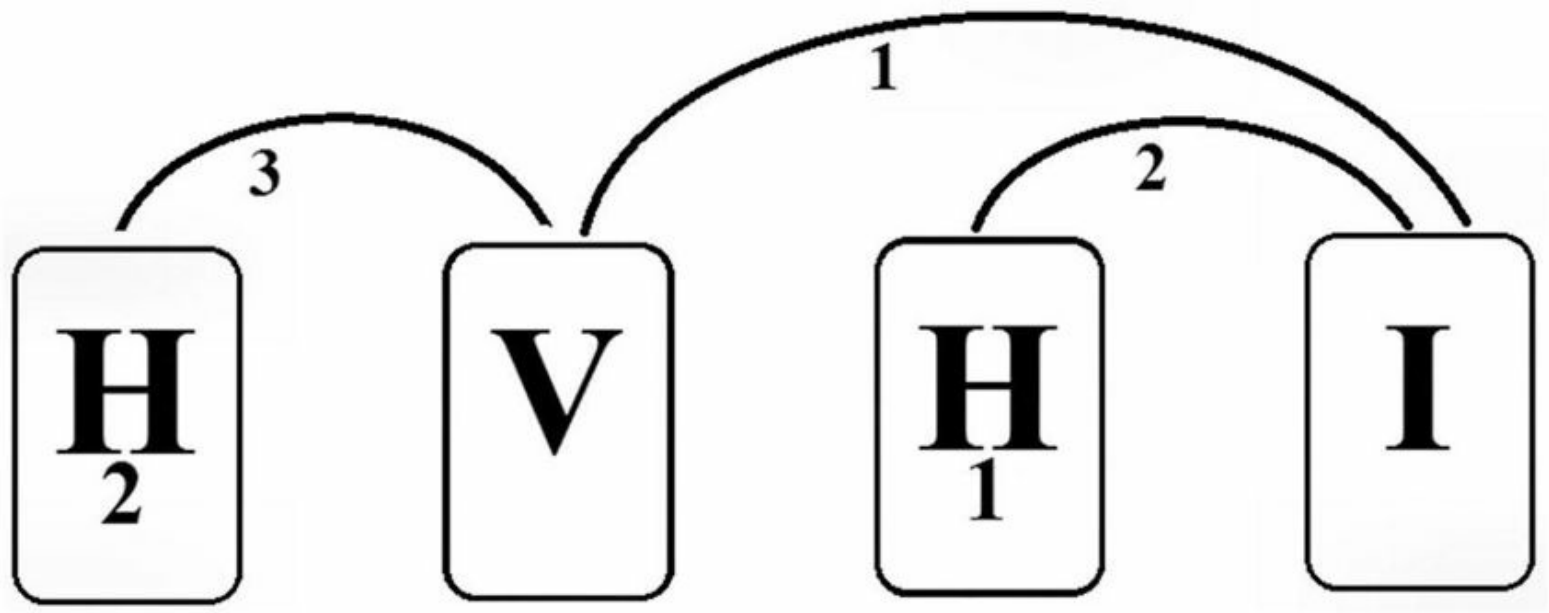
Seeker brings to the present. They correspond with article of faith (1), faith in a supreme being. Here, that can be understood as the self, the one in control of all decisions and the Seeker's own future. Cards 3 and 4 reflect the Seeker's goals, ambitions, or mission. These are Seeker's aspirations or how Seeker has been approaching those aspirations. They correspond with article of faith (2), faith in the prophet. As applied to this spread, the Seeker's will/determination is his or her own prophet. Cards 5 and 6 reflect the most probable future. If the Seeker is asking a specific question, then these cards reveal the final outcome. They correspond with article of faith (3), judgment.

Cards 7 and 8 represent the Seeker's allies or where the Seeker can find support. This position can also represent important messages the cards have for the Seeker: warnings, cautions, or inspiration. They correspond with article of faith (4), angels. Cards 9 and 10 represent the Seeker's knowledge and experiences. They represent the learned information the Seeker brings to his or her present. The cards correspond with article of faith (5), divine books. The final cards, 11 and 12, represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. These could suggest the Seeker in his or her environment, third-party influences, or the circumstances the Seeker finds him- or herself in right now that feel beyond the Seeker's control. These cards correspond with article of faith (6), fate.

The Six Faiths spread is best suited for specific questions, though it can also be tailored to provide a general view of the Seeker's present situation. The Six Faiths spread is a more intermediate spread and therefore mastery of the two-card spreads, five-card and seven-card spreads, and the Celtic Cross are suggested before attempting the Six Faiths.

Grand Profile Life Assessment Spread

The Grand Profile Life Assessment spread provides a Seeker with incredibly detailed insight into his or her present life situation. It is a general reading that touches on the four areas of life per the First Operation, i.e., I, H_1, V, and H_2. After the deck has been shuffled by the Seeker, have the Seeker cut the deck into four piles per the First Operation. Review Chapter 11 on the method of cutting the cards into the four piles. The actual First Operation need not be performed prior to this reading.



Also, signifier cards are optional here. This spread is essentially four independent readings. Once the four piles have been formed, start with the first pile, I, and ask the Seeker to state the first number that comes to his or her head, one through nine.

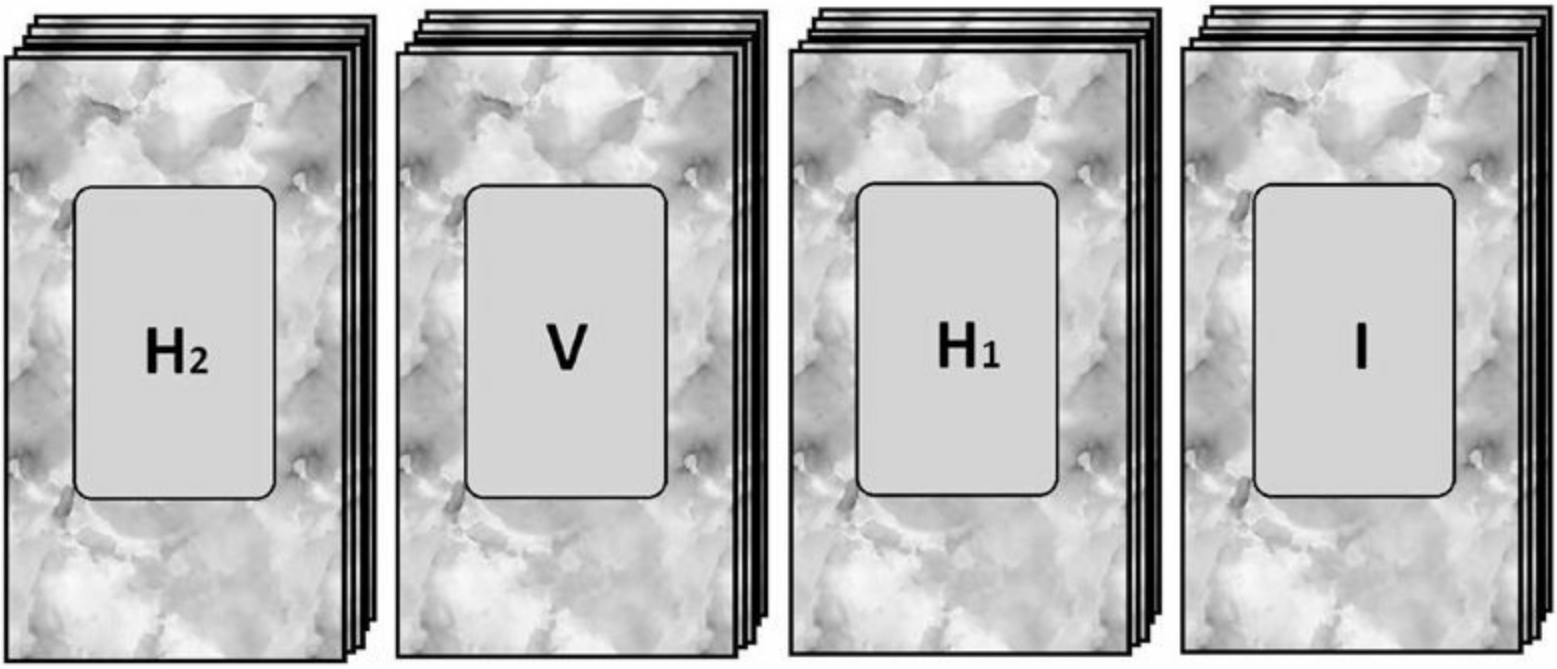
From the top of the pile, draw out that number of cards in a row. You can either go right to left to remain consistent with the above, or left to right to suggest the progression from past to present to future. Whichever direction you go with, maintain consistency and stick with that direction every time you perform the spread. Tell the Seeker the significance of the number he or she selected. The significance of numbers is reviewed in detail later in this chapter. That numerological significance will apply to the "I" category of the Seeker's life, which is personal development, work/career, and health and wellness issues. Continue for the next three piles, each time having the Seeker select a number one through nine and then drawing out the corresponding number of cards into a reading about that particular area of the Seeker's life.

Pile H_1 will reveal issues pertaining to love and relationships in the Seeker's life. Pile V indicates the Seeker's goals, ambitions, and also past accomplishments. Note that if the cards of the V pile reading seem dark and negative, then the pile could be indicating a source of conflict or a significant dispute going on in the Seeker's life. Finally, the H_2 pile will reveal the Seeker's financial situation, material concerns, property concerns, and overall wealth conditions. Read the cards as a series of vignettes that offer glimpses into the Seeker's past, present, and future. Apply the considerations of the spread landscape discussed in the next chapter. Note that the number that the Seeker selects bears significance to the topic. The number of cards selected by the Seeker corresponds as follows:

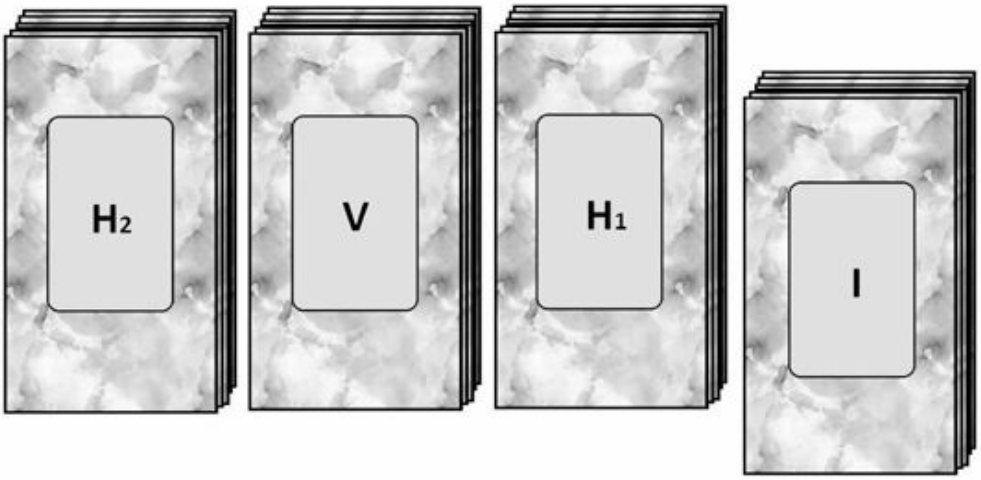
#	*Significance*
1	**Leadership**. Confidence. Conviction. Perhaps egocentric and somewhat arrogant. Motivated by glory and honor. Seeker feels self-assured in this area.
2	**Peacemaking**. Seeker is trying to understand the higher purpose or meaning to the events in this area. The events currently feel existential. Seeking the spiritual component to the events.
3	**Communication**. Expression. Persuasion. Conference. Seeker is making social connections with others. Seeker does not take criticism very well in this area, however.
4	**Strategic Planning**. Pragmatism. Motivated by values and stability. Seeker wants to create something of use.
5	**Pioneering**. Adventure. Spontaneity. Seeker wants to feel excited and invigorated. Seeker wants to experience new sensations.
6	**Nurturing**. Family. Faith. Tradition. Romance. Seeker wants the inner sphere to be strong. Maturity.
7	**Analytical Thought**. Philosophizing. Intellectualism. Spiritual wisdom. Rational thought and analysis. Mind over matter.
8	**Tycoon**. Money issues. Property. Assets. Wealth accrual. The material realm. Seeker wants to seek his or her fortune.
9	**Artist/Healer**. Humanism. Philanthropy. Seeker strives to help others. Benevolence. Charity. Self-sacrifice.

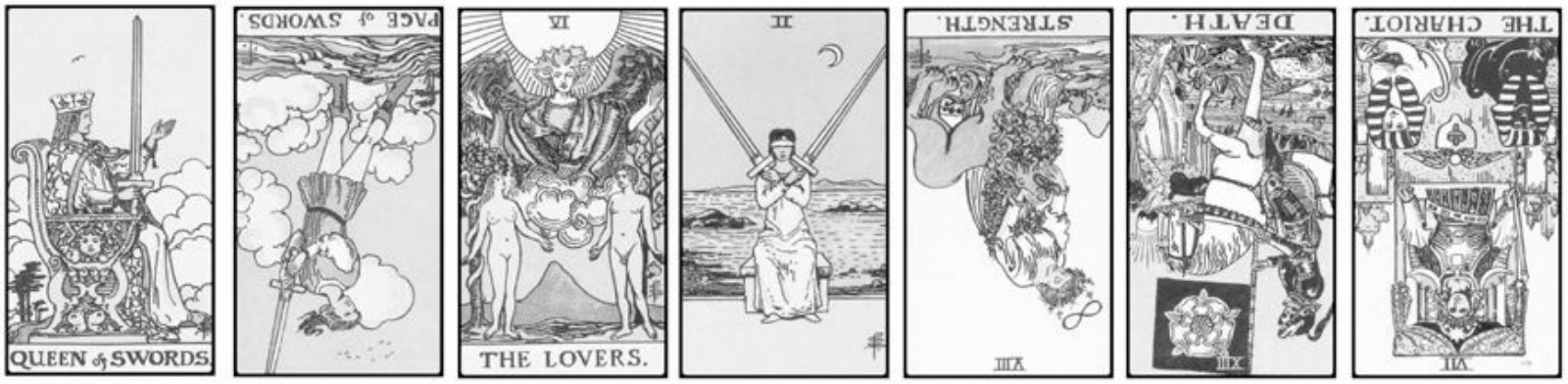
Case Study: Nadie

Nadie is a forty-five-year-old female requesting a general reading. You, the practitioner, decide to utilize the Grand Profile spread to help Nadie assess the four main sectors of her life. No signifier card is used.



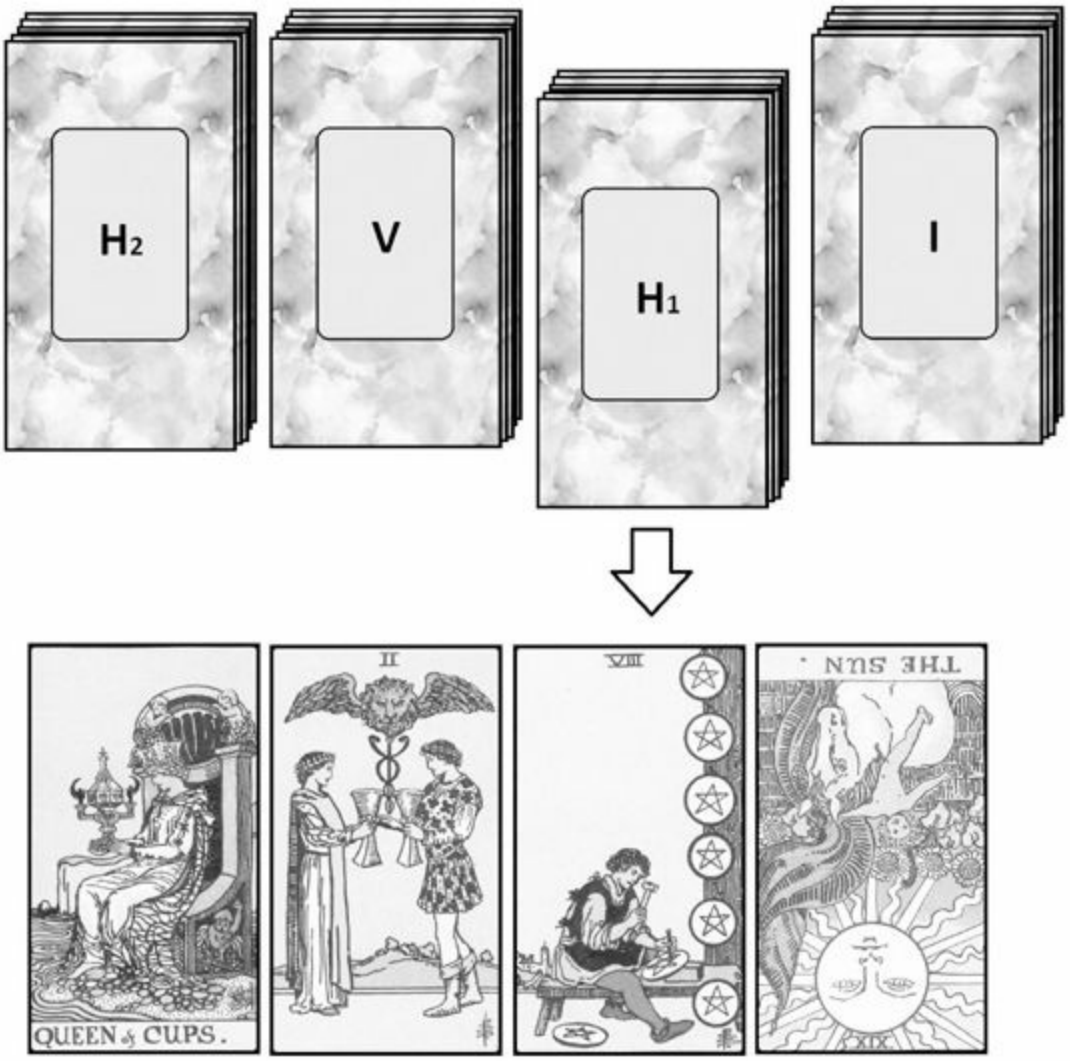
The deck is cut into the four piles as pictured. Nadie is asked to select a number, one through nine. She selects seven. Per the previous table, the number seven corresponds with thought, philosophy, and intellectualism. Nadie may have an academic streak in her or may work in academia. Her disposition and in turn her interests and decisions will lean toward academia. You draw seven cards from the top of the pile I, which are as follows:





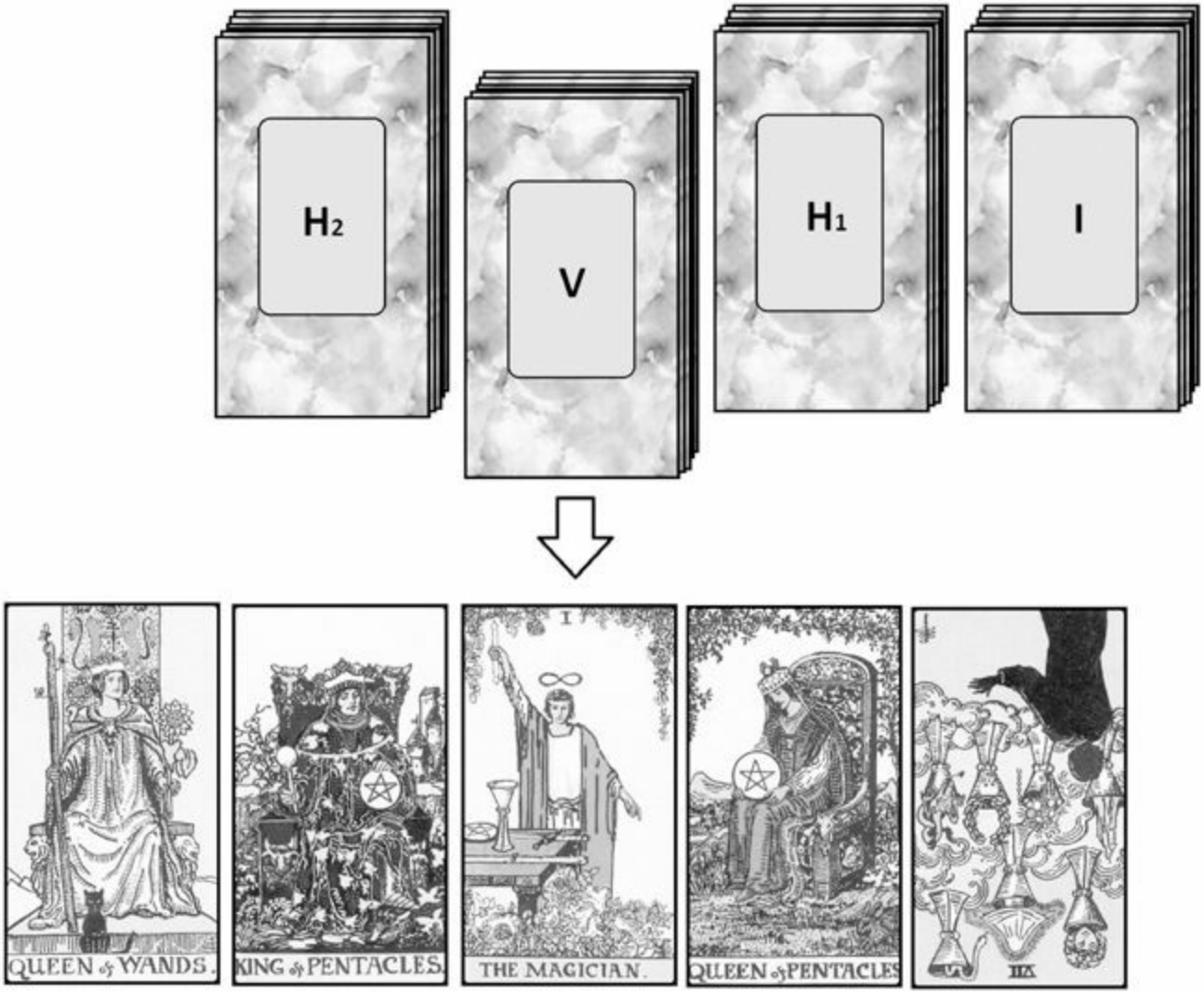
Here, the center card is the Two of Swords, one sword pointed in each direction toward three cards. This could suggest that Nadie is deciding between two career paths or has two equally compelling projects from which she must pick only one. One option is represented by the Queen of Swords, Page of Swords, reversed, and The Lovers card; the other by Strength, reversed, Death, reversed, and The Chariot, reversed. Immediately the one headed by the Queen looks more promising. The two swords and dominance of the Air sign suggests that it could be related to communications, a technical field, or an endeavor that is highly analytical in nature. The other option seems high-risk and will take more fortitude, conviction, and stamina than Nadie might have to offer right now. The practitioner should review the meaning of each card in detail with Nadie before proceeding. In the interest of time, that detailed reading will be omitted from this section.

Move on to the next pile, H_1. As you pick up the second pile, you ask Nadie to choose a number, one through nine, again. She picks four. That suggests that perhaps Nadie is a very logical-minded woman. She wants everything to be planned out, especially her love life. When it comes to romance, she doesn't want surprises.



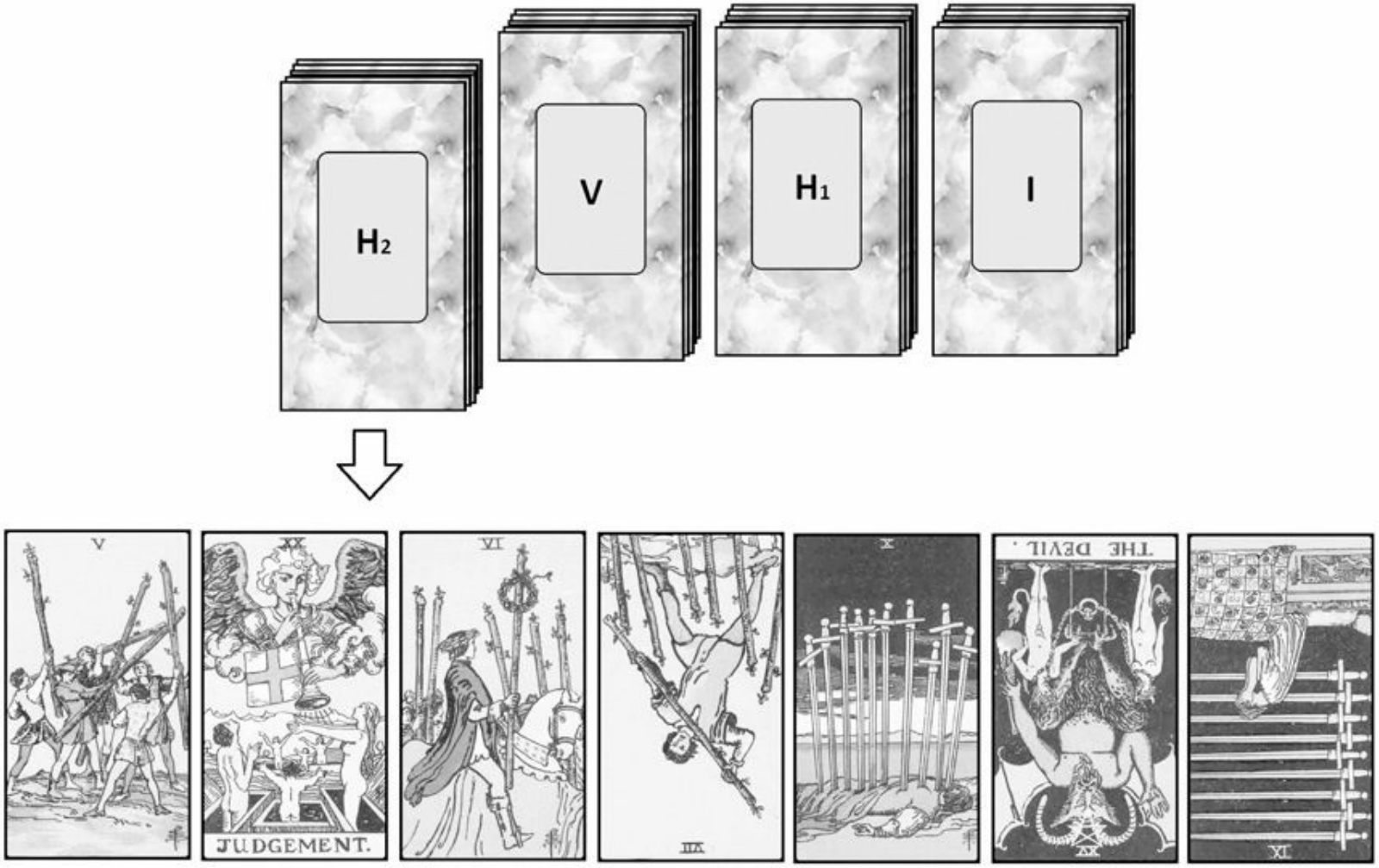
Several romance-favorable cards: the Queen of Cups and the Two of Cups. The Eight of Pentacles could suggest a lover who is in an artistic field or craft. If Nadie is rather young and in the entry level of her career, he could be a peer. If Nadie is older and established in her career, he could be her junior in some way, or less developed in his career than she is. The Sun card in reverse here does suggest disorientation, losses, and even marriage trouble. Again, a truncated nutshell interpretation is offered here.

For the V pile, Nadie selects five. The number five is associated with adventure and being a pioneer. Considering the indication of the pile, which is Nadie's relationship to society, her ambitions, and the higher intellectual plane, and considering that she is an academic, the five here, with pile V, could indicate an activist, someone who works for social change. She could be in the nonprofit sector. One way or another, her work is interconnected with her community.



The Queen of Wands here could represent either a female peer who bears relevance to Nadie's work, or it could represent an inner facet of Nadie's character; either way, it is about a self-assured, creative woman with Fire energy. The King, likewise, could take on either a literal or figurative indication, for male Earth energy, power, enterprise, and establishment. The Magician echoes the King's theme of power. Note how The Magician is sandwiched in between the King and Queen of Pentacles. Intuitively the spread appears to be quite populated with characters. Nadie is not working alone in a vacuum. There are many people involved here. The Seven of Cups in reverse suggests that Nadie and these characters are still trying to find and commit to their purpose or mission. That purpose will be revealed to them soon enough.

Finally, for $H_{2.}$ she selects seven again. Again, the operation on the higher thought plane is a large part of Nadie's mental state.



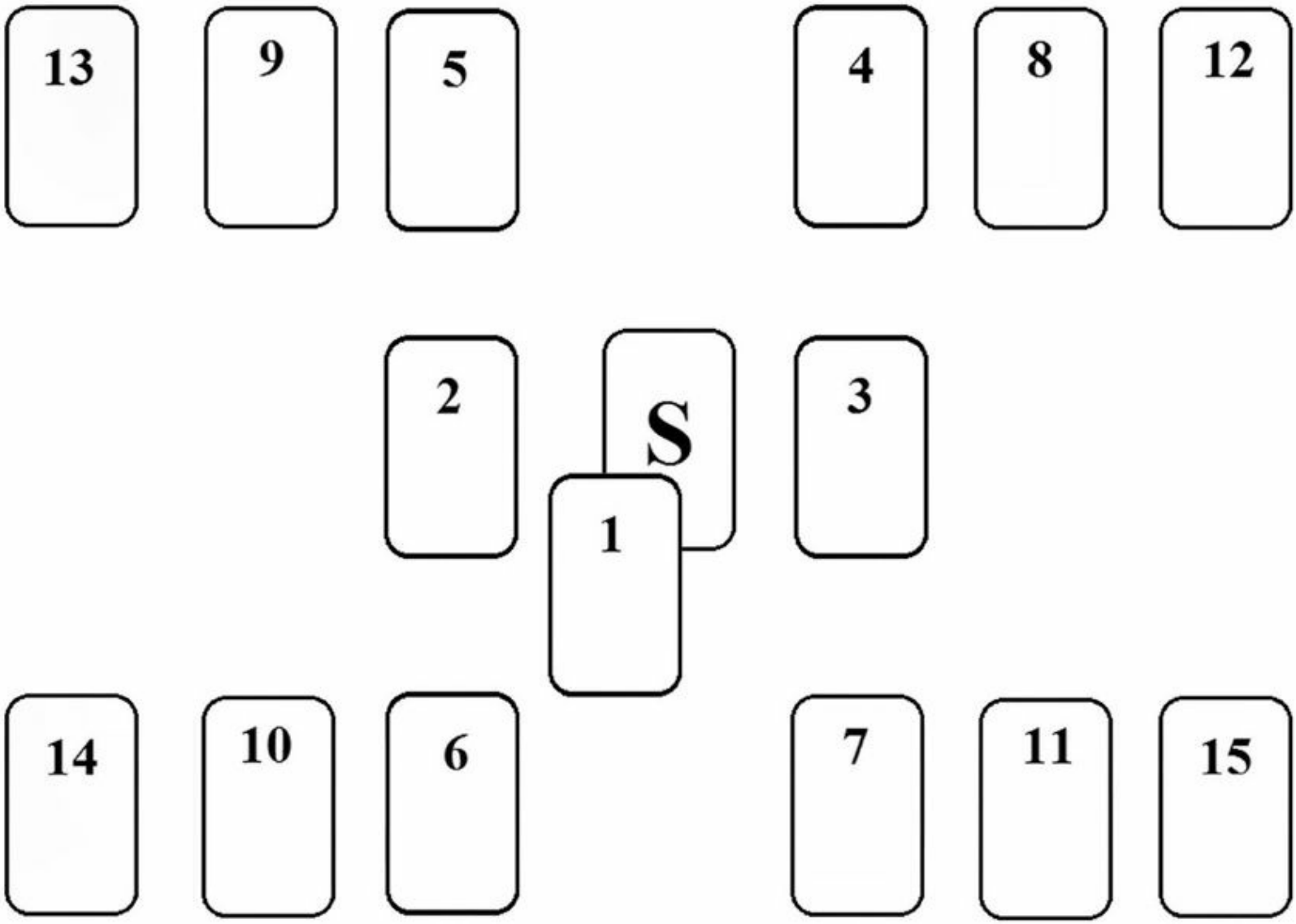
There may be rivalry of some kind or disputes over financial matters, suggested by the Five of Wands here. The dispute will come to a head soon enough, however, as the Judgement card suggests epiphany, or coming to a realization about that dispute that will change the course of Nadie's actions. Ultimately she will succeed, as the Six of Wands suggests victory. There may be praise and accolades showered on Nadie. As it appears in the H_2 pile, the result of the recognition she attains will be monetary.

That is not to say money comes easy for Nadie. The Seven of Wands in reverse suggests vulnerability and insecurity, which, as applied to the pile at hand, suggests financial vulnerability and insecurity. Reprisals could happen. The Ten of Swords juxtaposed with The Devil reversed suggest severe financial troubles, such as tax issues that might result in penalties or near-bankruptcy. Financial decisions that have been made may further lead to regret, as suggested by the Nine of Swords. In reverse, the Nine here suggestsrecovery, so the financial difficulties that occur will be recoverable. The practitioner may further want to note to Nadie that sometimes the Nine of Swords in reverse can indicate infidelity of some kind.

The Traditional Fifteen-Card Spread

I learned the Traditional Fifteen-Card spread fromRobert Wang's work *The Qabalistic Tarot*[9] and have adopted it for my personal practice. I use a signifier, which is placed down first. Card 1 is placed on top of the signifier. In the illustration provided of the spread, Card 1 is placed to the side slightly so that it can be made clear to the reader that a signifier is used. In practice, Card 1 would go directly on top, so that the signifier would be covered.

The cards are then placed in the positions as illustrated, Card 2 to the left of the signifier, Card 3 to the right, and then the cards drawn and placed in the order of the four corners of a quadrilateral, going counter-clockwise. The final spread is as follows:



Card 1 represents the present state of the Seeker, what covers the Seeker, and what present matter of controversy or conflict must be dealt with. Card 2 represents past key issues that affect the matter at hand; Card 3 represents the forthcoming key issues that will affect the matter at hand.

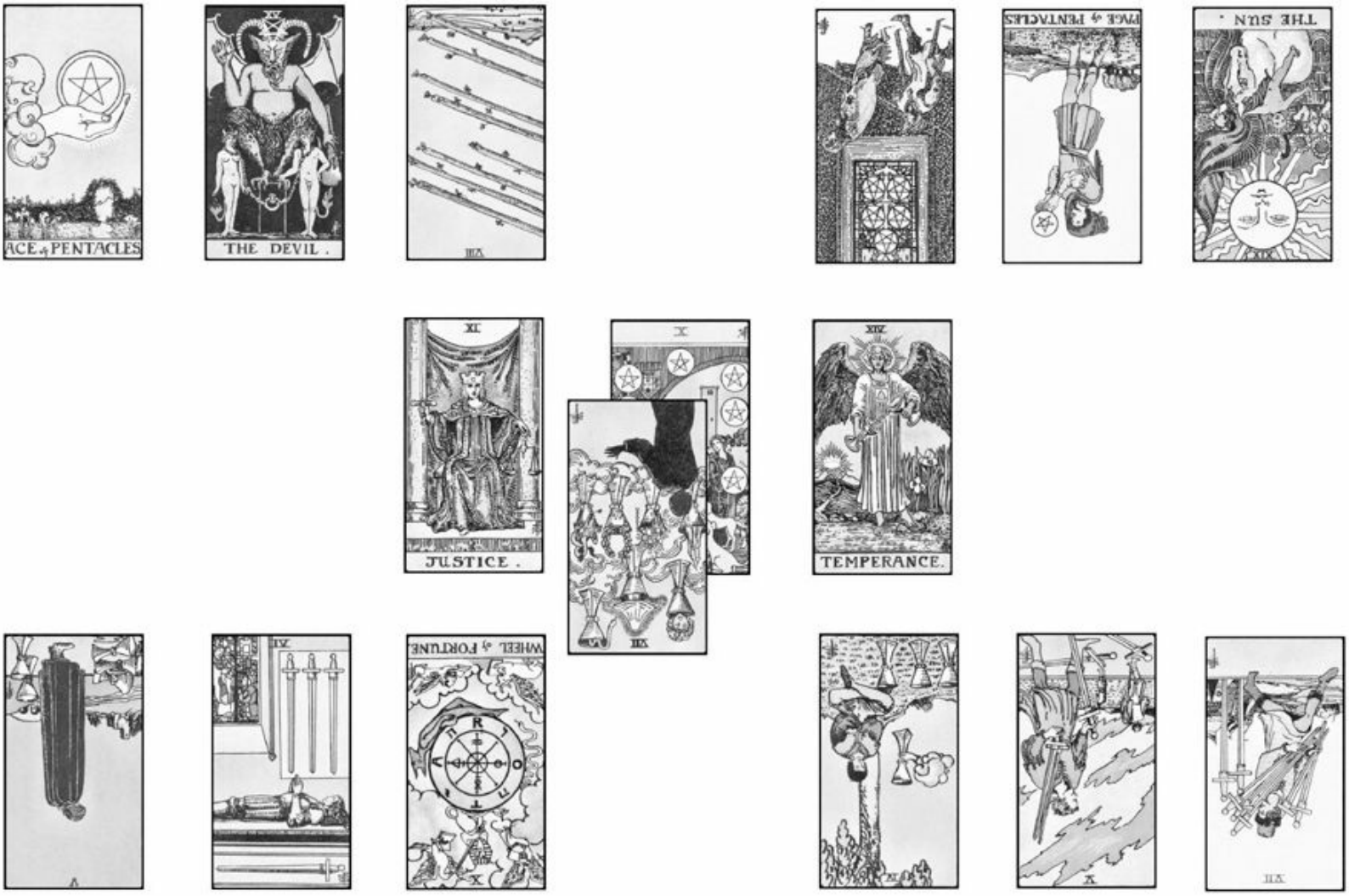
The top right corner (Cards 4, 8, and 12) represents the most probable outcome if the Seeker remains on the current trajectory. The top left corner (Cards 5, 9, and 13) represent a speculative, alternative outcome if Seeker makes adjustments to the present trajectory. These three cards represent what *could* happen. The bottom left corner (Cards 6, 10, and 14) represent the necessary factors that will help the Seeker positively. The bottom right corner (Cards 7, 11, and 15) represent the greater

external factors at play in the issue, what may feel beyond the Seeker's control, what factors the Seeker must mitigate to ensure the most positive outcome possible.

Case Study: Hector

Hector is in his mid-forties and is the second generation of a family business. Sadly, his father has passed on and Hector now runs the company by himself. Recent downturns in the economy have had a detrimental effect on sales and the company his father built is now struggling. A venture capitalist is interested in investing in the company and would like to help it expand internationally. Hector is excited about the prospects, but the venture capitalist wants a minimum of 50 percent ownership of Hector's company, which he inherited from his father and planned to pass on to his son. Although Hector is by no means relying on a tarot reading to make such an important (and possibly life-changing) business decision, he is interested to see whether he might gain some insight into his situation from a reading.

You, the practitioner, use the fifteen-card spread. Instead of using a court card for the signifier, the Ten of Pentacles is used, which anchors the reading toward Hector's family business. The First Operation produced the signifier card in the H_2 pile, validating the nature of Hector's inquiry. The following spread is drawn:



The right top corner represents the most probable outcome, the left top corner represents what could happen if different decisions are made, the left bottom represents necessary factors for success, and the right bottom represents external factors at play.

To start, note how the signifier card is flanked by two Major Arcana cards, both

featuring guardians of strength. Note further that the angel imagery of Temperance is adjacent to the Five of Pentacles in reverse, indicating a greater need for spirituality. The Four of Swords is also present in this reading, further confirming a need for Hector to return to his faith.

The Page of Pentacles here takes on a figurative meaning and suggests the receipt of disappointing financial news. Its neighbor card—the Five of Pentacles, also in reverse—suggests that the venture capitalist could probably help rehabilitate Hector's company, though The Sun in reverse here suggests disorientation and the company yielding to the venture capitalist's decisions on how to run operations over Hector's. The top right corner suggests what will happen if Hector agrees to the joint venture. On the other hand, the top left corner holds a few warnings for Hector if he does decide to continue on his own. He needs to be careful not to rush into any hasty decisions, or the consequence will be regression of the business, as suggested by the Eight of Wands in reverse. The Devil suggests material bondage, which for a business could represent debt. In the event Hector rejects the venture capitalist's offer, he might be tempted to try to finance the company with loans he can't pay back. The cards on the top left side warn not to proceed with such a high risk. Many of the cards in Hector's spread warn to be conservative now, and not take risks. On the bright side, the Ace of Pentacles does indicate recovery for the company if Hector goes at it alone.

The bottom left represents the necessary success factors. The Five of Cups in reverse suggests restoration of past losses, and the Four of Swords echoes that theme with a message of recovery. However, his business will continue to swim upstream, as suggested by the Wheel of Fortune in reverse. To navigate his business solo, he will need to work twice as hard as he did before. The bottom right represents external factors. The Seven of Swords in reverse can indicate forfeiture, which is consistent with the speculative possibility of exorbitant loans that The Devil card might represent. In general, while third-party debt financing can be a great idea to kick-start or resuscitate businesses, Hector should think twice before doing so. It may not turn out well for him. Both the Five of Swords and Seven of Swords in reverse hint at penalties.

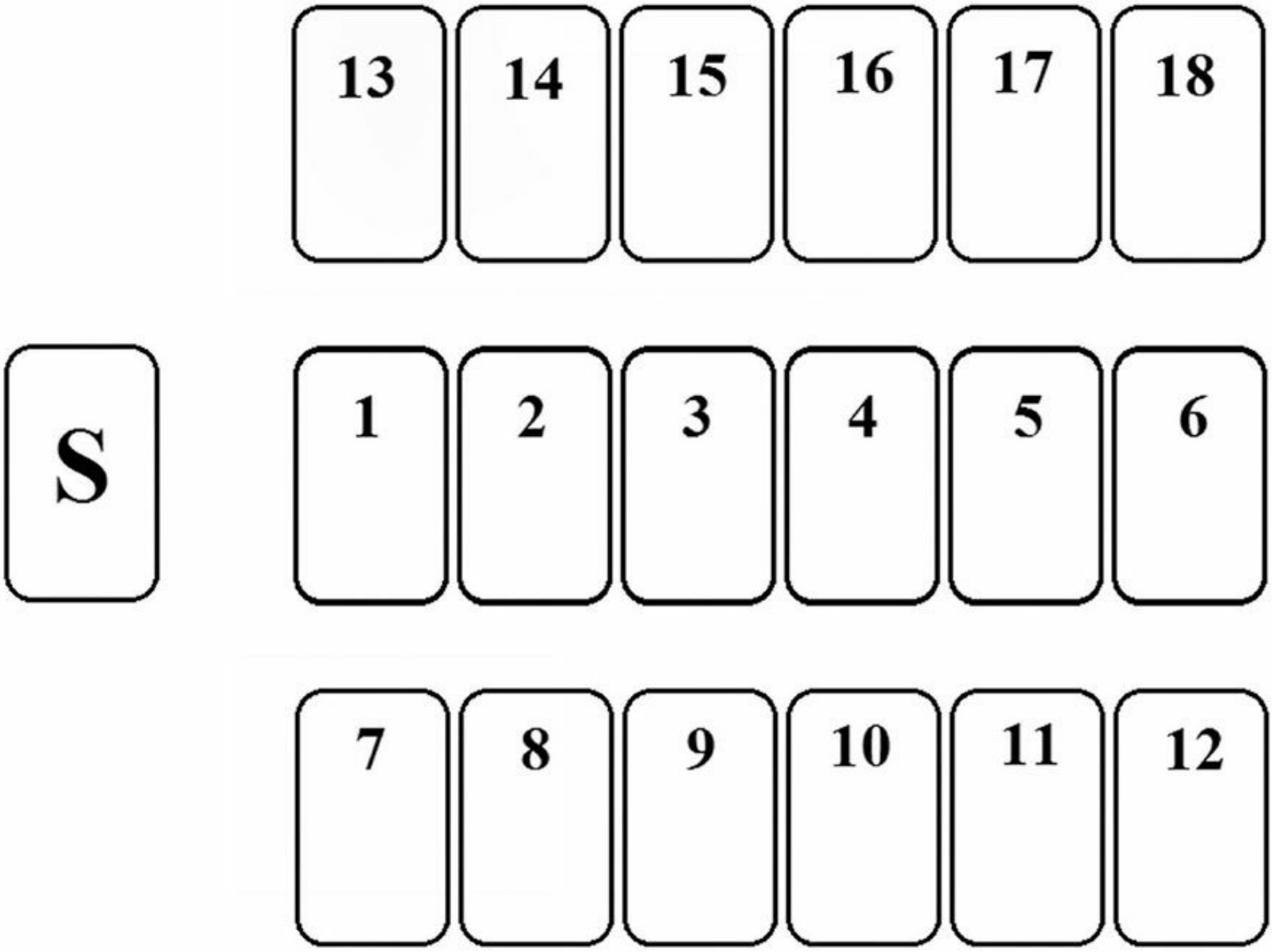
Justice and Temperance hold strong and upright, protecting the signifier card, which ultimately is a positive omen for Hector. Since the inquiry is regarding a business, the appearance of the Justice card more likely indicates legal issues than it does a more general sense of fairness or equity. Temperance could be said to be a relative to Justice, as both represent a form of balance. To have both in a reading to either side of Hector's signifier might indicate to Hector that he needs to make business decisions that will maintain harmony for his company and position it for the long haul—within the family.

The Chai Eighteen-Card Spread

The eighteen-card spread can be used to examine a Seeker's life overall. Why eighteen? "Chai" means life in Hebrew. The gematria, a mystical Judaic tradition, assigns numerological values to Hebrew letters, and for the letters that spell "Chai," the sum is the number eighteen. The number eighteen is a popular symbol for good luck in many cultures, as it represents life.

In the following spread, the cards are organized in three rows of six, both numbers of numerological significance. Six is the smallest perfect number, and in the Book of Genesis the divine deity took six days to create the world. Note that, at least in the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, the Hebrew letters for YHWH (ה-ו-ה-י) appear on the wheel in the Wheel of Fortune card, card ten of the Major Arcana. The number three represents trinity, an important concept to many faiths, such as the Christian holy trinity, the Hindu trimurti (a triad consisting of creation, maintenance, and destruction), the three refuges of Buddhism (Buddha, dharma, sangha), the Taoist concept of Fu Lu Shou (good fortune, prosperity, and longevity), the three blessings of a good life, or the triple goddess of Wicca (the maiden, the mother, and the crone; waxing moon, full moon, and waning moon). Likewise, the eighteen-card spread represents the three components of our life at any one time: the present, the past, and the future. Each component is read through six cards.

For the eighteen-card spread, the signifier card is placed to the side. The signifier card is represented by the "S" card in the above illustration. Set down the signifier card. Then, to its right place down six cards, Cards 1 through 6, to represent the Seeker's present. Below it, place down six more cards, Cards 7 through 12, to represent the Seeker's past. Above the present, place down Cards 13 through 18, to represent the Seeker's future.

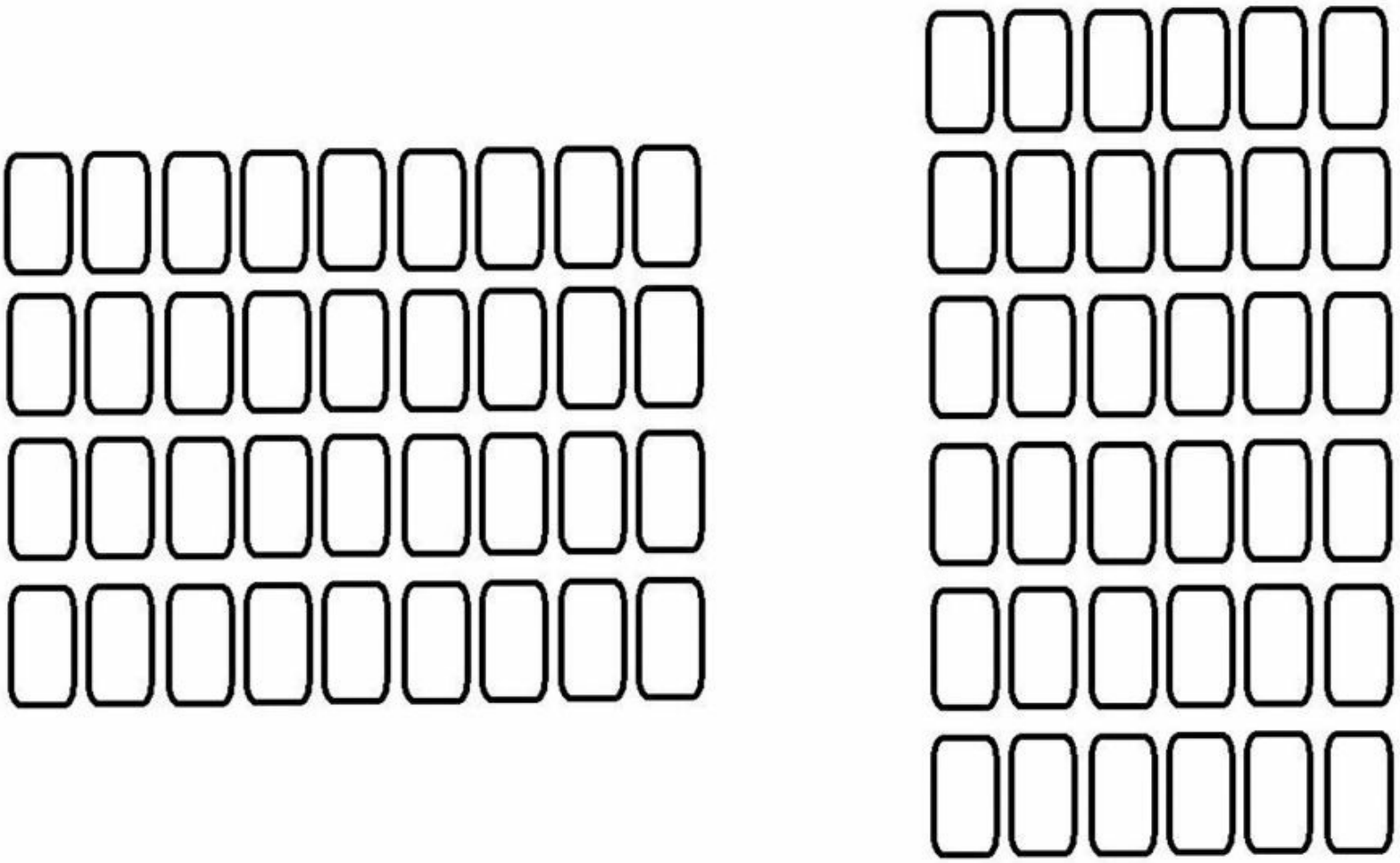


The cards of each row are read as a three-act story, the two leftmost cards in each row representing Act I, the exposition; the center two, Act II, the complication; and the rightmost, Act III the climax and denouement. The two left cards of each row set the scene and introduce the Seeker's setting as it was in the past, as it is in the present, and as it will be in the future. The center two cards reveal the Seeker's complications and the obstacles that the Seeker may face. The rightmost cards offer insights into how the Seeker can reach an equilibrium for his or her past, present, and future respectively, and suggest the Seeker's points of catharsis.

There are pros and cons to a large spread. Large spreads are often best suited for intuitive readers, or readers who will scan the cards quickly for the signs that stand out the most and creatively put together a narrative for the Seeker based predominantly on the practitioner's direct access to the unconscious. However, for analytical practitioners, a large spread can create too much noise. It is also difficult to read too deeply into any one card with so many left to get to. Some practitioners will take to the smaller or more organized spreads. Others will prefer the eighteen-card spread for its openness, flexibility, and fluidity.

The Grand Tableau

The Grand Tableau spread is typically associated with the Lenormand oracle deck, a deck of thirty-six cards (the Petit Lenormand) or fifty-four cards (the Grand Jeu Lenormand) often used in Europea cartomancy. Yet the concept can be applied here to tarot and works quite well. You will need a lot of space, however, as it is a large spread of thirty-six cards.

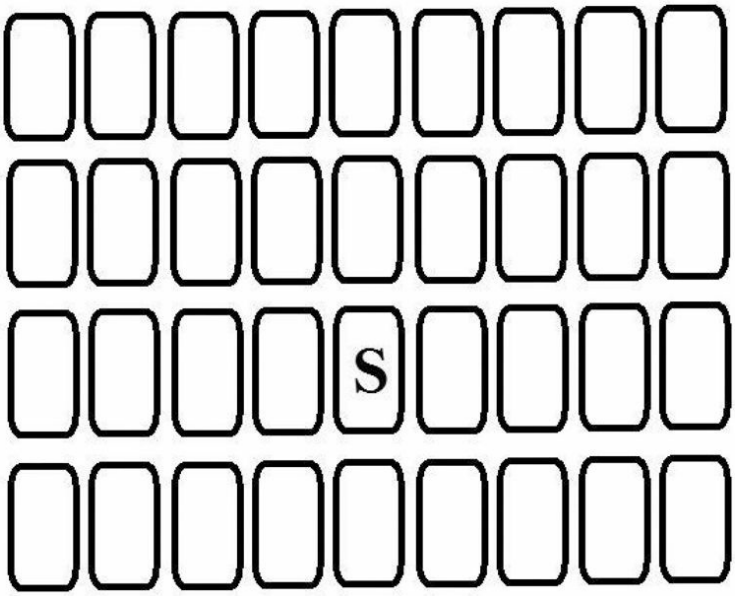


Above left: 9×4 layout. Above right: 6×6 layout.

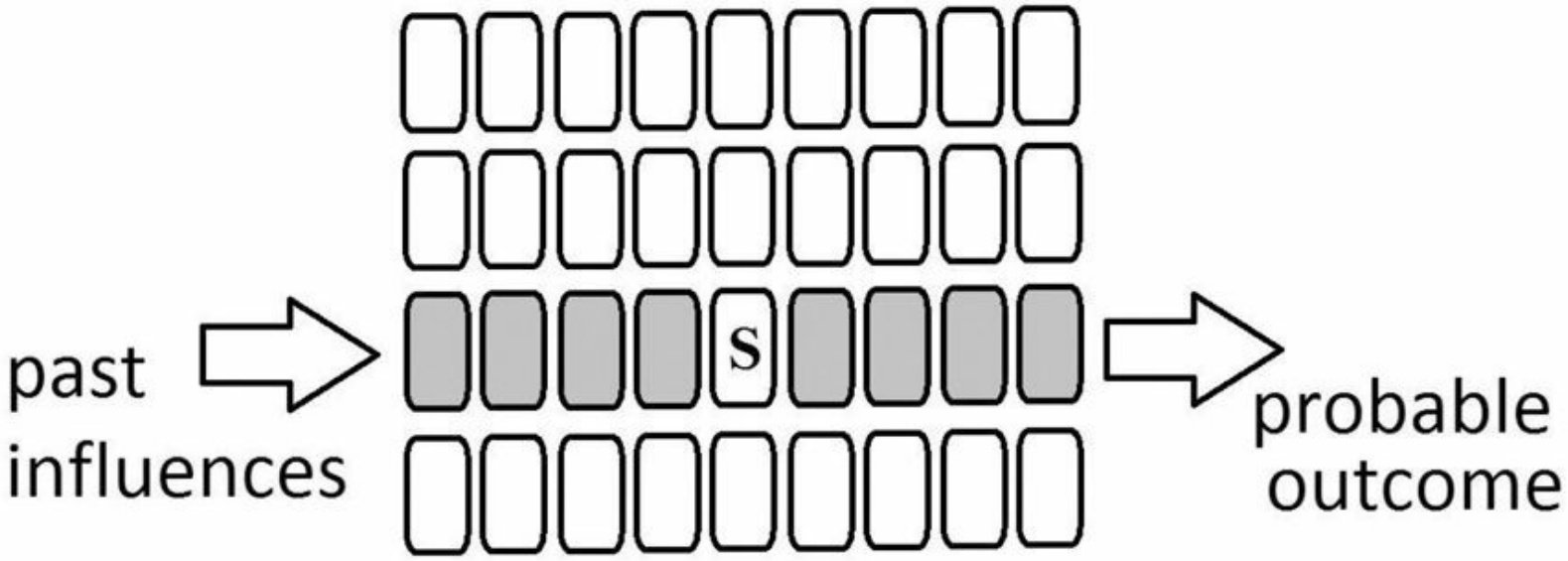
Start by selecting the signifier. Set the signifier aside. Have the Seeker shuffle the deck thoroughly and then draw out thirty-five cards.

Shuffle the thirty-five cards with the signifier (for a total of thirty-six) and lay the cards out into the Grand Tableau spread as illustrated. You can opt for the nine rows by four columns (9×4) layout or the six rows by six columns (6x6) layout. Go with the one that speaks to you the most and then stick with it. Consistency is key for accurate readings. I like to use the 9×4 layout, so that is the one I'll explain here. However, the techniques discussed in this section can be applied to either layout.

Grand Tableau Spread Layout

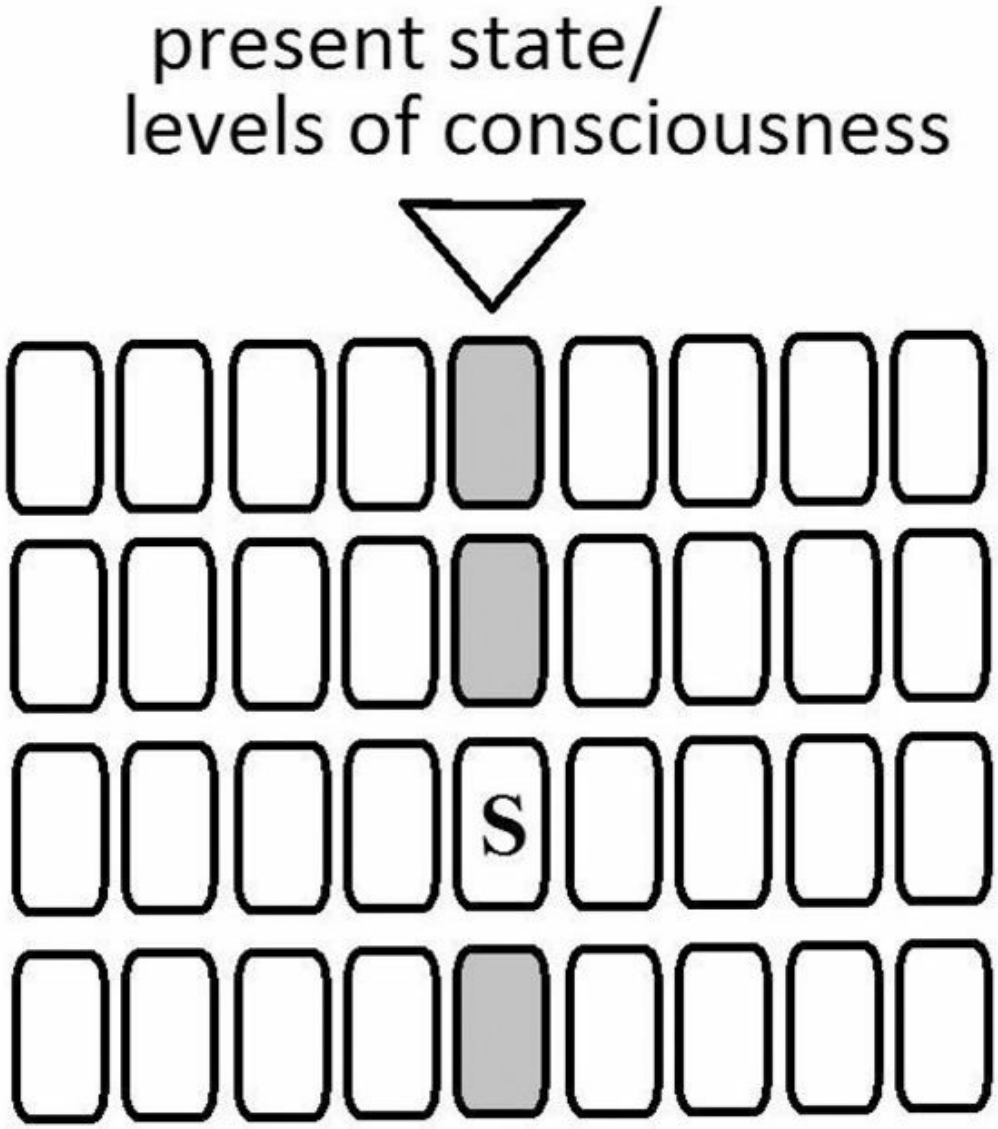


Once you have the layout, locate the signifier. To explain how to read a Grand Tableau, the example as illustrated will be used. The signifier is denoted with "S." At all times in the reading, the signifier card is your point of reference. Start by examining the cards in the same row and the same column as the signifier.



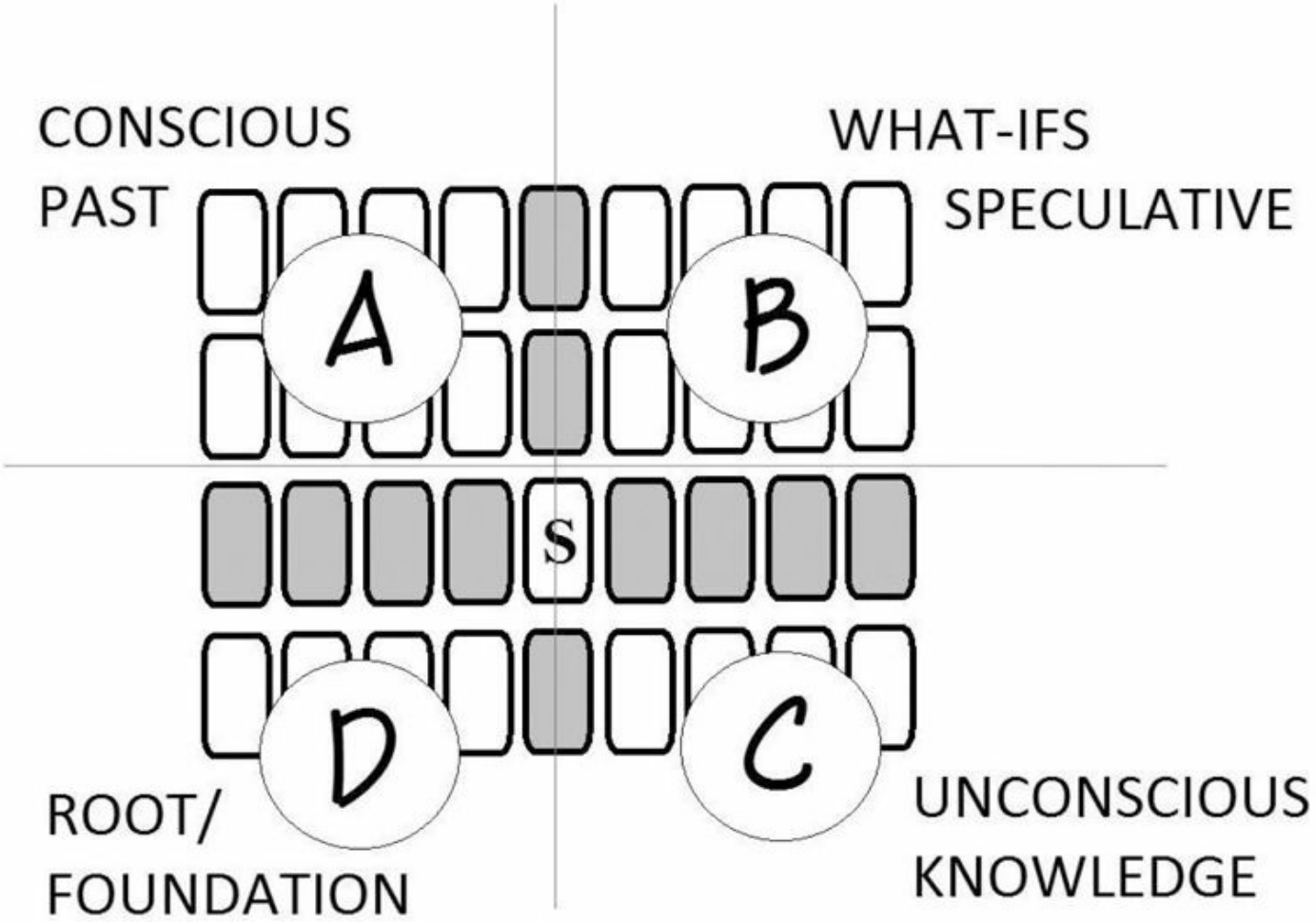
S Row Interpretation

Cards in the same row as the signifier, to the left of it, represent past events that still have a hold over the Seeker. The cards in the same row, to the right of the signifier, represent what is most likely to come, given the Seeker's present actions and state of mind: the most probable future outcome.



S Column Interpretation

Cards in the same column as the signifier represent the Seeker's present moment and what is occupying the Seeker's mind and circumstances. They also represent the vertical gradient of the Seeker's consciousness. Above the signifier card are the matters that the Seeker is aware of, and below the signifier are the matters the Seeker is neglecting, unaware of, or choosing not to confront.



Four Quadrants of the Grand Tableau

Now imagine that the column and row form a quadrant graph. The area marked by (A) denotes the Seeker's conscious or external plane. These cards represent the speculative thoughts corresponding with the Seeker's past events. Quadrant A sets forth the main points and themes of how the past has affected the Seeker's consciousness and how the Seeker has been grappling with that which he or she cannot control.

Quadrant B denotes the Seeker's aspirations, what could have been, the what-ifs, thoughts, alternative possible future outcomes, contemplated forks in the path. The row of cards to the immediate right of the signifier represent what is most likely to happen to the Seeker based on current conditions, but quadrant B offers insight into what *could* happen, positive or negative, if the Seeker changes his or her current conditions.

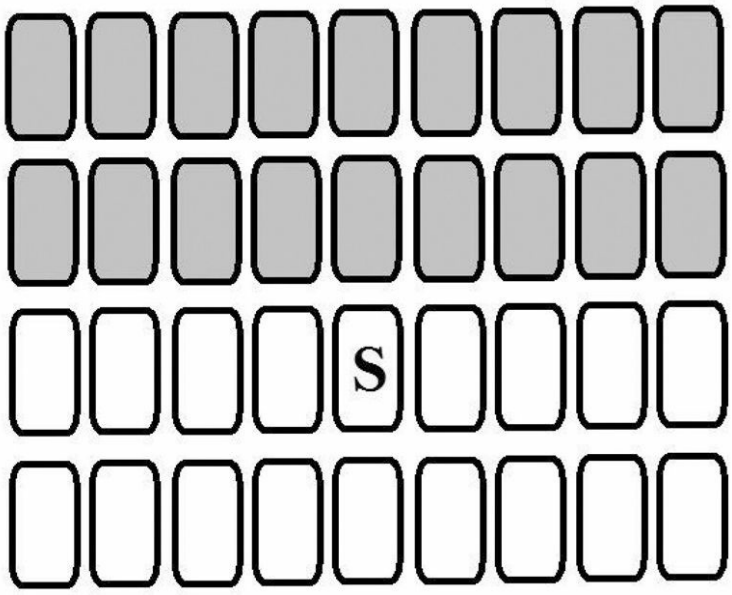
Quadrant C denotes the Seeker's unconscious or internal plane. However, these cards also represent the elements in the Seeker's life that he or she has control over. The cards here are directly related to the cards in quadrant B: if the Seeker wants to will a different future outcome, quadrant C reveals the factors within the Seeker's control that he or she needs to utilize to change the probable outcome.

When quadrants A and B are larger and the Grand Tableau spread is "top-heavy," then the Seeker is someone who has been quite passive in his or her life and has not taken full control of the circumstances. There is still much uncertainty in the Seeker's life and the Seeker is urged to be more assertive. When quadrants C and D are larger and the Grand Tableau spread is "bottom-heavy," then the Seeker is someone who is very determined, ambitious, organized, a planner, someone who really

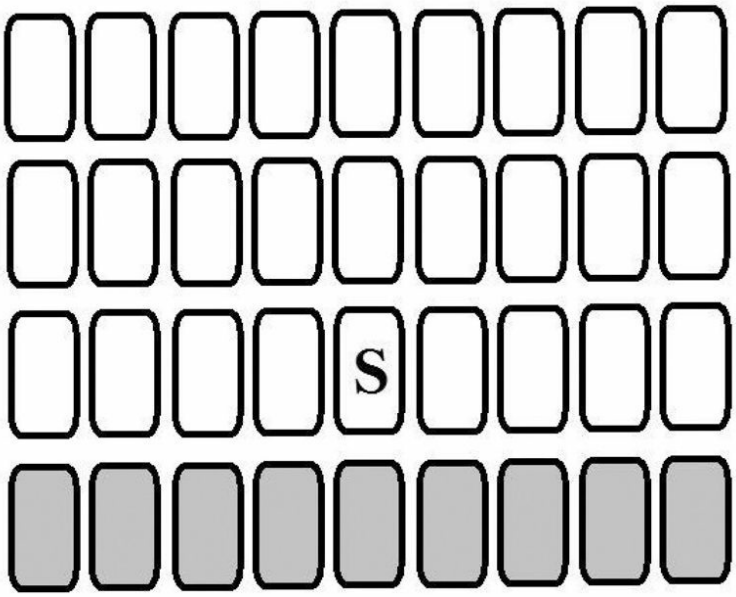
tries to take control and has for the most part succeeded at taking control. That said, the Seeker is probably also someone who is a sharp skeptic, who has trouble yielding to others and trusting others, who may need to learn how to have faith. Such a Seeker may try too hard to control everything in his or her life, so that in the end the Seeker will lose all control.

The final quadrant, quadrant D, fleshes out the row of cards to the immediate left of the signifier card. Quadrant D denotes the Seeker's physical world, what has come to pass and has become a part of the Seeker's baggage, for better or for worse. Distinguish these cards from the row of cards to the signifier's direct left: the cards to the signifier's direct left represent past influences still having a volatile effect on the present and potential future. These are tensions or tentacles reaching out from the past and into the Seeker's forward path, threatening to hold the Seeker back or cause future detriment. These are the issues the Seeker must resolve to advance forward. On the other hand, the cards in quadrant D represent the root, the foundation, the core, or the solidified past and legacy that make up who the Seeker is today.

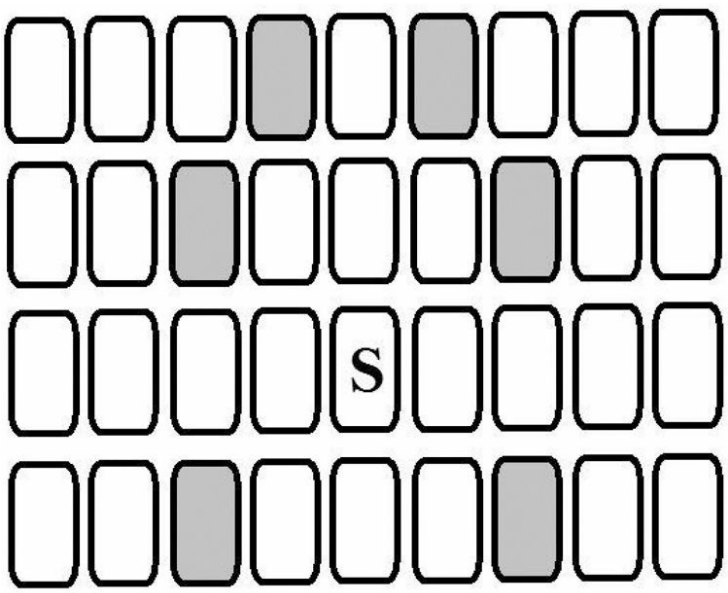
As Above …



… So Below



When scanning the overall landscape of the spread, understand that the rows above the Seeker, i.e., "As Above," corresponds with the rows below the Seeker, i.e., "So Below," even when the actual number of cards may not be equal. In the end, there is harmony to the various levels of the Seeker's reality. Thus, even what is speculative is in harmony with experience, and with the knowledge latent in the unconscious. So when reading the Grand Tableau, note how the Above correlates to the Below for balance in the Seeker's life.



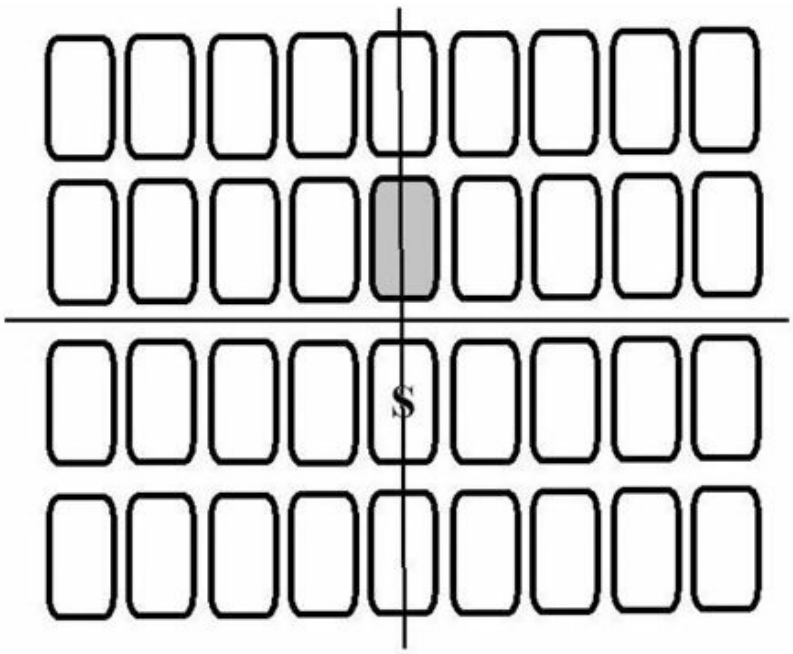
Knighting: Spotting Actionable Issues

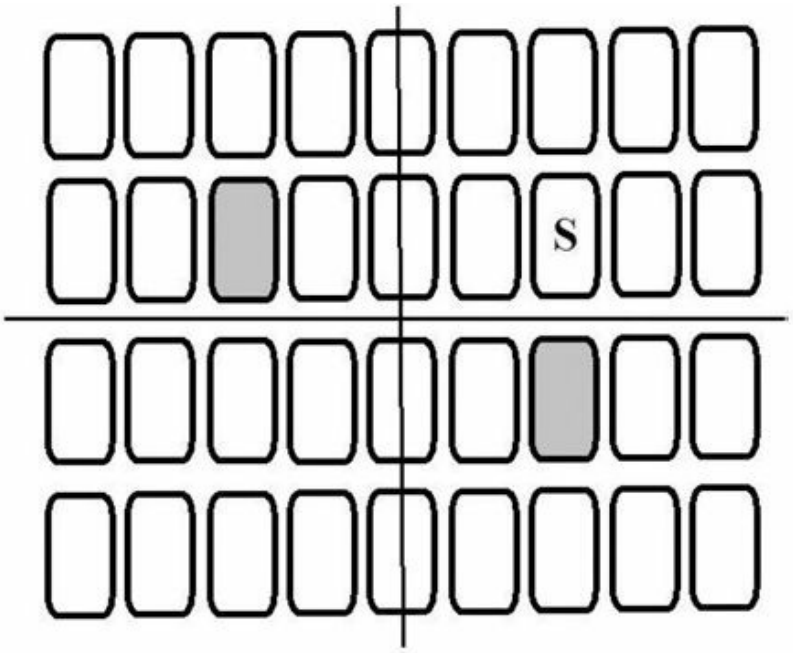
A technique called "knighting" can be used in the Grand Tableau reading. Knighting is a technique used by intermediate to advanced practitioners of the Lenormand. It applies to the tarot just as well. Knighting is essentially another way of determining significant influences.

Again, start by locating the signifier. All the cards that represent positions that the signifier could move to on a chessboard if it was a knight piece are called the knight cards. Similar to the knight piece in chess, these knight cards represent imminent action in the Seeker's life. The knighted cards to the signifier's right represent the elements that will directly help the Seeker advance onward to the next stage of his or her life, or toward the Seeker's objectives. The ones appearing to the left of the

signifier represent past actions that weigh down the Seeker and threaten to prevent the Seeker from obtaining his or her objectives. These represent the primary foci of tension in the Seeker's life.

If there are relatively few knight cards (i.e., the signifier is located near one of the corners of the spread), the Seeker may be in a repressed position or feel stuck between a rock and a hard place right now. If the signifier appears somewhere close to the center of the Grand Tableau, then the Seeker is in a position of empowerment.

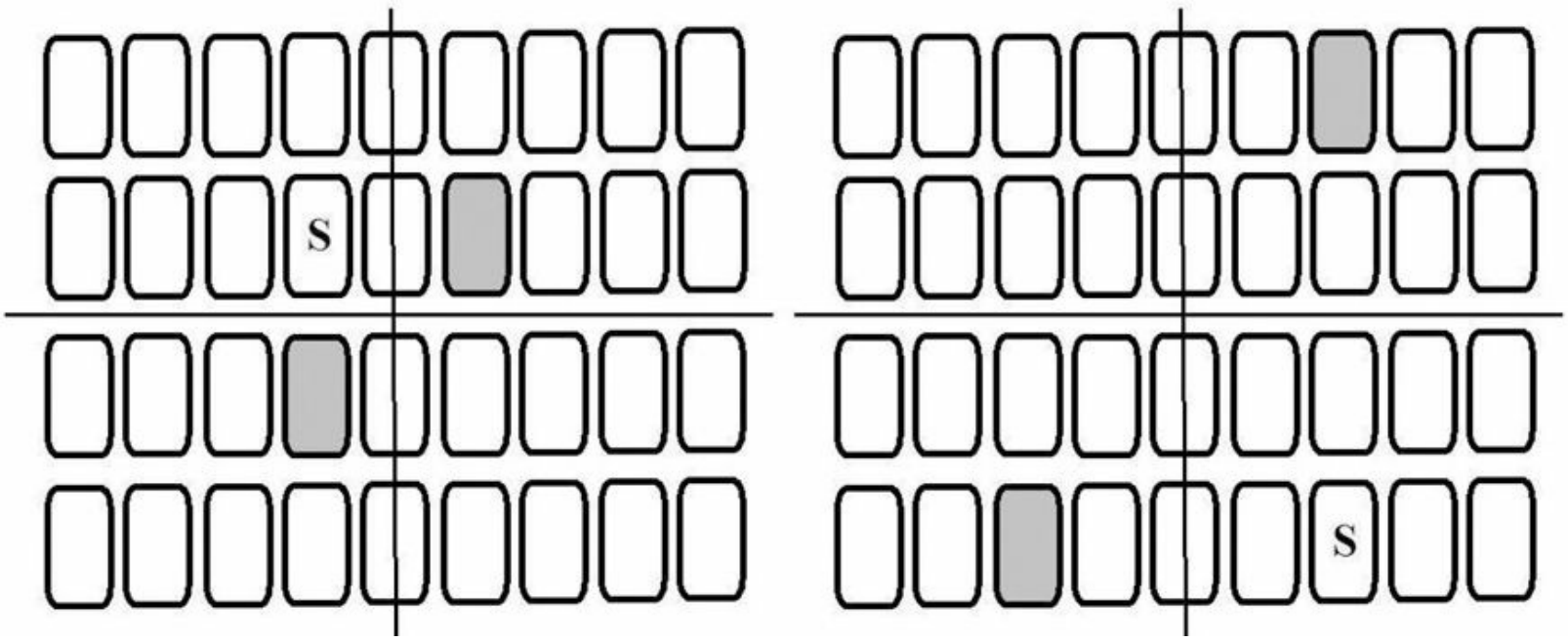




Mirroring: Reflections of the Self

"Mirroring" is another technique applied to the Grand Tableau. Mirroring is the technique of first locating the center divider line in the Grand Tableau, then locating the signifier, and then noting the card that represents a symmetrical reflection of that signifier's position over the center divider. See the above two diagrams. In the example we have been using so far, the diagram above to the left, there is only one mirror card, the signifier's reflection over the horizontal axis. In the example above to the right, the signifier has two mirror cards, one over the horizontal axis and the second over the vertical.

A mirror card appearing above the signifier represents the image or likeness of the Seeker that the Seeker wants to be. It is speculative, and that image has not yet come to materialize as the Seeker's reality. A mirror card below the signifier represents the Seeker's shadow. This represents the Seeker's true image that he or she tries hard to conceal from the external world. This represents a Seeker with many secrets, perhaps also many insecurities, and a Seeker who still needs to learn how to come to terms with his or her identity. A mirror card to the left of the signifier represents who the Seeker used to be and will indicate a Seeker who has made substantial changes or has gone through a major makeover of him- or herself to become who he or she is today. A mirror card to the right of the signifier represents who the Seeker is going to become someday or may indicate a coming makeover that will change the way the Seeker sees him- or herself. Look to the neighboring cards to see what is going to trigger this change.

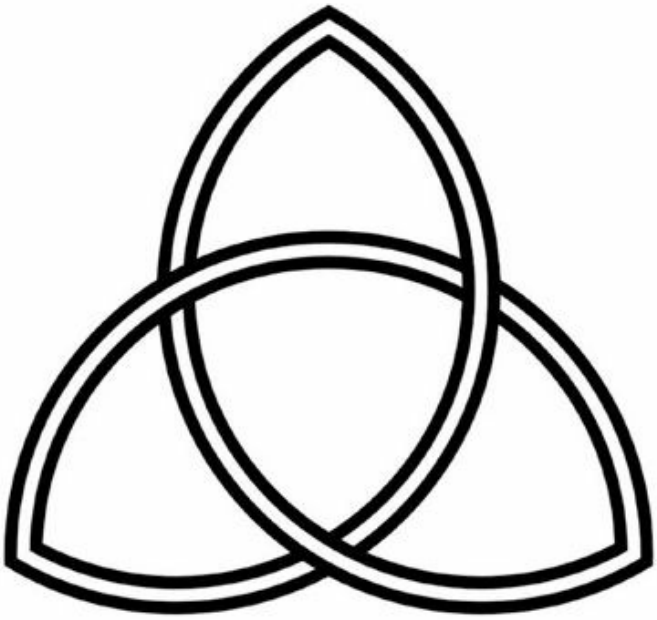


As seen in the left diagram above, a mirror card below the signifier indicates secrets. A mirror card to the right of the signifier indicates coming changes to the self. In the right diagram above, a mirror card above the signifier indicates aspirations, or fears. A mirror card to the left of the signifier indicates a changed Seeker.

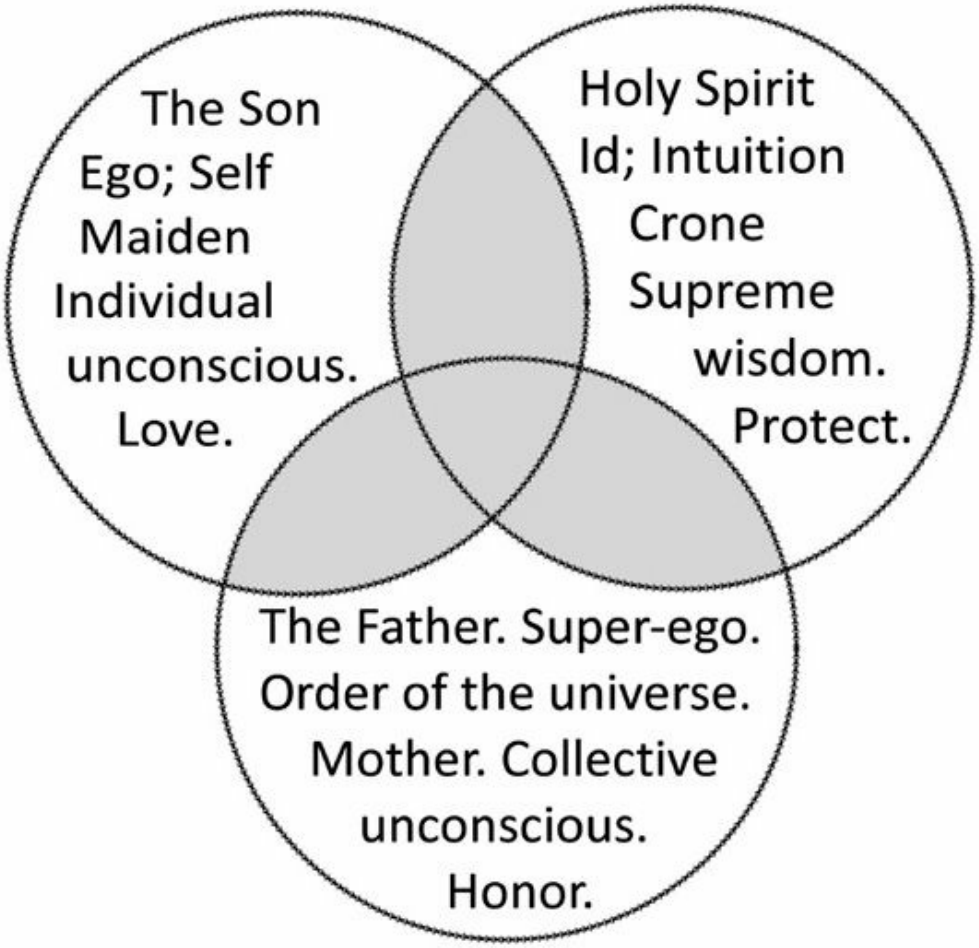
The Grand Tableau is a spread I have modified from Lenormand techniques, which is another form of cartomancy, to apply to tarot analytics. It is considered an advanced technique in tarot reading and should only be attempted after the practitioner has mastered a few of the simpler spreads.

The Triquetra Outcome Management Spread

Triquetra Symbol



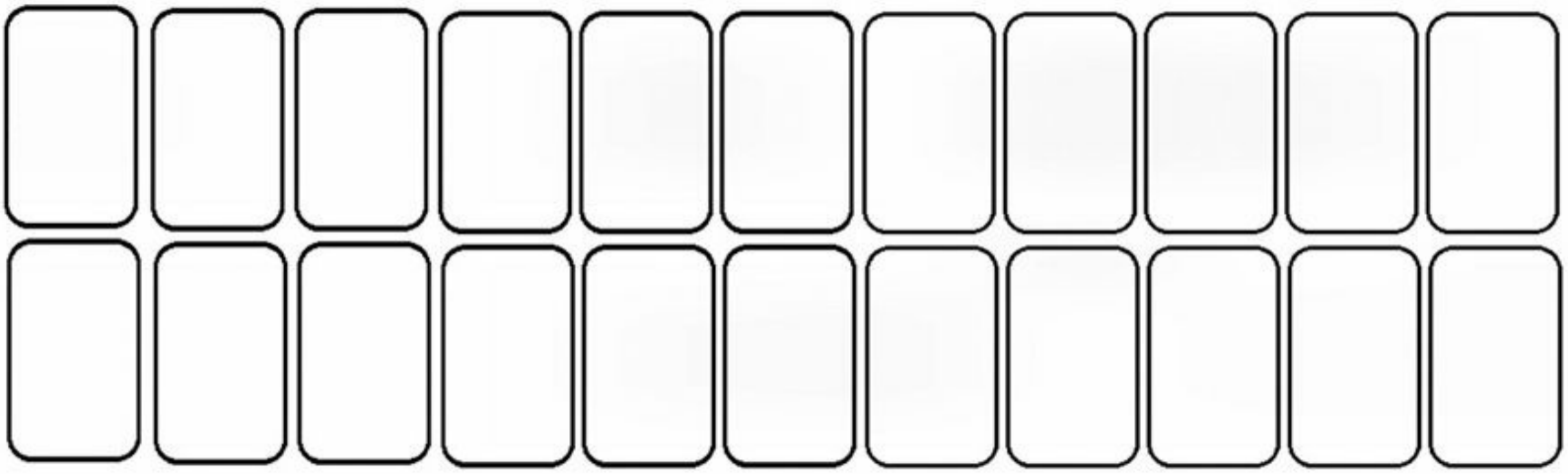
The future card or most probable outcome card in a spread does not always end on a positive note. Every one of us goes through darker times and at the given moment of a tarot reading, the outcome for the Seeker could look bleak. The Triquetra outcome management spread is performed if the main reading results in a bleak probable outcome. The purpose of the subsequent Triquetra reading is to offer energies and strategies that the Seeker can invoke to improve the bleak outcome. The spread reveals to the Seeker what forces are crucial for the Seeker to turn his or her luck around.



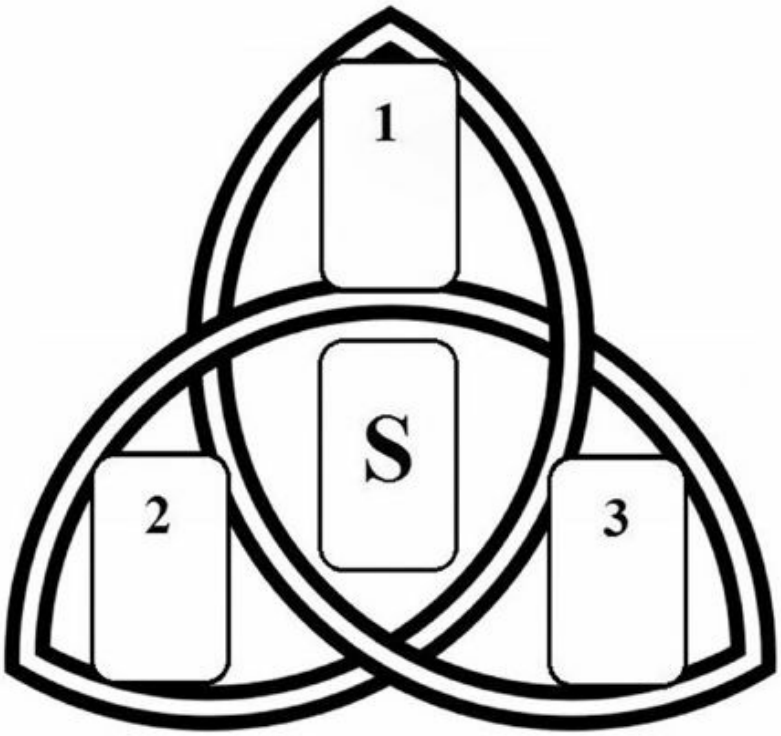
The Triquetra is symbolic across many cultures and religions of a trinity of forces that combine into a unity. For instance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in Christianity; god, man, and the universe of esoteric philosophy; the sun, moon, and stars; the triple goddess in neo-paganism; or the three promises of a relationship—love, honor, and protection—in the Irish tradition. It can also represent the three parts of the Freudian psychic apparatus, the ego, superego, and the id, or the Tria Prima of alchemy[10]—sulfur, mercury, and salt. Here, the symbol is invoked to draw out the trinity of cosmic forces that the Seeker must command to change the bleak outcome revealed in the main reading.

The Triquetra spread uses the Major Arcana cards only and they are read upright only, no reversals. After the main reading, if the practitioner has determined that a subsequent Triquetra spread would be beneficial to the Seeker, the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana are drawn out of the deck. In the alternative, if the practitioner has a second tarot deck where the Major Arcana are already sectioned out, then the second deck may be used in the interest of conserving time, though the same signifier card from the first deck should be kept. Some practitioners may insist on using the same deck and taking the time to draw out the Major Arcana, as it helps the practitioner harness his or her focus in preparation for the Triquetra reading.

Once the Major Arcana cards have been separated out, have the Seeker shuffle the twenty-two cards thoroughly. While shuffling, the Seeker should focus intently on the question/statement, "How do I change my fate? I have the will to control my own future," or some similar derivative of that theme. When the Seeker is satisfied, he or she is to hand the deck back to the practitioner. The practitioner then lays out the cards in two rows of eleven cards.



The Seeker selects a card from the spread and hands it to the practitioner. The practitioner lays it down into the below formation as Card 1, directly above the signifier card. The practitioner then selects a card from the rows and places it into the below formation as Card 2. In one sense, Card 1 represents the ego, the self, or the Seeker's own subconscious. In a Holy Trinity attribution, it corresponds with the Son. Card 2 represents the superego, the order of the universe, or the collective unconscious. It corresponds with the Father. There is no distinction between upright and reversed here. Place all cards upright. The main focus is on the archetype that each Major Arcanum card represents.



After Cards 1 and 2 are placed in the triquetra spread formation, the remaining Major Arcana cards are placed back into a pile and shuffled again by the Seeker. Once the Seeker is satisfied, the practitioner draws the first card from the top and places it down as Card 3. Card 3 represents the id, the Holy Spirit, or the final part of the trinitarian force. Of the three forces, it is likely the most challenging one for the Seeker to master.

The trinitarian force, like the mystical concept of the Holy Trinity, represents three distinct bodies that are one. The Major Arcana represent archetypes, or the twenty-two aspects of human nature that

we must master to attain self-awareness or enlightenment. In the Triquetra reading, three of these aspects are drawn out to form the trinity of forces that will empower the Seeker to change his or her outcome for the positive. These are the three facets of one solution to the Seeker's problem.

Use the Triquetra spread after a main reading to help the Seeker map out an outcome management strategy for his or her future going forward. Card 1 represents the trait that the Seeker should focus on first and master. Card 2 is the trait he or she can master through the support of others. Remember: we cannot do it all alone. It always takes a village. We tend to be too proud to ask for help. Here, the Seeker must ask for help. Card 2 is the support from others. Card 3 is the trait that is as important as the others, but will be most elusive to the Seeker. This is the one the Seeker must devote extra willpower to. To solve the Seeker's problem, the three traits become one solution. Though the traditional meanings of the cards are still applied for reading the spread, the following table provides a more-focused suggested explanation of the traits that each card represents in the Triquetra reading.

0 - Fool. **Innocence**	1 - Magician. **Individuality**
Need a return to innocence, to a childlike state. From there, Seeker will be able to harness the wisdom needed to overcome the issue.	Answer is in the path less traveled. Key 1 appears in spreads for Seekers with the potential for greatness. Must tap into that greatness now.
2 - High Priestess. **Intuition**	3 - Empress. **Creativity**
Seeker has very good intuition. Use it. In making decisions involving the issue, go with the gut instinct.	Need to enable oneself to be more fertile. Need to create and exercise creativity. Be more nurturing.
4 - Emperor. **Authority**	5 - Hierophant. **Conservatism**
Seeker must wield greater authority. Be commanding. Be demanding. Be a leader. Strong leadership skills are crucial to resolving Seeker's problem.	For now, better to comply with traditions and the greater institutions at play. Sometimes when in Rome, must do as the Romans.
6 - Lovers. **Passion**	7 - Chariot. **Self-Control**
Need to be more passionate. Seeker's lack of motivation stems from lack of passion. Look within to find what excites you; use that to find your passion.	Tendency to allow others to influence your decision. Cannot do this. Must be in control of yourself. Stop listening to others. Tune them out. Listen to yourself only.
8 - Strength. **Compassion**	9 - Hermit. **Introspection**
Need to show greater compassion for others. Tendency to be self-centered or self-absorbed. Try to empathize with what others are going through. That is how you get them to yield to you.	Too much exposure to the social, external sphere. Must retreat inward and be introspective. Take more time out to be alone with your own thoughts.
10 - Wheel of Fortune. **Action**	11 - Justice. **Objectivity**
Not enough action from the Seeker. Seeker just waits for things to happen. Much passivity. Need to be more active and assertive. Need a revolution.	Tendency to be prejudiced, emotional, or too subjective. Learn to be more impartial and objective. Seeker must change self-righteous tendencies.
12 - Hanged Man. **Self-Sacrifice**	13 - Death. **Transformation**
Need to yield to the greater good. Seeker is tasked with the grave responsibility of sacrificing the self for others.	Inability to move on. Stuck in inertia. Fear of change. The solution is to change. Need to progress to new stage.
14 - Temperance. **Balance**	15 - Devil. **Overcome Materialism**
Inability to temper the extremes is the source of Seeker's problem. Must find balance. Learn to temper. Find center gravity; find inner balance.	Tendency to see situations in its most materialistic or superficial terms. Seeker must overcome own materialism.

16 - Tower. **Humility**	17 - Star. **Hope / Optimism**
Seeker is overconfident with own abilities. Hubris causes downfall. Showing greater humility will be instrumental to the solution.	Life can be a self-fulfilling prophecy and when we hope for the best, the best will result. Seeker must adopt a more optimistic outlook.
18 - Moon. **The Repressed Self**	19 - Sun. **Dynamism**
Seeker is going through life with two different faces, one that is shown to others, and one hidden deep down. That face deep down must surface now. Seeker must confront the repressed self.	Seeker's tendency to be lethargic hurts the situation. Be more energetic, be dynamic; show more vitality. Need more fuel to fire that engine. Also, self-awareness is crucial.
20 - Judgement. **Spiritual Awakening**	21 - World **Fulfillment**
Important life lesson must be learned by Seeker from this problem. Until that epiphany hits, problem will persist.	Indicates Seeker's importance in greater cosmic landscape. Seeker plays a key role in something greater than the self.

As an alternative to using the Major Arcana for the Triquetra spread, the practitioner can opt for an oracle deck to draw out the trinitarian force. Oracle decks will be explained later in this book.

The Triquetra spread helps unlock the inner tools that the Seeker needs to use to overcome difficulties, pain, or loss. It can also be applied as a blessing or prayer through the trinity of Seeker, practitioner, and tarot: it is a call to the collective unconscious to invoke the energies of these three cards and infuse them into the Seeker to help him or her through the tough times ahead.

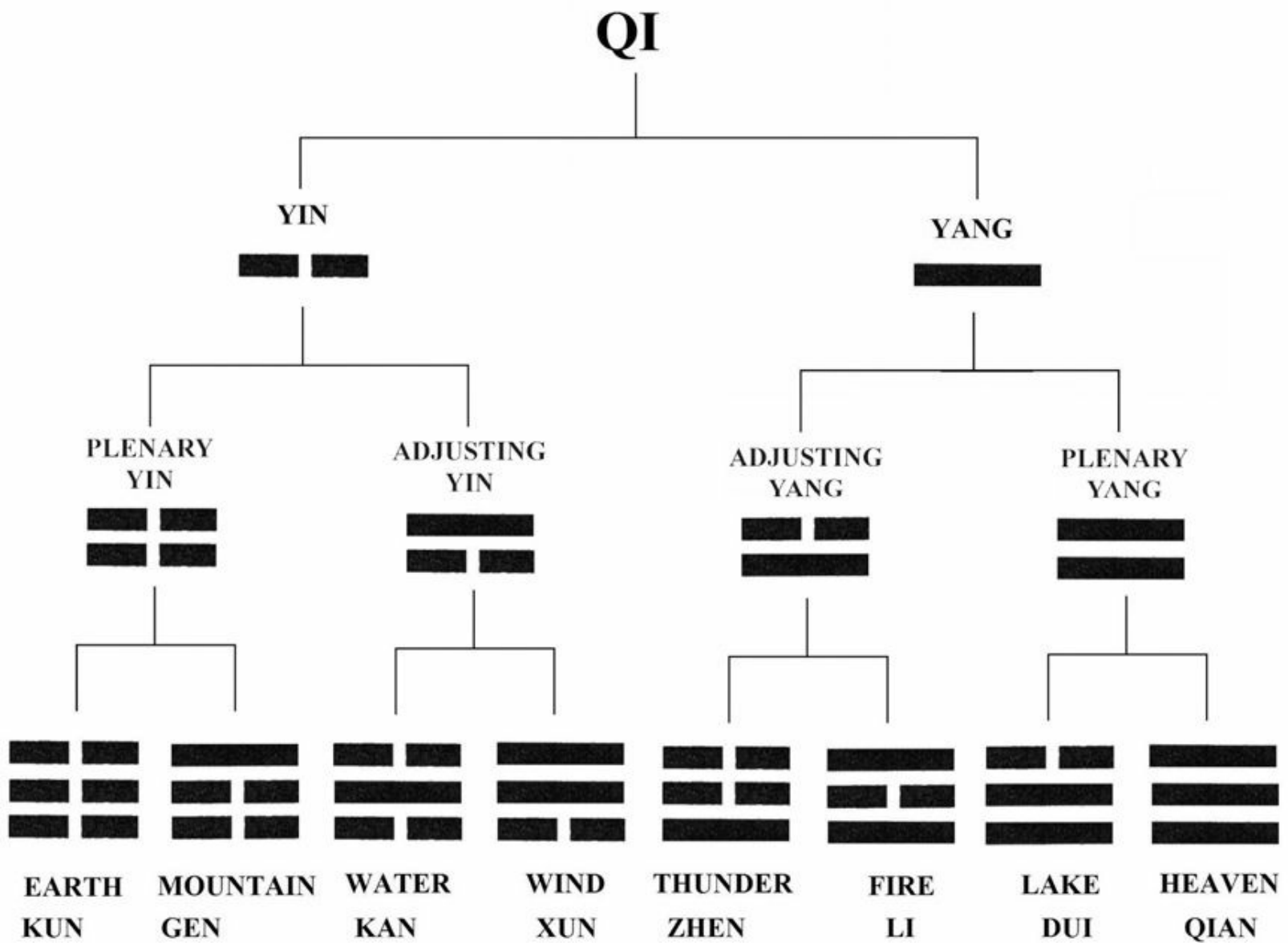
The Ba Gua Spread

The I Ching is one of the oldest known books in human history. Unlike in Western civilizations, where divinatory practices were generally frowned upon, in Imperial China the I Ching was integrated into the curriculum on civil service exams. Every scholar needed to know the I Ching. If the tarot practitioner agrees to expand his or her study of the I Ching, reading the *Tao Te Ching* (or *Dao De Jing*) by Lao Tzu is strongly recommended. Many fantastic English translations of the book are available to the practitioner.

The Ba Gua Spread is based on the eight trigrams of the ba gua, a fundamental concept in Taoism (or Daoism) and the I Ching. Many versions of the ba gua exist and are used for different purposes from feng shui, geomancy, astrology, martial arts,[11] medicine, and philosophy to military strategy.[12] I have found it to be highly intuitive to the tarot cards and to help provide accurate readings.

As the tarot has retained a basic structure of Major Arcana, Minor Arcana, the suits, and the court cards, but has evolved over time into many deck versions, the I Ching has also retained a basic structure through centuries of use—but precise interpretations and even the order of the guas (the trigrams) have varied over the course of history and vary by application. The ba gua applied for the following spread is the Later Heaven King Wen ba gua.

Here is a quick overview: The eight trigrams of the Ba Gua Spread represent the eight elements Earth, Mountain, Water, Wind, Thunder, Fire, Lake, and Heaven. These eight elements were derived from the four subdivisions of yin and yang, Plenary and Adjusting, which were derived from the dichotomous yet complementary forces yin and yang, of shadow and light, female and male, passive and active, the duality of forces that created the universe. In the I Ching, the broken lines indicate yin and the straight, unbroken lines indicate yang. Understanding yin and yang will further deepen the tarot practitioner's understanding of elemental dignities, especially since every tarot card can also be designated as either fundamentally yin or yang.



Yin and yang were derived from the single cosmic, infinite energy that connects the universe, qi. Qi is the life force within us and it is also the collective life force that connects and binds all living beings to one another. One theory for why tarot and other divinatory tools work is qi gong, or the mastery of the qi life force for healing or esoteric uses.

These eight trigrams then combine to form a total of sixty-four hexagrams, which is the I Ching. Feng shui practitioners have linked the eight elements to correspond with eight principal divisions of human life. That is the theory behind the structure of the Ba Gua tarot spread.

South

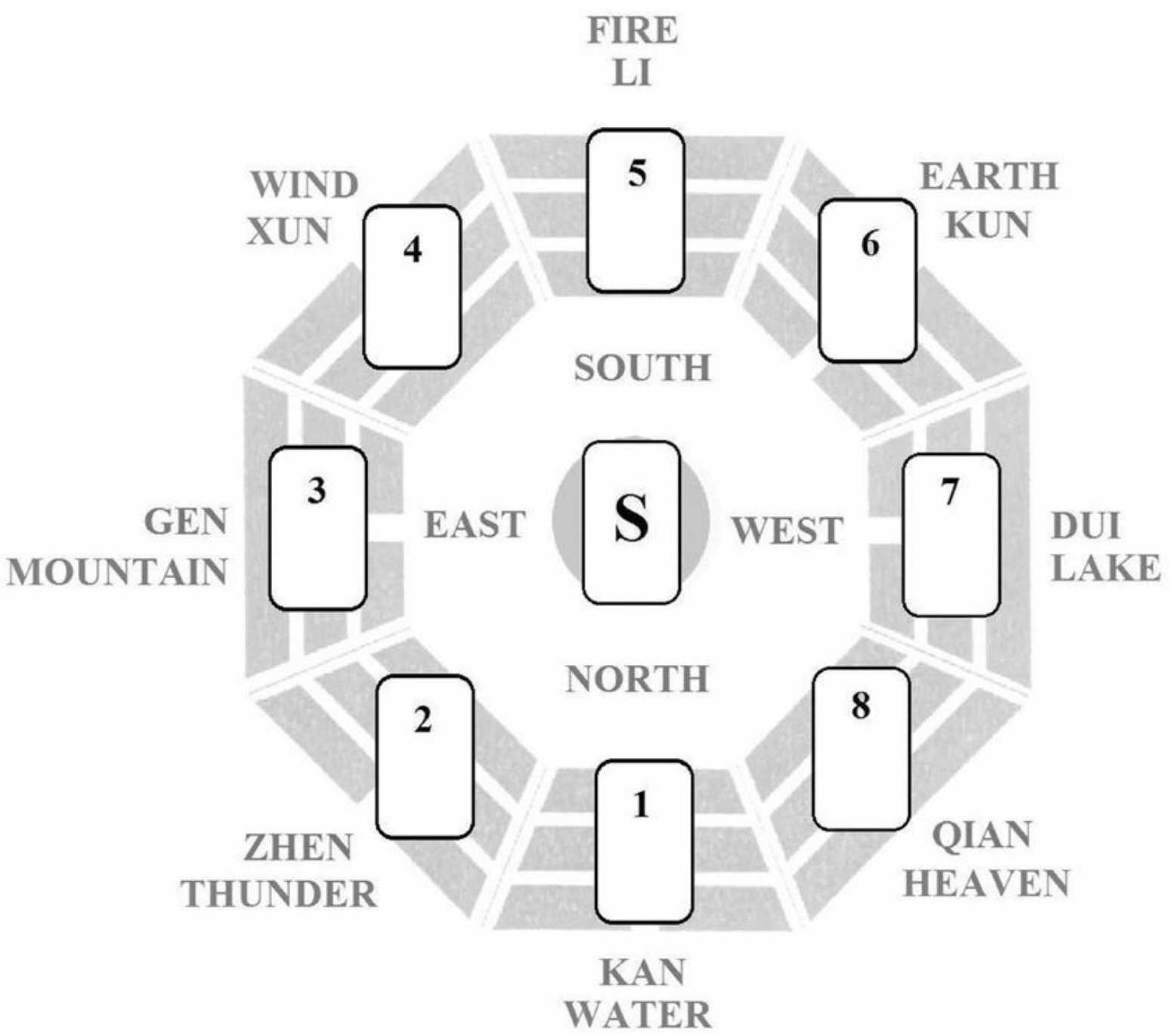
WIND XUN **Finances**	FIRE LI **Achievement**	EARTH KUN **Love**
MOUNTAIN GEN **Family/History**	[Signifier] **The Self**	LAKE DUI **Offspring**
THUNDER ZHEN **Knowledge**	WATER KAN **Work/Career**	HEAVEN QIAN **Community**

East *West*

North

The eight trigrams relate directly to the card position designation of the eight cards in the Ba Gua Spread. What's more, the eight trigrams and card position designations relate directly to feng shui theory. You can use the chart on the bottom of the previous page to apply feng shui techniques to your living space. So, for example, if after a tarot reading with the Ba Gua Spread you found that the Love sector of your life was lacking, you could apply basic feng shui techniques by fortifying the southwest corner of your room, which corresponds with Earth/Kun. Chapter 21 herein provides tables of gemstone and color attributions. For Love, you could decorate the southwest area with rose quartz and colors such as pink and yellow.

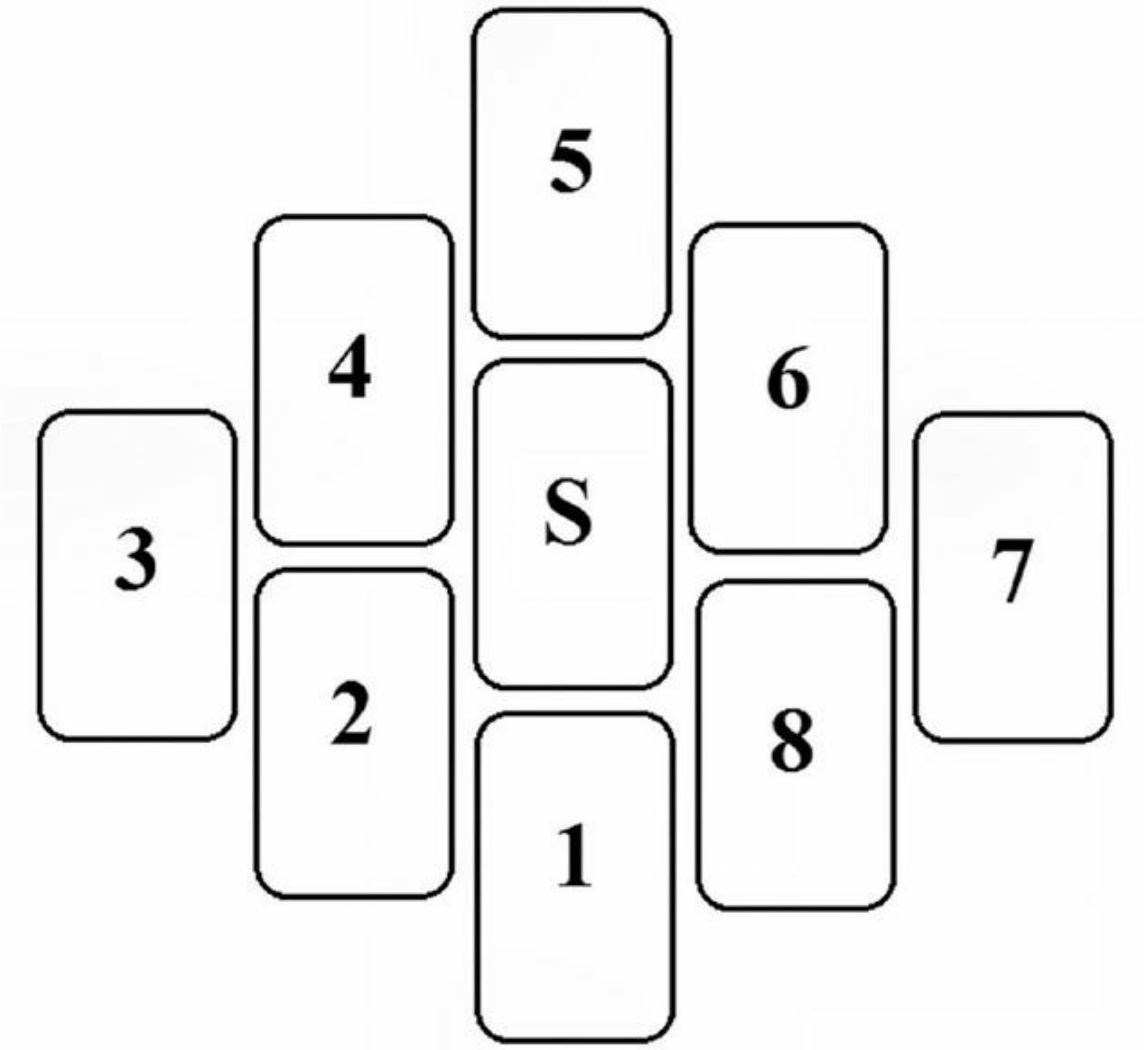
With some understanding of why the card positions are what they are, see the following diagram for the Ba Gua Spread:



To start, have the Seeker sit at the south position. The practitioner should sit at the north position. The cards are then placed in the order numbered in the spread illustration, forming the shape of an octagon. The signifier card can be placed at the center. A compass should be used to align the ba gua with the cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west respectively.

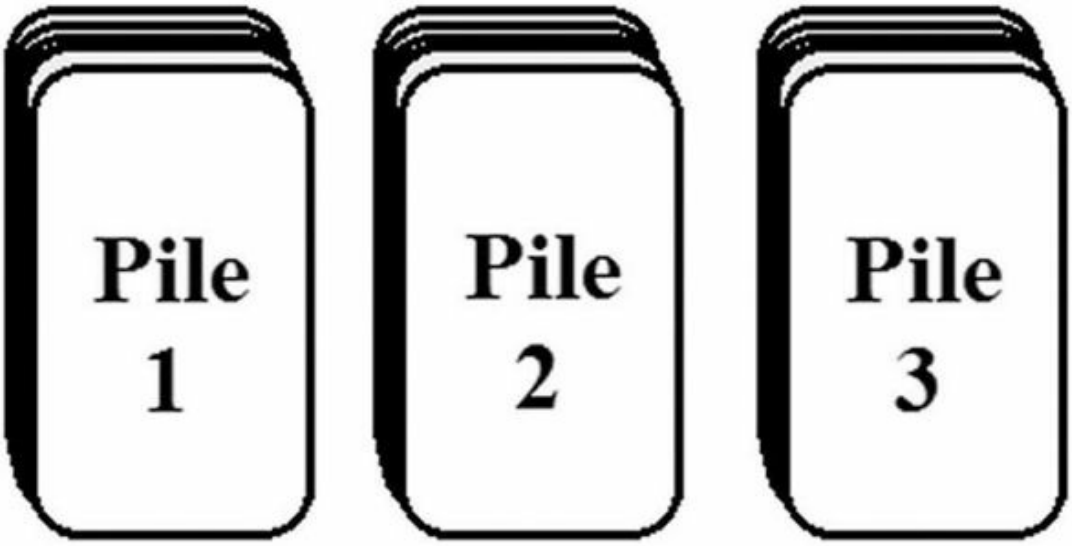
Card 1 is placed in the position and gua corresponding with north, which is the kan trigram. Then move from east toward west. Card 2 is placed in the northeast gua, the zhen trigram; Card 3 in the east, or the gen trigram; Card 4 in the sun trigram, and so on.

Alternative Spread Layout for the Ba Gua Spread



Card 1 represents the Seeker's career situation, the influences from his or her work or profession. If the Seeker is still a student, then this card represents influences from school or university. Card 2 represents the Seeker's knowledge and experience as they influence the situation at hand (if a specific question is asked) or the Seeker's present (if it is a general reading). Card 3 represents the Seeker's past influences. Card 4 represents the Seeker's financial situation or financial issues that may influence the situation at hand. Card 5 represents the Seeker's outward appearance or image to the world. This card represents how others view the Seeker and possibly how that view by others affects the Seeker's views or attitudes toward the self. Card 6 represents love and relationships. Card 7 represents the Seeker's future. Card 8 represents the Seeker's allies, those who the Seeker can gain support from.

Eden Gray's Three Aces Spread for Yes or No Inquiries



Mastering the Tarot by Eden Gray (Signet, 1971)[13] was my first serious introduction to the study of tarot. A simple yet effective spread taught by Gray in *Mastering* is the Three Aces spread, which answers yes or no inquiries in a quick, concise manner. The spread employs card counting, a technique that has been used in cartomancy for ages. The card counting is based on the belief that certain numbers bear significance to a particular event, circumstance, or person, and invoking that number or looking for that number can yield a divinatory result. In Gray's method, the number invoked is thirteen.

After shuffling the deck, turn the cards over one by one, facing up into Pile 1 as you count up to thirteen. However, if an Ace appears before you reach the thirteenth card, stop and move on to Pile 2. Continue this until three piles have been created, each either having thirteen cards or an Ace as the pile's top facing card.

If no aces appear in the spread, then the matter cannot be determined at this time. Usually that is because not all variables required to determine the outcome have materialized yet. If only one Ace appears, then if it is upright, the answer is "Yes." If it is reversed, the answer is "No." The suit of the Ace card will provide further detail to the answer. The remaining non-Ace cards in the spread also offer insight.

Spread Outcome	*Meaning*		
No Aces	Seeker's question cannot be answered at this time.		
One Ace Only	Ace is Upright	:	The answer is "Yes."
	Ace is Reversed	:	The answer is "No."
Two Aces	Gray's Approach	:	Right pile reveals immediate outcome. Left pile reveals final outcome Reversed Aces indicate setbacks/delays.
	Author's Approach	:	Left pile reveals immediate outcome. Right pile reveals final outcome. Reversed Aces indicate setbacks/delays.
Three Aces	The answer is "Yes" Reversed Aces indicate setbacks/delays/warnings.		

If there are two or more aces, Gray's approach is to read the rightmost pile as revealing the immediate outcome and the leftmost pile as the final outcome. The approach I have adopted, however, is to read the leftmost pile as the immediate outcome, since it is the first Ace to appear in time. The rightmost pile will be the final outcome.

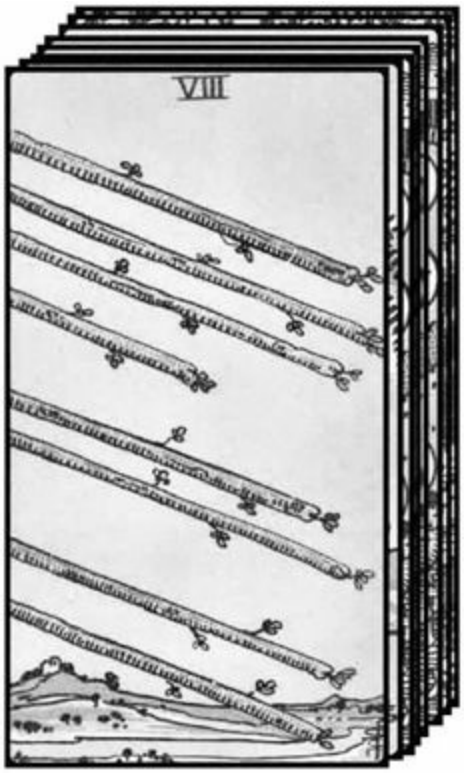
Also, I have extended Gray's spread for an additional layer: if there are three aces in total, then the answer is a resounding "Yes," but any reversed aces will indicate minor setbacks, delays, or other warnings that the Seeker should take note of. Again, examine the suit of the aces for further detail, and if the answer is "No," examine the non-Ace cards to understand why.

In Gray's book, she does not specify whether the practitioner or the Seeker should turn the cards to form the spread. My approach is to have the Seeker shuffle the cards while thinking on his or her question, and then hand the deck to the practitioner to turn the cards.

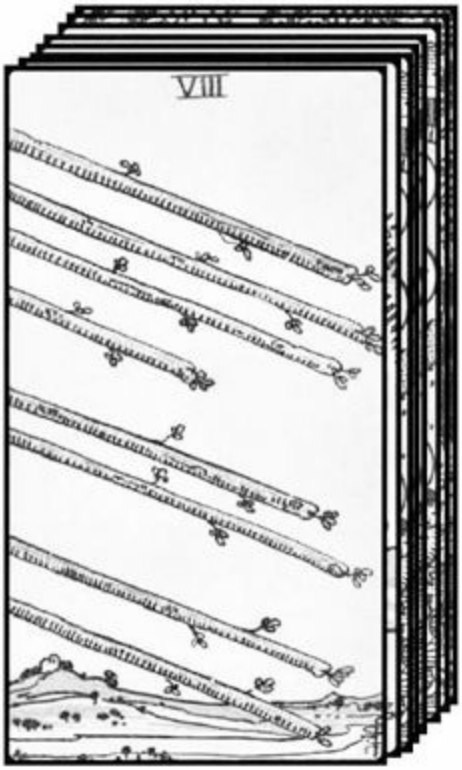
Now let's see how the Three Aces spread might be applied.

Case Study: Emiko

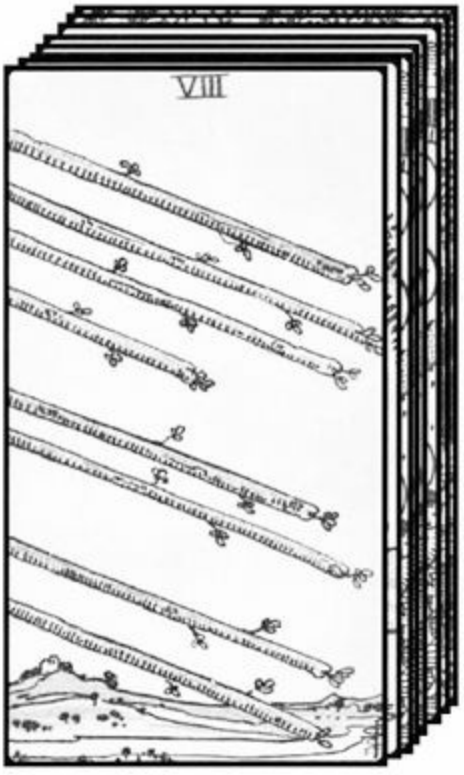
A Seeker, Emiko, has just finished her violin auditions and wants to know whether she will be seated as concertmaster of the symphony she plays in. She consults the tarot for a quick answer, with the hope that doing so might calm some of her persisting nerves.

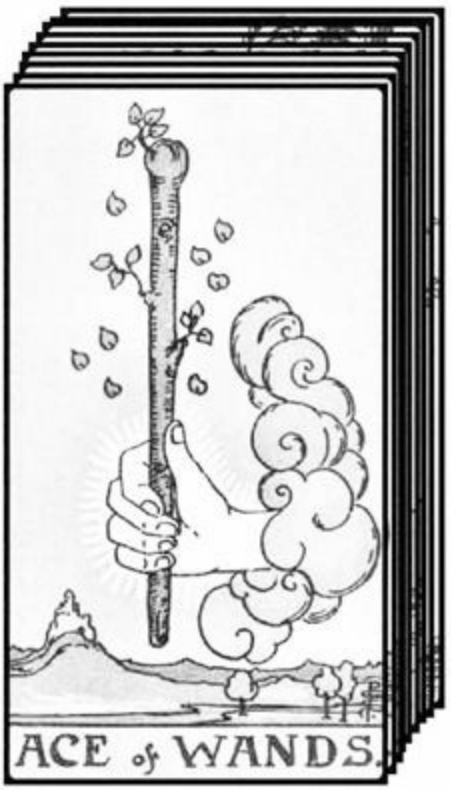


For Pile 1, after Emiko shuffled the cards to her satisfaction, the cards are counted into the first pile until either an Ace is drawn or the practitioner has reached the thirteenth card. Here, the thirteenth card appeared before any aces. The thirteenth card was the Eight of Wands, which suggests that Emiko is an extremely motivated individual who works harder than everybody else around her. There would be a great deal of buzz around Emiko's talents, too, most likely. She is the type to strike hard and fast to attain her goals.



Then the second pile is formed. After only three cards this time, the Ace of Cups appears in reverse. Since an Ace was drawn, Pile 2 stops here. The Ace of Cups in reverse here suggests that Emiko's reasons for wanting to be concertmaster could be superficial. Even if she attained it, it would not fulfill her emotionally or spiritually. She needs to reconsider why she wants the concertmaster chair. Would it truly bring her joy? Here, although the Ace of Cups appears in reverse, do not jump to the conclusion that the answer is no just yet. Wait for the third pile.





In Pile 3, the eleventh card was an Ace of Wands. Per my approach, the leftmost Ace, or

the Ace of Cups in reverse in Pile 2, represents the immediate outcome. The Ace of Wands in Pile 3 represents the final answer to the issue at hand.

The spread here indicates that Emiko is not likely to be awarded the concertmaster chair this time around, and in the grander scheme of things it may be because her heart was not in the right place and she didn't want the concertmaster chair for the right emotional or spiritual reasons; instead, her real reason for wanting it was superficial and so her preparation for the auditions may have been halfhearted.

However, the Ace of Wands is very promising. Emiko is going to be very happy with the final turn of events. Since it took eleven cards before the Ace of Wands was reached, intuitively the delay in reaching the Ace suggests that in real life there will be a delay or setbacks before the positive outcome represented by the Ace of Wands materializes. Note further that the majority of Wands confirms that the tarot here recognizes that the question at hand is about personal development and Emiko's creative pursuits.

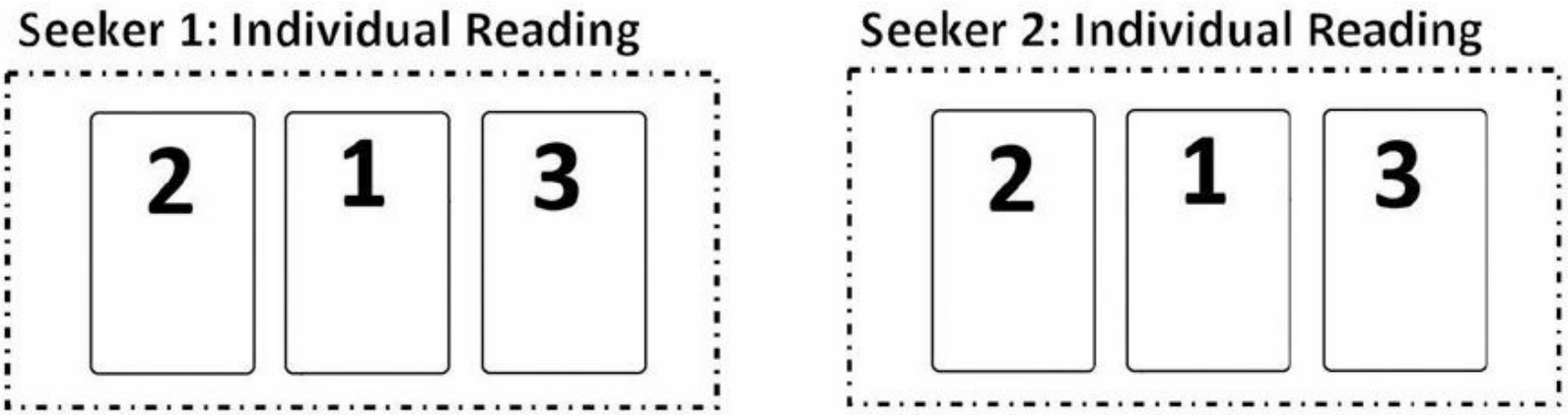
As the practitioner, always acknowledge your reading flaws to the Seeker. Although the cards are always right, the practitioner's interpretation of them can be prone to error. So instead of saying definitely yes or no, it is good practice to state to the Seeker the general meanings of each card and *why* you think the cards indicate what you think they indicate. That is the best practice to adopt, because it surrenders control and determination to the Seeker. After all, it is the Seeker divining the outcome by reaching into her own unconscious for the answer. As the practitioner, you simply read the cards.

As it turned out, Emiko was not seated concertmaster after that particular audition. However, she did later get the chair and held that seat for several years. In the end, she blossomed into a highly respected concert violinist.

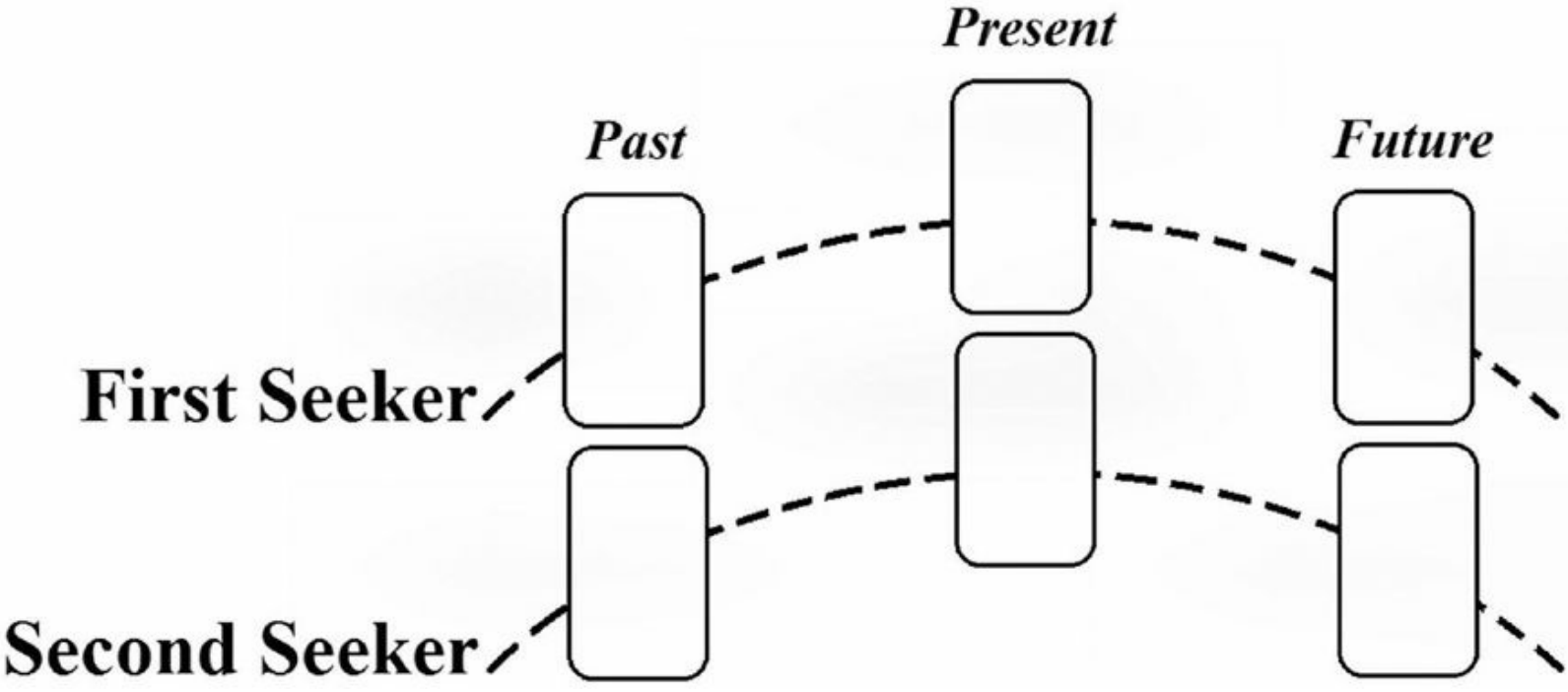
Two-Seeker Love and Relationship Spread

The following spread is performed for two Seekers who are in a romantic relationship. Both Seekers must be present for the reading. To start, a signifier card should be selected for each Seeker. Next, the practitioner deals the deck equally between both Seekers. Thus, each Seeker should have thirty-nine cards. The Seekers are then asked to shuffle their respective deck while concentrating on their relationship. Ask the Seekers to think intently on fond memories, some not-as-fond memories, and some mundane ones they have of each other and their relationship.

Ask the Seekers which one should go first. They will tell you. Take the deck from the first Seeker and draw three cards into a three-card spread. This is a quick reading of the first Seeker's personality. Then take the deck from the second Seeker and draw another three-card spread. This is a quick reading of the second Seeker's personality. These three cards represent the past influences, present influences, and future influences respectively that the two Seekers bring to the relationship.



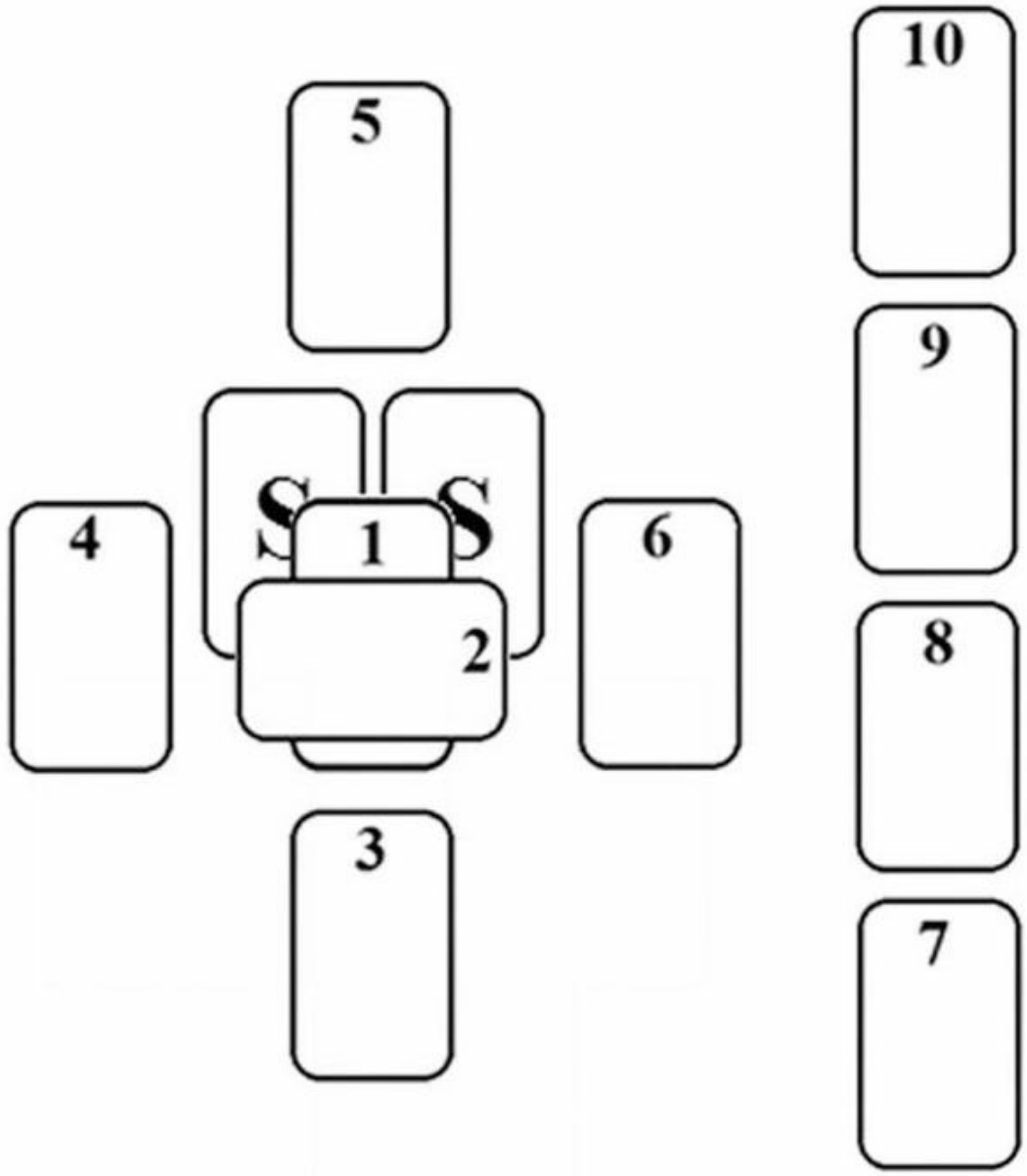
Collect all the cards into a single pile again and reshuffle. Have each Seeker draw another three cards. Six cards in total should be spread out as indicated in the next diagram.



The first and separate three-card readings for each Seeker indicated the independent forces that the

Seekers represent on their own. The second combined three-card spread indicates the influences they have on each other and what synergies are formed as a result of the combination. If a card from the separate three-card spreads reappears in the combined spread, it suggests that those influences from that particular Seeker dominate in the relationship.

An optional third spread can be used to elicit even more detail about the couple's relationship. Place both signifier cards side by side, reshuffle the deck, and proceed with the Celtic Cross spread.

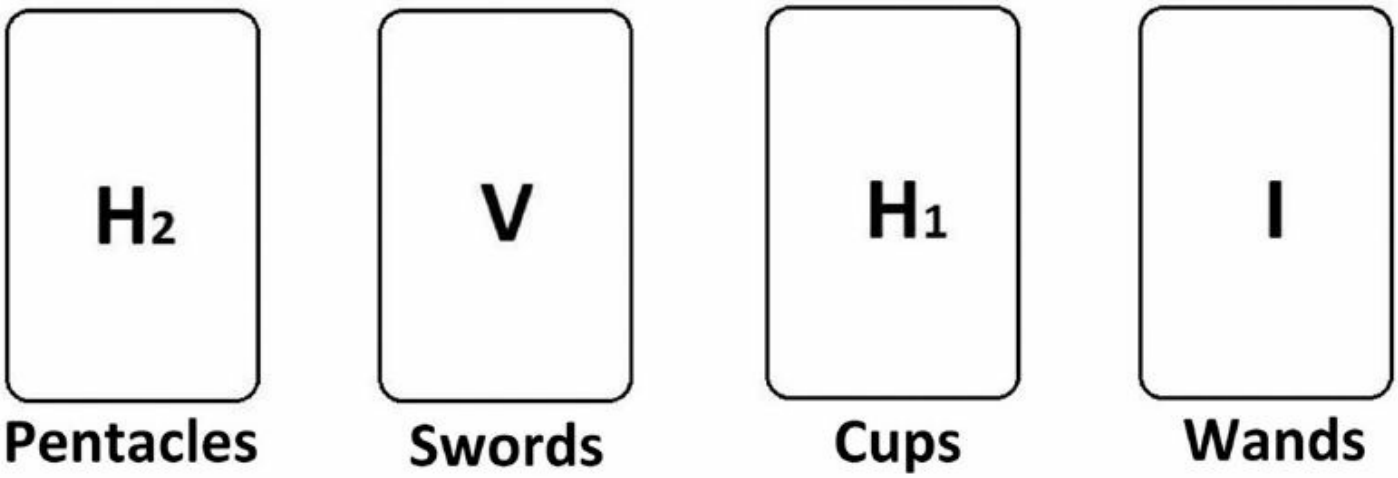


Read the Celtic Cross as a specific inquiry about the relationship.

The Rose

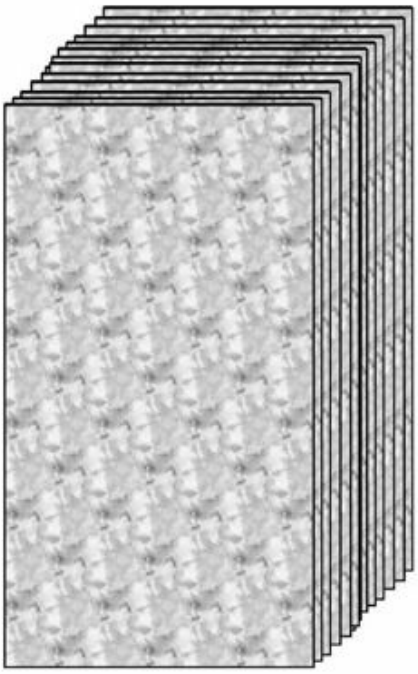
Roses have inspired myths, legends, and intense emotions throughout many cultures and civilizations. They symbolize esoteric secrets, the powers of Isis, and the charge of Venus. The Rose is a spread for specific inquiries, though it can also be used in general inquiries after the First Operation. It requires the Major Arcana to be separated out from the Minor Arcana in advance, and further, one particular suit of the Minor Arcana separated out as well. Which suit is to be separated out will depend on the nature of the question.

If the First Operation is used, note the pile that the signifier card appeared in. The piles correspond to the suits as follows:

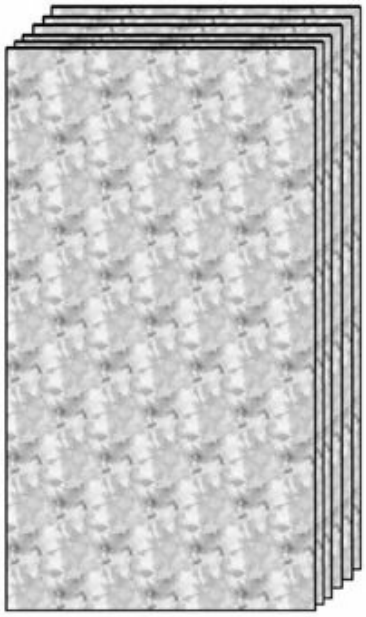


If the signifier appears in the I pile, then separate out the suit of Wands from the Minor Arcana. If the signifier appears in the H_1 pile, then the Cups; the V pile, then the Swords; the H_2 pile, then the suit of Pentacles. If the First Operation was not performed, then select the suit corresponding with the Seeker's specific inquiry.

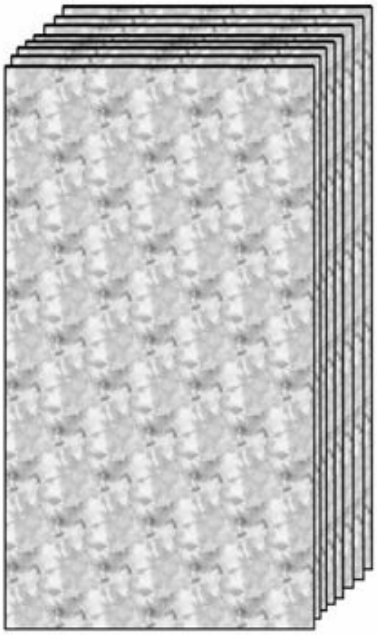
Remaining Minor Arcana



Minor Arcana Specific Suit (14)

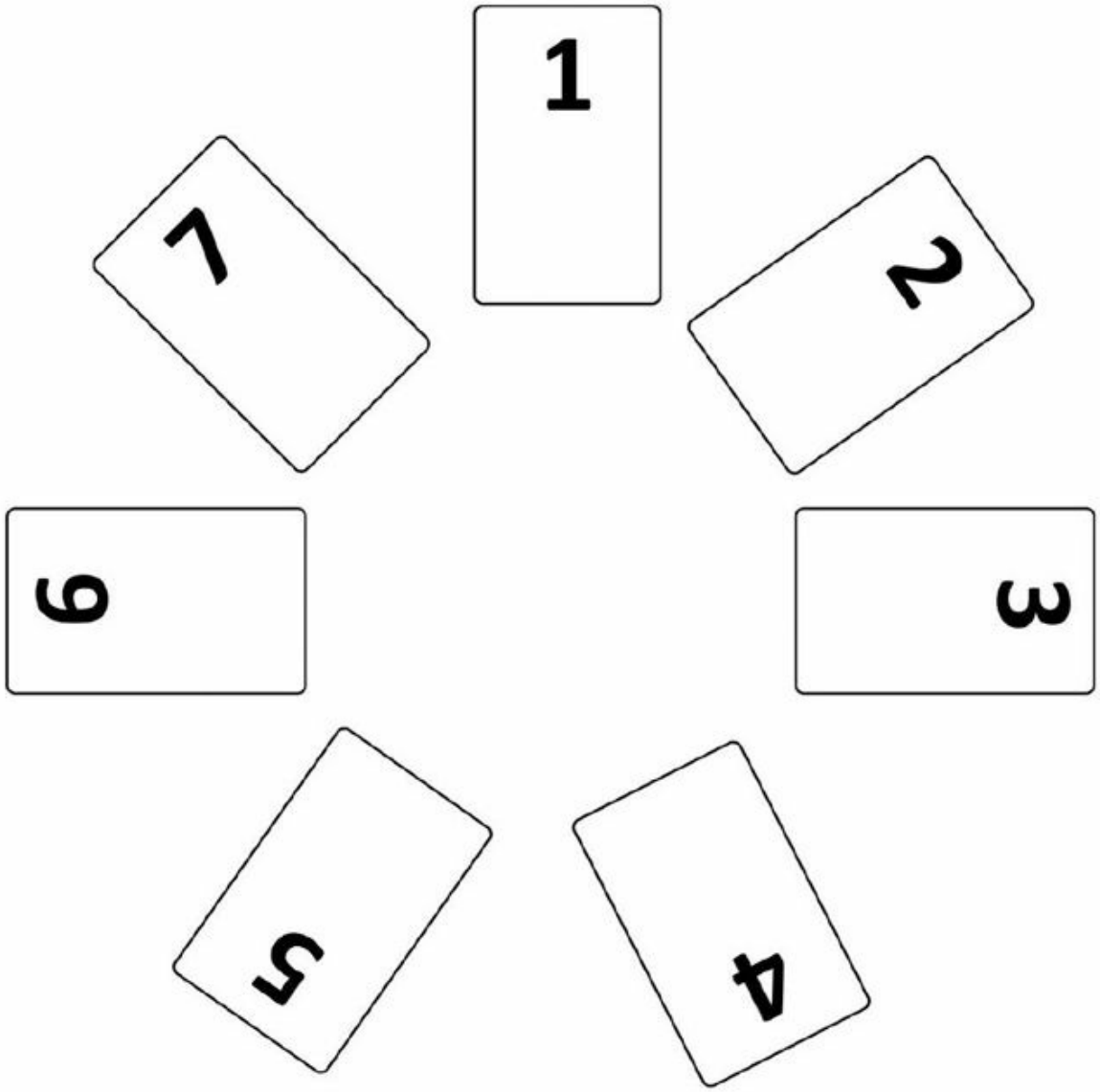


Major Arcana (22)

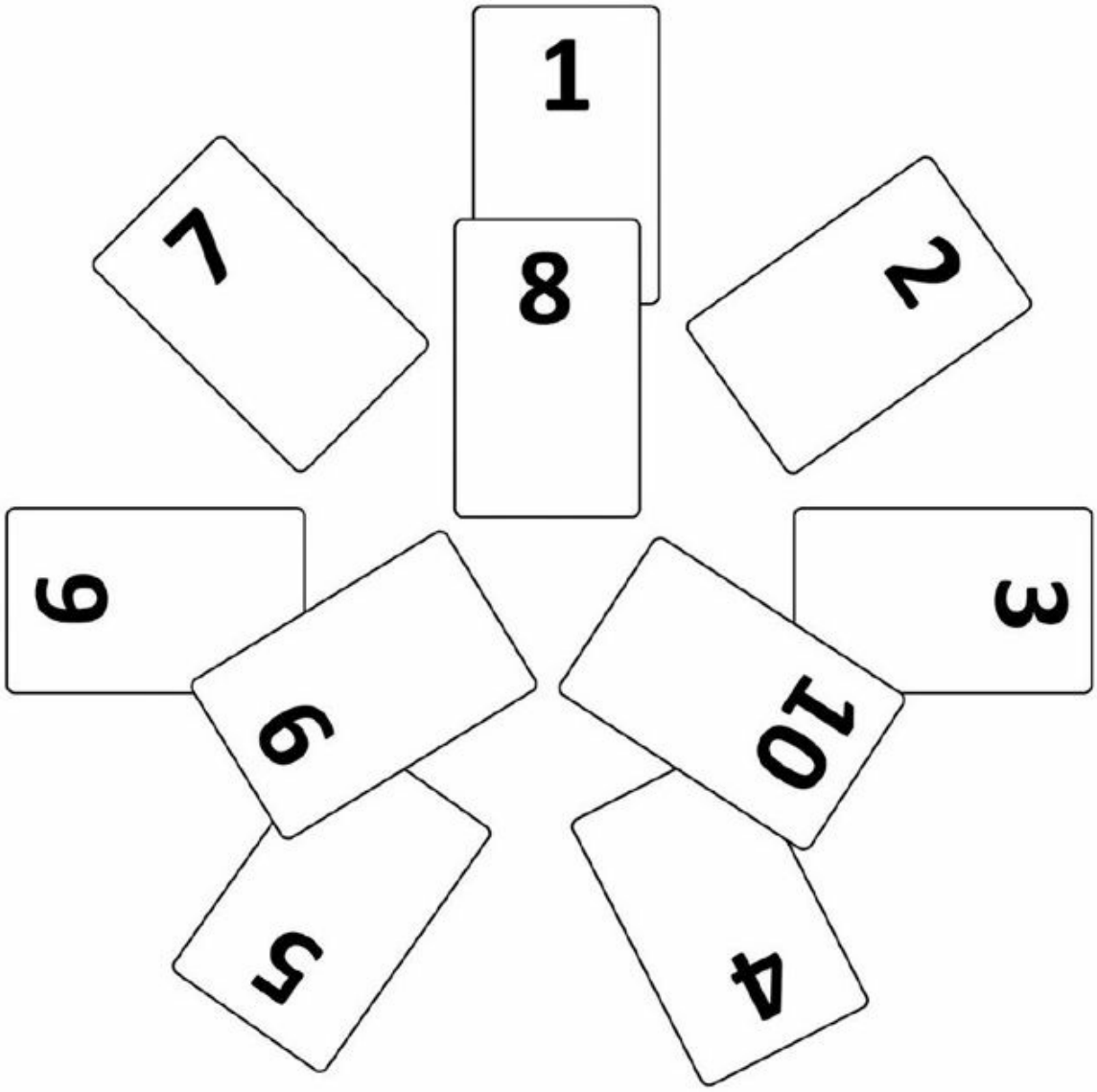


Specific Inquiry	*Corresponding Suit*
Work/Career, a Creative Project	Wands
Love, Relationships, Family	Cups
Dispute, Legal Issue, Community, Greater Ambition	Swords
Money, Property, Wealth, Assets	Pentacles

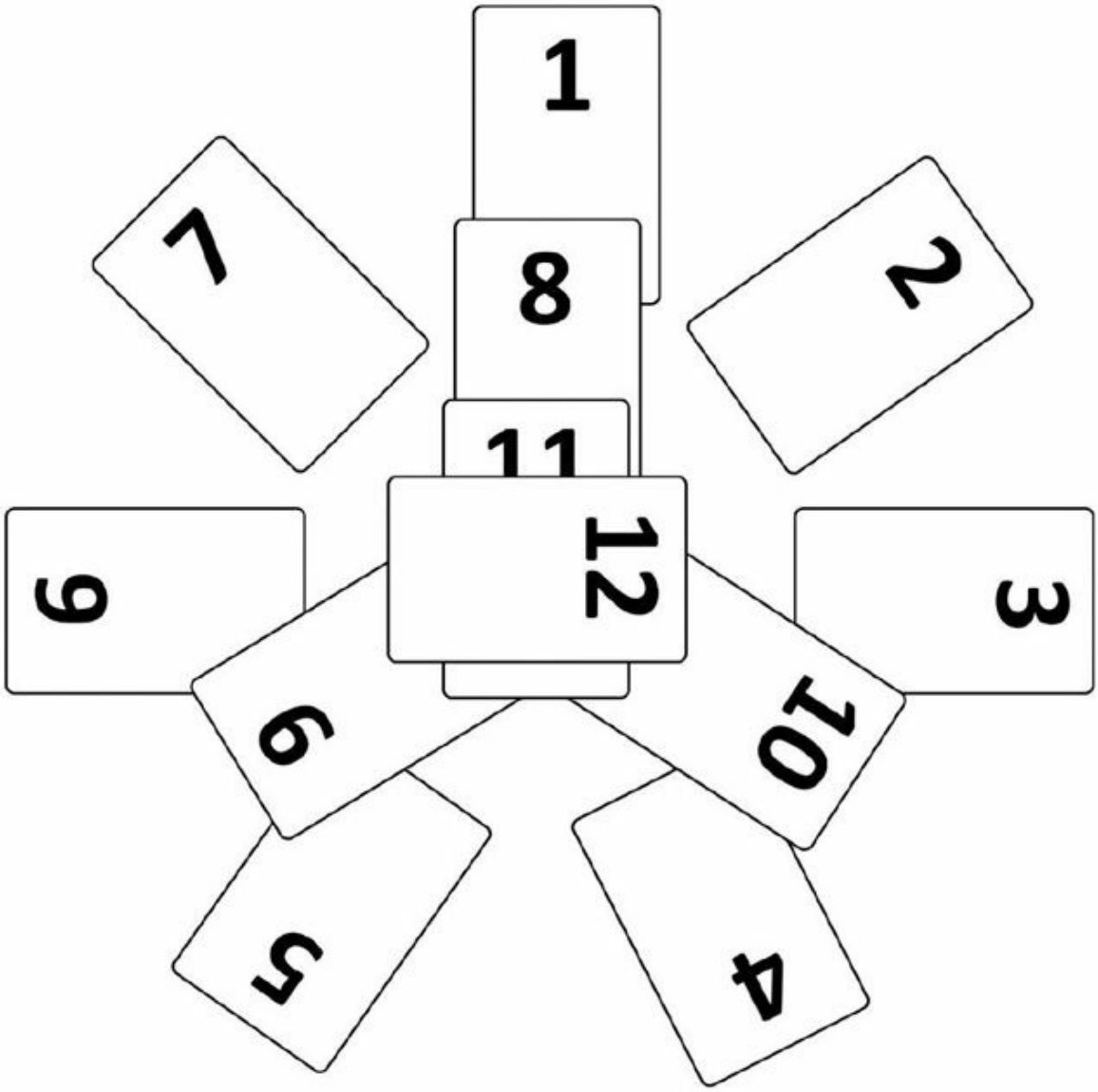
You should now have three separate piles of cards: the suit corresponding to the First Operation results, the Major Arcana in a second pile, and the remaining three suits of the Minor Arcana in a third pile. Take the pile of remaining Minor Arcana cards and draw out seven cards into the following spread, for the outer petals of the rose:



These seven cards, Cards 1 through 7, represent the most influential factors on the issue at hand. Next, take the specific Minor Arcana suit that was separated out and draw three cards into the spread as follows:



These three cards, Cards 8 through 10, represent the answer corresponding to the pile that the First Operation designated as the area of the Seeker's focus or as the answer to the Seeker's specific inquiry. Card 8 can be read as the present; Card 9 is the past; and Card 10 is the probable future outcome. Finally, take the Major Arcana pile and draw out two cards into a cross for the center of the rose:

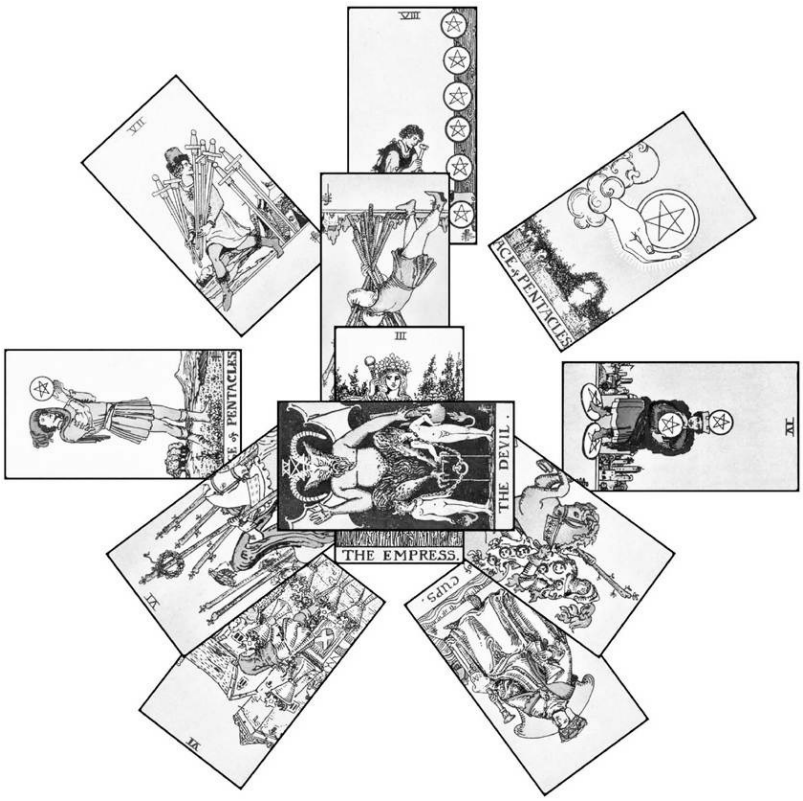


The two Major Arcana cards that cross each other at the center, Cards 11 and 12, represent the force majeure or greater external factors that may affect the Seeker's outcome.

Case Study: Christopher

Christopher has self-published a book and is ready to go. He understands the business and marketing aspects of what he must do, but he also wants to tap into his intuition to get a sense of the landscape and projections for his book as he embarks on this new endeavor. The Rose is an ideal spread to use for Christopher because many human factors and uncontrollable external conditions will influence such a project.

It takes about two minutes to separate a randomized deck into these piles, so the Rose spread is not quite as time-consuming as it may seem. To confirm that the piles are correct, the practitioner need only check the suit-specific pile for fourteen cards and the Major Arcana pile for twenty-two cards. Then the reading proceeds. The practitioner hands the remaining Minor Arcana deck to Christopher to shuffle and cut. Christopher hands the deck back to the practitioner, who then draws the seven cards for the outer petals. Then Christopher shuffles and cuts the specific suit pile, which the practitioner then draws three cards from for the center petals. Finally, the Major Arcana pile is shuffled and two cards are drawn into the inner cross.



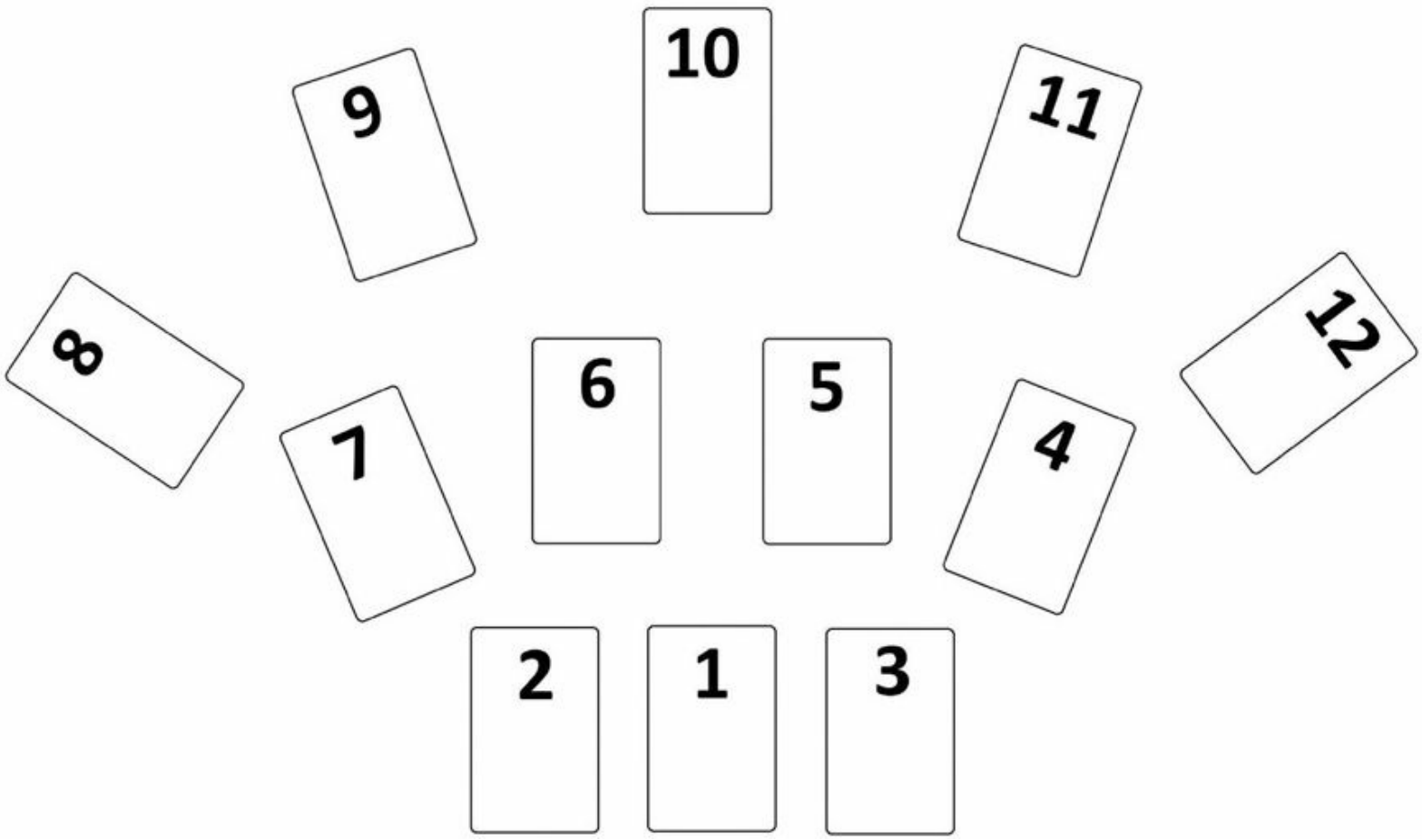
In the interest of time, only the main points of Christopher's reading will be highlighted. A full analysis of this spread could take up to an hour. Note that although a signifier would be needed if the First Operation was performed, in Christopher's case no signifier was selected.

Among the external petals, note which element seems to dominate. Reading elemental dignities will be covered in detail in Chapter 15. For now, simply note that the suit of Pentacles, which corresponds to the element of Earth, dominates in the outer petals of Christopher's spread. Money matters will heavily influence the trajectory of his book launch. Very quickly here, the Eight of Pentacles validates that Christopher has put in his

best, that he can rest assured that he has produced a work of great quality. The book will probably make him a small but significant amount of profit, as indicated by the Ace of Pentacles next to the Eight. The Four of Pentacles warns Christopher to remain frugal, however. The Page of Pentacles most likely takes on a figurative meaning, representing receipt of good news with regard to money matters. That echoes the Ace of Pentacles, confirming that the book will make a profit, though the chance of Christopher becoming wealthy over it and retiring early are still rather slim.

The center three petals drawing from the suit of Wands lean more positive than negative for Christopher. The Six of Wands again resonates with profit. The book will be a victory for him. The Knight of Wands, like the Page of Pentacles, takes on a figurative meaning here and represents gallant action and buzz around Christopher's book. The Ten of Wands in reverse, however, warns of exhaustion and the inability to balance multiple obligations at once. Maybe midstream in Christopher's book launch he may decide to add another venture or commitment to his plate. Advise Christopher against this and to focus on the book. Overwhelming himself with unrelated commitments could end up being detrimental, as suggested further by The Devil card, which visually seems to cross both the Ten of Wands and The Empress, The Empress here symbolizing fruition.

The Seashell



The Seashell is a hybrid spread used for general inquiries, to assess a Seeker's life and how successful he or she can be. It is based on a traditional French cartomancy spread used by fortune-tellers, but here it is a great tool for gauging potential and for identifying the factors that hold a Seeker

back. By identifying these factors, the Seeker can then make adjustments and thus ensure his or her success.

Cards 1, 2, and 3 are drawn and read as a three-card reading for the present, past, and future respectively. The cards 4, 5, 6, and 7 correspond to the I-H_1-V-H_2 piles and provide insight into the four quadrants of the Seeker's life as indicated by the piles.

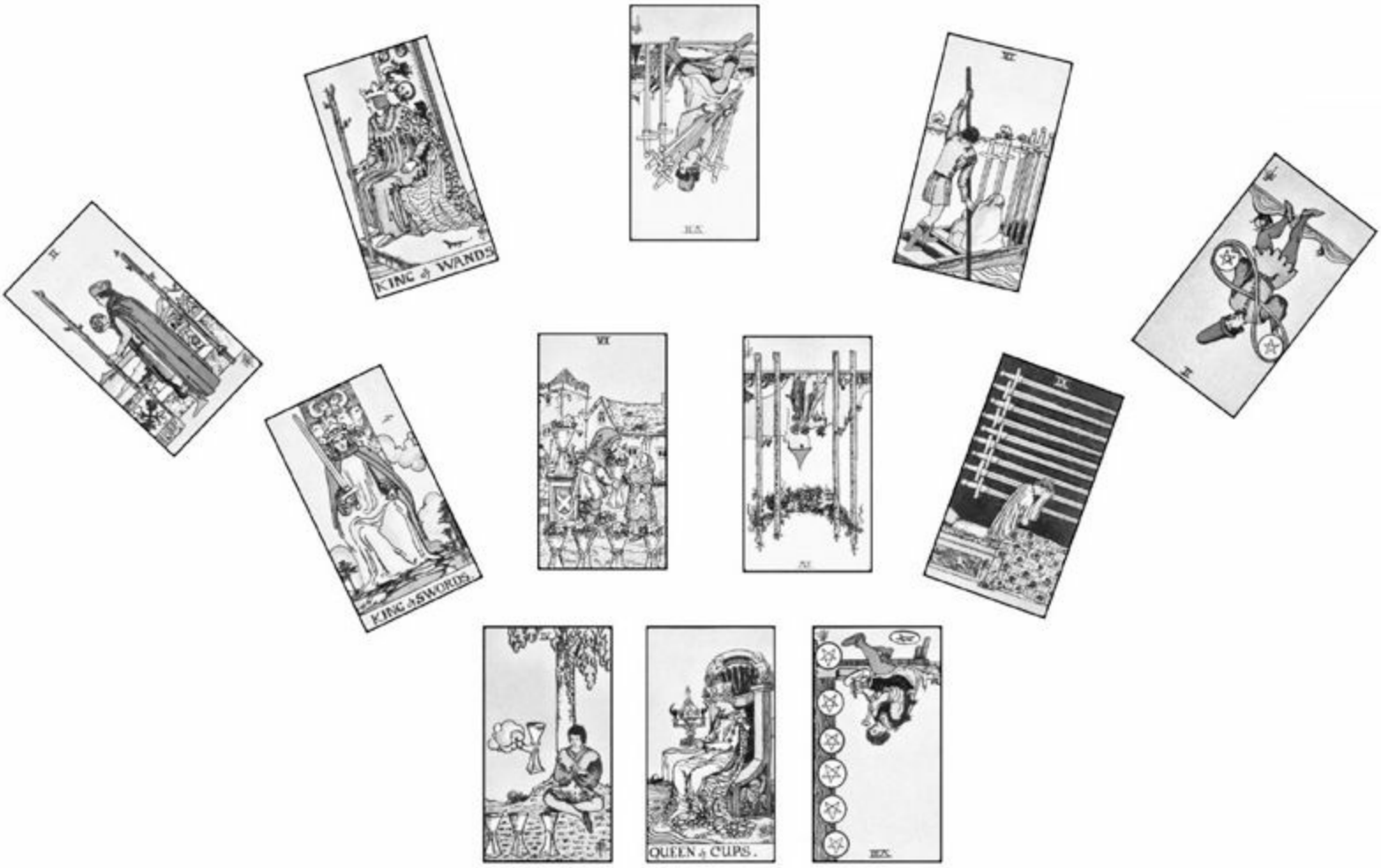
Cards 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are based on the five components of circumstance, a foundational theory to be applied to reading tarot that is discussed in Chapter 18. Card 8 represents force majeure, or the external or environmental conditions that affect the Seeker's situation or present life that are out of the Seeker's control. These are generally the conditions that the Seeker needs to mitigate. Card 9 represents karma, or the karmic theme of the Seeker's life that needs to be reconciled to yield a positive or successful future. Card 10 represents disposition, which is the Seeker's character and temperament. These are the personality and mental factors that affect Seeker's success. Card 11 represents education, which is the skill set or knowledge that the Seeker needs to pay attention to for success. Card 12 represents action, what the Seeker must do to be successful.

The Seashell spread provides comprehensive, though broad, insights into how the Seeker is faring in life, what variables will help the Seeker be successful and what variables tend to hold the Seeker back, meaning what he or she needs to work extra hard to overcome. While the Seashell is mostly used for general inquiries, that doesn't mean it can't be used for specific inquiries. Simply focus the card position indications to the matter at hand.

This is considered an advanced spread because it synthesizes multiple techniques, i.e., the present-past-future three-card spread, I-H_1-V-H_2, and the five components of circumstance, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 18.

Case Study: Zara

Zara is a college student, female, and an Earth sign. She is presently an English major and is thinking about obtaining an MFA degree later on. However, at the moment she feels lost about her future career prospects. Zara is also an aspiring musician, and if she could be successful writing and singing songs, she would want to pursue that. She requests a general reading. You, the practitioner, opt for the Seashell spread.



Again, only a broad overview of the reading interpretation will be provided here, for the sole purpose of understanding how the Seashell spread is applied. The Queen of Cups centered at the foundation of the seashell represents who Zara is right now (to be distinguished from her signifier card, which would be the Page of Pentacles, if court cards are being used). That is someone who is deeply nurturing, warm, empathetic, and perhaps one who tends to mother her peers. She is always the one who has to watch out and protect others. Note the Seven of Swords reversed in the Card 10 position for her disposition. Since the present card is essentially a character card, not to mention the synchronicity of the Queen appearing directly below the card position for disposition, Cards 1 and 10 can be read together. While the Seven of Swords in reverse can suggest forfeiture or the contemplating of an act that is potentially unethical, the meaning here does not seem so severe for Zara. Here, the card more likely suggests someone who ends up turning her back on her passions, what she loves in life, to pursue more material aspirations. There may be a hint of "selling out" here, though for the practitioner to use that phrase would not be

advisable. Comparing the Seven of Swords to the Queen of Cups, which is who Zara is right now, there is a strong possibility that the person Zara becomes in ten years could be someone she could never recognize today, and vice versa. There may be dramatic changes to her disposition going forward. Note that the approach of linking Cards 1 and 10 is not always applicable, though for Zara it is. Hence, assessing the overall landscape of a spread is imperative before the practitioner begins the interpretation.

Note the Eight of Pentacles here, albeit appearing in reverse for Zara. Zara had mentioned that she was a liberal arts major, that she may want to attend graduate school for the arts, and that she's also a musician. As the tarot practitioner gains more experience, he or she will inevitably observe how frequently the Eight of Pentacles (or the Three of Pentacles) appears in readings for those with innate artistic talents. However, in reverse, the Eight of Pentacles suggests that Zara may end up squandering her artistic talents. Perhaps she won't display the stamina for following through to the MFA, or other extenuating circumstances bar her from that path. Either way, note this to her. Remember that the cards do not predict the future. The purpose of noting the possible diversion from the arts path is so Zara can remain self-aware. If her will is truly bent on pursuing the arts, then the resolve of not letting that card come true could be what pushes Zara to not only obtain an MFA but perhaps even enjoy a lucrative career doing what she loves.

The Nine of Swords in the I position, or Card 4, suggests major setbacks in her career pursuits. This is an indication to Zara that she must exercise greater willpower and really control the reins of her life if she wants success. If, in contrast, the Wheel of Fortune card appeared upright in the Card 4 position, that might indicate someone who will have it easy throughout life. The Nine of Pentacles could resonate with a similar message of privilege, as would the Ten of Pentacles, suggesting family assistance. However, here is the Nine of Swords, so Zara will have to work twice as hard as others to achieve the same.

The Four of Wands in reverse in the H_1 position, or Card 5, is not negative, if the reader recalls from the Cyclopedia chapter. The Four of Wands is one of the few cards that are positive upright and reverse. In reverse, it suggests a rite of passage. Marriage for her could have dramatic effects on her professional ambitions, and that is something she will need to pay attention to. Although marriage doesn't seem like it will have a negative impact, it will certainly cause her to change her lifestyle (and may even dramatically change her social standing) in a significant way.

The other four here, the Four of Cups in the past position, Card 2, might suggest that in Zara's youth, she tended to be more introverted than extroverted. She was a pensive child, but also she tended to overthink (and thus worry) about decisions, causing a lack of decision. The Two of Pentacles reversed in the action position, Card 12, echoes that theme. The Two of Pentacles shows someone who is not adept at prioritizing and tends to get overwhelmed easily.

The King of Swords in the H_2 position, or Card 7, can take on two possible meanings here: literally it can represent a man in a position of authority over Zara, who controls her financial situation; or figuratively, it may represent possible aspirations (and great success—leadership) in politics and accruing wealth through that path, which would make sense since many of the other cards in Zara's spread show that she may end up never activating

her artistic talents. The V position, Card 6, tends to be difficult for practitioners to interpret because of its variations in meaning. The V position can mean a dispute or legal issue, strong ambitions, or it can represent community involvement or the Seeker's relationship to the external sphere or his/her environment. If the card is negative, it is more likely to convey disputes, controversies, and legal issues. Strong Major Arcana cards or the suit of Swords will also resonate with such indications. A lighthearted card like the Six of Cups upright, however, will lean toward community involvement, and here, perhaps represent Zara's hometown.

Note how the practitioner does not need to interpret the cards in the order that they were drawn into the spread. Feel free to skip around. In fact, a better way to read is to scan the entire landscape, draw patterns and connections, and begin by analyzing the strongest synchronicities in the spread.

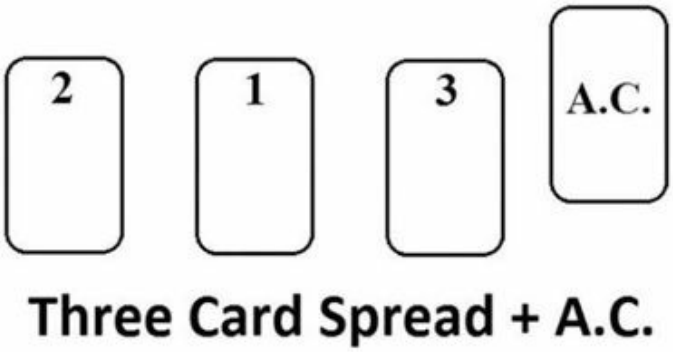
Although some key points from Cards 8 through 12 were touched upon here, they will be revisited in Chapter 18 once the five components have been covered.

The Adjustment Card

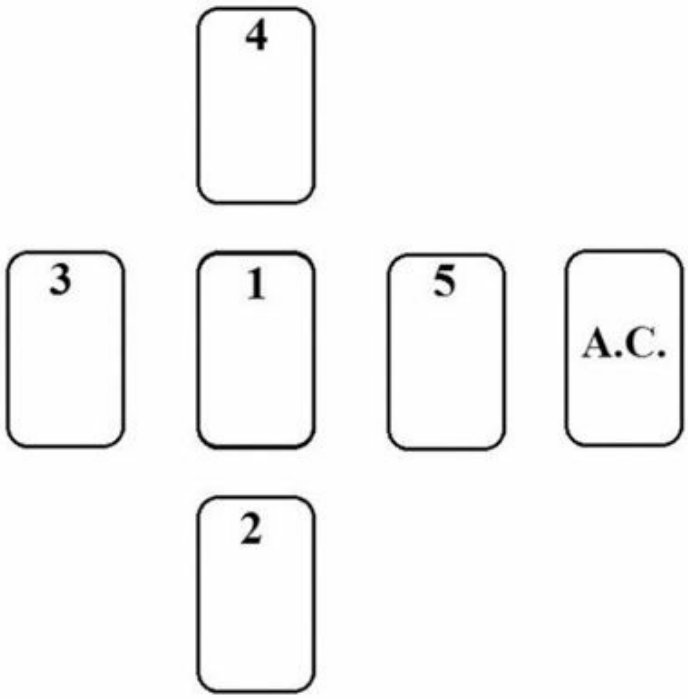
Every future is mutable. No one is born with a single destiny. There are infinite forks in our path, a great number of possible paths to walk, and each decision we make changes that path. Legend has it that when Prince Siddhartha, the future Buddha, was born, scholars foretold that he would one day become either a great king or a great holy man. Even a prophet's destiny is not set in stone.

After a reading is near complete, the practitioner may elect to draw an additional card, the Adjustment Card. The Adjustment Card can be used in conjunction with any spread. After the "most probable outcome" card or equivalent is drawn, the Adjustment Card, represented as "A.C." in the subsequent diagrams, can be brought into a reading to identify what factors are within the Seeker's control for changing the given outcome.

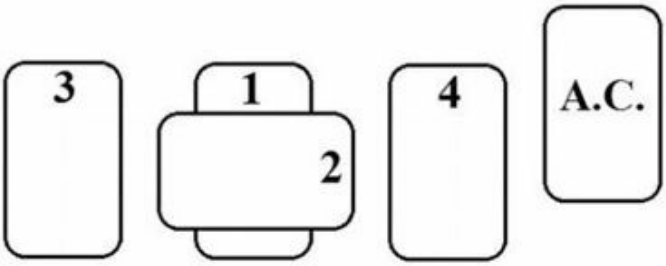
To select the Adjustment Card, the remaining tarot deck is handed back to the Seeker and shuffled or cut once more. Then the top card is drawn for the A.C.



Three Card Spread + A.C.

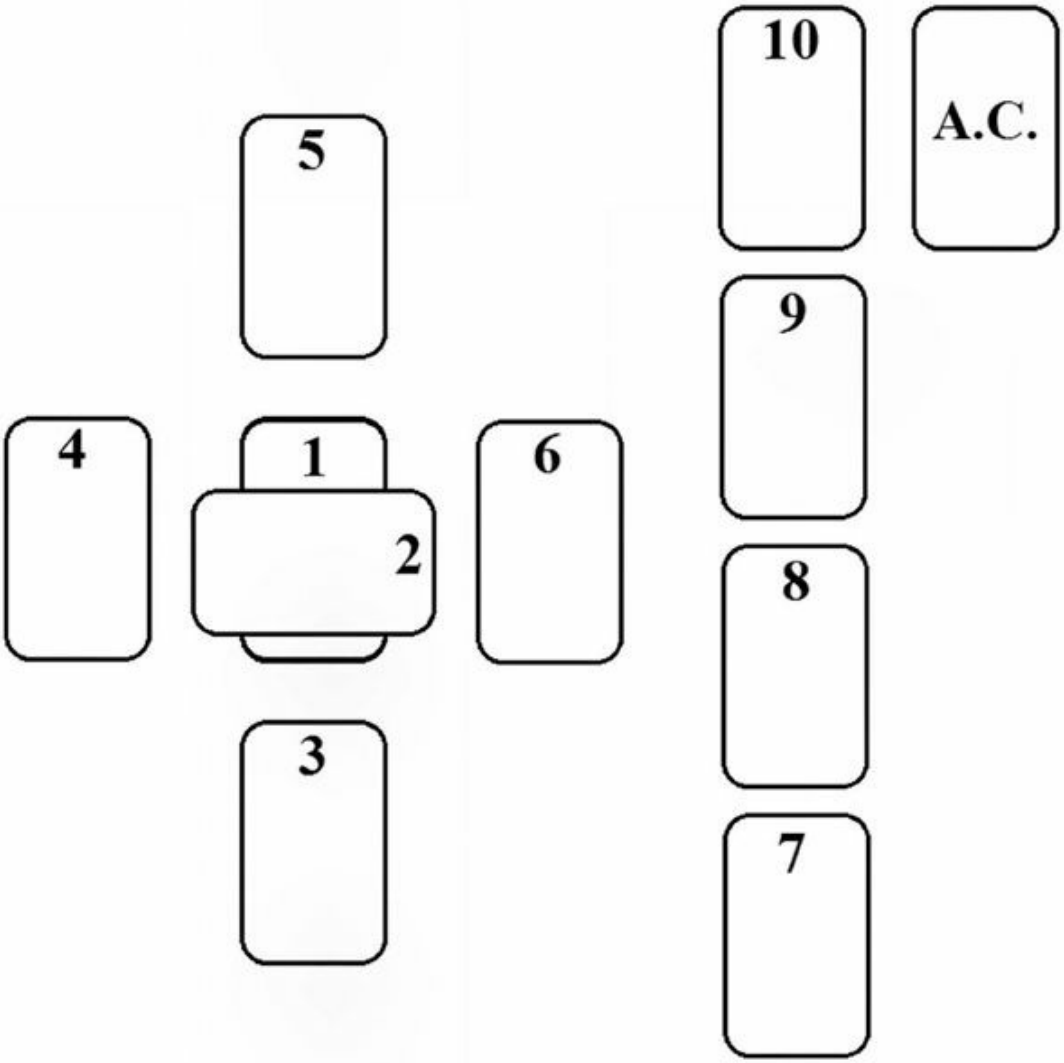


Simple Cross + A.C.



Four Card Spread + A.C.

Do not use the Adjustment Card as a crutch. If the spread seemed unclear or the message confusing, it is not the cards, it is the subjective analysis, so revisit the present cards and review. Do not draw another card. If, however, the message was crystal-clear and the Seeker needs insight into how he or she may alter the probable outcome for a more desired outcome, then the Adjustment Card may be drawn.

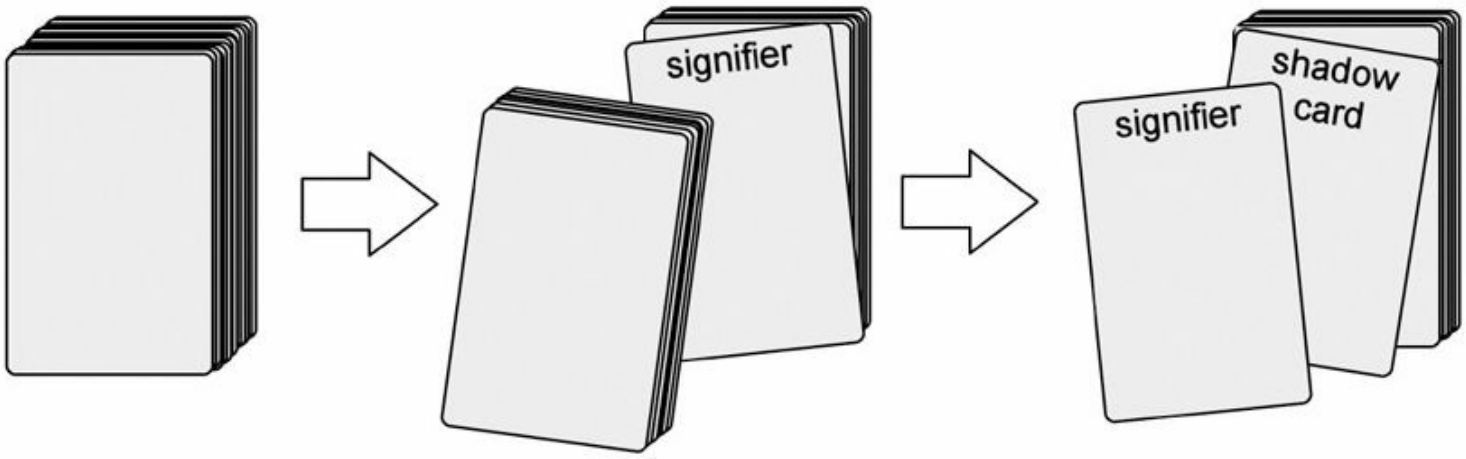


Celtic Cross + A.C.

The Shadow Card

As an alternative to drawing an Adjustment Card, a Shadow Card could also be drawn at the close o a reading. While the Adjustment Card is about what actions or attitudes the Seeker must adopt to adjust the most probable outcome to a more favorable one, the Shadow Card is about what latent extenuating forces are compelling the current of the Seeker's situation.

Collect the deck into a single pile and shuffle. Then sift through the deck to locate the signifier card. The card immediately following the signifier is the Shadow Card.



I do not acknowledge any upright or reverse distinctions when reading the Shadow Card. Instead, consider the overall essence of that card, upright and reversed interpreted holistically, and correlate it with the essence or the untapped part of the subconscious that could have a powerful influence. However, if you choose to utilize Shadow Cards and wish to distinguish between the upright and reversed meanings, then do so. The choice is entirely dependent on your connection with your tarot deck.

The Shadow Card represents a latent aspect of the Seeker. It could also represent potential, or a characteristic that is being rejected, denied, or is simply unknown to the person.

A Major Arcana card means that the person is strong, with the potential to be a force of nature. The drawing of a Major Arcana card could also reveal a part of the psyche or psychology that is significant to the matter at hand.

Wands indicate a motivated or energetic characteristic. Could suggest creative energies. The Seeker's actions and conduct are attributed to how events have turned out for him or her.

Cups indicate an emotional or spiritual characteristic. Could suggest interpersonal issues. The Seeker's personality, outlook, or character traits are attributed to how events have turned out for him or her.

Swords indicate an intellectual, aggressive, or ambitious characteristic. Could suggest pathological issues. The Seeker's actions and conduct are attributed to how events have turned out for him or her.

Pentacles indicate someone who is financial- or gain-oriented. They can also indicate business acumen. Could suggest money-related issues affecting how events have turned out for the Seeker. The Seeker's personality, outlook, or character traits are more influential on the outcome than any actions or conduct.

Court cards indicate that a latent aspect of the personality is exemplified by that particular court card. Could suggest the substantial influence of certain people in Seeker's life. If not representative of

an actual person, they may take on a literal meaning. Apply the analytical process for court cards.

The Shadow Card need not be drawn. Many tarot readers do not utilize a Shadow Card. However it may be useful for revealing hidden powers or characteristics from within the person the reading is being conducted for. These powers or characteristics could be harnessed by him or her to alter the final outcome predicted by the cards, especially if the reading was not favorable. This hidden power or characteristic could be just what is needed to change the outcome more favorably. The Shadow Card reinforces the concept of free will: deep within each of us is the capability to navigate our own course.

Note: Appendix A provides a quick-reference file of the spreads discussed in this chapter.

The Essence Card

The Essence Card denotes a person's basic, invariable nature. That being said, the innumerable conditions of nurture may have caused that fundamental nature to be modified, concealed, amplified, or even thwarted. While the Essence Card is not typically drawn during a reading as part of a spread, a person's birthday may be taken down to calculate the Essence Card. The card is also known as the birth card, soul card, or personality card. This book will refer to it as the Essence Card.

To determine a person's Essence Card, take the numbers of his or her date of birth and add the month, the day, and the year together. If his birthday is December 26, 1978, you would add 12 (for December) and 26 and 1978 for a sum of 2016. Then add each individual digit, 2 plus 0 plus 1 plus 6, for a sum of 9. The method is referred to as theosophic reduction,[14] which is the reduction of any number with two or more digits down to a single digit by adding them until only one remains. Now correspond that sum to a key number from the Major Arcana. For a person born on December 26, 1978, his Essence Card would be 9, the Hermit. If the sum of the digits exceeds 21, which is the highest key number of Major Arcana cards, add the two digits together.

Example 1
Date of Birth = Month + Day + Year
= 12 + 26 + 1978
= 2016
Sum of Digits = 2 + 0 + 1 + 6
= 9
Person's Essence Card is Key 9: The Hermit.

Example 2.
Date of Birth = Month + Day + Year
= 11 + 30 + 1835
= 1876
Sum of Digits = 1 + 8 + 7 + 6
= 22
Sum of Digits = 2 + 2
= 4
Person's Essence Card is Key 4: The Emperor.

The subsequent summaries of each Essence Card traits are left brief and generalized intentionally, so that tarot practitioners will feel encouraged to develop a more comprehensive description of associated traits on their own. Also consider the upright and reverse keywords for each card.

1 Magician, *Power / Disruption*

Well-rounded, disciplined; great potential for the creative

2 High Priestess, *Intuition / Deceit*

Intuitive, attractive, sensual; good at keeping secrets; serene

3 Empress, *Fertility / Barren*

Nurturing; strong capability for bearing ideas into fruition

4 Emperor, *Authority / Passivity*

Confident; strong leadership qualities; commands authority

5 Hierophant, *Tradition / Nonconformity*

Places emphasis on tradition; respect for formality; regal stature

6 Lovers, *Passion / Temptation*

Passionate; nurtures relationships; humanist; intellectually a romantic

7 Chariot, *Victory / Riot*

Disciplined; highly competent in combat; potential for glory

8 Strength, *Compassion / Brute*

Great inner strength; skilled at overcoming hardships and fears

9 Hennit, *Introspection / Ignorance*

Introspective; introverted; a great teacher or mentor; wise

10 Wheel of Fortune, *Motion / Flux*

Adventurous; risk-taker; skilled at pushing forces into motion

11 Justice, *Integrity / Prejudice*

Fair, objective; serious, impartial; logical; tendency to be critical

12 Hanged Man, *Self-Sacrifice / Martyr*

Non-conformist; independent; can be self-sacrificing for greater good

13 Death, *Transformation / Conclusory*

Chameleon personality; peripatetic nature; restless; profound thinker

14 Temperance, *Balance / Excess*

Balanced, prudent; compassionate; a bringer of harmony; pacifist

15 Devil, *Bondage / Defeat*

Mischievous nature; extremely clever; prone to temptation

16 Tower, *Hubris / Oppression*

Ambitious; ego-driven; proud; potential for great success

17 Star, *Hope / Pessimism*

Hopeful, warm, and kind; bright personality; inspires others

18 Moon, *Duality / Inconstancy*

Dual personality; psychic; many hidden talents; great imagination

19 Sun, *Attainment / Contentment*

Radiant, successful; penchant for innovation; full of vitality

20 Judgement, *Awakening / Dormancy*

Spiritual leader, messenger; commands respect from others

21 World, *Fulfillment / Hiatus*

Sophisticated, knowledgeable; potential for greatness

Contradictions between the upright and reverse keywords represent the tenuous yin and yang balance within each of us. Those of us with hearts full of compassion also have the propensity for becoming brutes when not kept in check. The keywords "bondage" and "defeat" for Essence Card 15 cuts both ways: bondage and defeat of the self but also bondage and defeat of others. Martyrs like the Hanged Man, or Essence Card 12, will sacrifice the self for the greater good, but if conditions turn a particular way, the Seeker's essence can become selfish and self-serving. Thus, each essence should ruminate on that yin and yang within.

Calculating the Essence Card for a Seeker could be included as part of the reading that a practitioner performs. Some practitioners may use the Essence Card as the signifier in a reading.

Chapter 18 of this book discusses the five components of circumstance, a theory for determining how the force majeure or external influences in our lives—karma, our disposition or character, education, and our actions—conspire together to produce our future. The Essence Card is one way of examining disposition. When a Seeker is self-aware of his or her own disposition, the Seeker can better control the other components of circumstance. Thus, if a Seeker's Essence Card seems to resonate strongly with him or her, then use it to help guide the Seeker through his or her tarot reading.

Admittedly, Essence Cards have a tendency to be inaccurate or overbroad. When the personality description sounds accurate, confirmation bias is probably at play. We do, after all, affirm as true any information that serves our personal hypotheses about ourselves. Then, when the personality description sounds inaccurate, the skeptics of tarot and other intuitive arts will stir at full vigor. What's more, no cookie-cutter calculation or personality test should ever know more about you than yourself. Always trust you.

See also Appendix G for calculating Life Path numbers and how that can be used in conjunction with the Essence Card and general tarot practice.

Card Counting in Tarot

The card counting technique is often seen in the Golden Dawn method of tarot application, though it predates the Golden Dawn to early-eighteenth-century cartomancy. The technique is rooted in the rationale that numbers hold spiritually or theosophically significant properties. Each card corresponds with a number, and there is a meaning attributed to that number. In card counting, a number is selected that bears relevance to the Seeker's matter at hand. It is then believed that sequentially, the card falling in the position that corresponds with the selected number can be taken out of the deck, pulled into a spread, and read as a narrative that will answer the questions for the Seeker's matter at hand. Chapter 30 provides a tutorial on the Opening of the Key method, which utilizes card counting.

There are two views to how numbers should be assigned to the cards for the card counting technique. The first is the Majority View, which is found in the works of Papus, A. E. Waite, Paul Foster Case, and the canonical text on the Opening of the Key methodology, *Book T* (also known as *Liber T*). In the Majority View, the Major Arcana are subdivided three ways, into Zodiac Cards Planetary Cards, and Elemental Cards. Zodiac Cards are assigned the number 12 for the twelve signs Planetary Cards are assigned the number 9 for the number of planets in the solar system,[15] and Elemental cards are assigned the number 3, for the elements (rather than 4, since here Earth is counted under Planetary). The aces are assigned the number 11, because Western occultists believed the number 11 to hold mystical catalytic properties.[16] The pip cards 2 through 10 correspond to the numbers on their faces. A table of the Majority View is as follows:

Card Counting: Majority View

Major Arcana					
Planetary Cards	**9**	**Zodiac Cards**	**12**	**Elemental Cards**	**3**
Key 1, The Magician Key 2, The High Priestess Key 3, The Empress Key 10, Wheel of Fortune Key 16, The Tower Key 19, The Sun Key 21, The World		Key 4, The Emperor Key 5, The Hierophant Key 6, The Lovers Key 7, The Chariot Key 8, Strength Key 9, The Hermit Key 11, Justice Key 13, Death Key 14, Temperance Key 15, The Devil Key 17, The Star Key 18, The Moon		Key 0, The Fool Key 12, The Hanged Man Key 20, Judgement	

Minor Arcana			
Ace	**11**	Eight	**8**
Two	**2**	Nine	**9**
Three	**3**	Ten	**10**
Four	**4**	Page	**7**
Five	**5**	Knight	**4**
Six	**6**	Queen	**4**
Seven	**7**	King	**4**

The second approach is to subdivide the Major Arcana two ways only: into Zodiac Cards and Planetary Cards. Under the second approach, Key 0: The Fool is associated with Uranus (rather than Air, as it would be under the Majority View), Key 12: The Hanged Man with Neptune (rather than Water), and Judgement with Pluto (rather than Fire). The second approach is based on the theory that all cards possess an elemental character and thus three cards need not be separated out and assigned special elemental significance, especially when those cards are already assigned as Planetary. Therefore I attribute them as Planetary Cards rather than Elemental. Also note that in the Minor Arcana, the Ace is not 1, but rather 11. Some approaches assign the number 5 to aces.

Card Counting: Minority View

Major Arcana			
Planetary Cards	**9**	**Zodiac Cards**	**12**
Key 0, The Fool Key 1, The Magician Key 2, The High Priestess Key 3, The Empress Key 10, Wheel of Fortune Key 12, The Hanged Man Key 16, The Tower Key 19, The Sun Key 20, Judgement Key 21, The World		Key 4, The Emperor Key 5, The Hierophant Key 6, The Lovers Key 7, The Chariot Key 8, Strength Key 9, The Hermit Key 11, Justice Key 13, Death Key 14, Temperance Key 15, The Devil Key 17, The Star Key 18, The Moon	

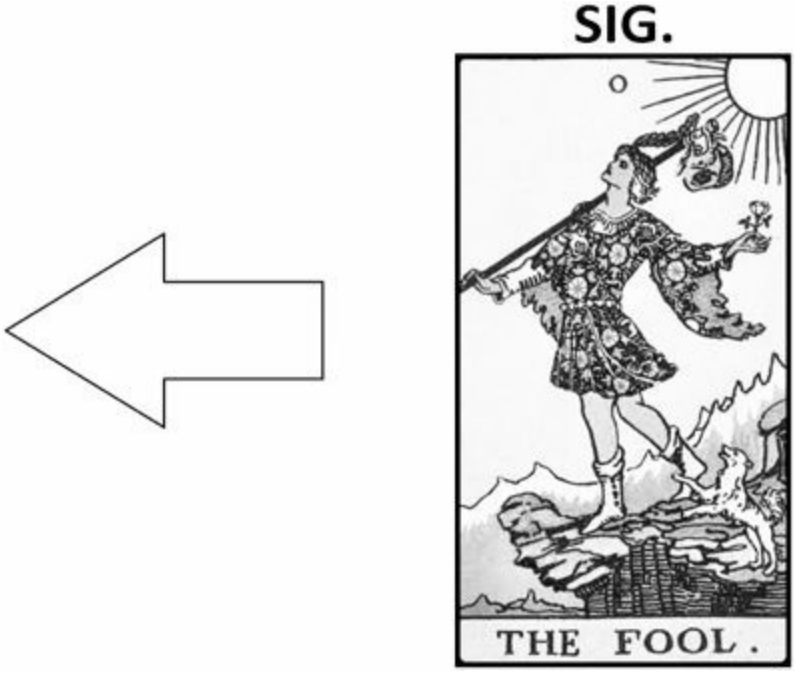
Minor Arcana			
Ace	**11**	Eight	**8**
Two	**2**	Nine	**9**
Three	**3**	Ten	**10**
Four	**4**	Page	**7**
Five	**5**	Knight	**4**
Six	**6**	Queen	**4**
Seven	**7**	King	**4**

First, the signifier is set to anchor the reading. If the character depicted on the card (or its directionality, as later explained in Chapter 15) faces left, then the practitioner draws and places the cards one by one to the left of the signifier, placed right to left. If the signifier faces right, then the practitioner draws and places the cards one by one to the right of the signifier, placed left to right.

Note the numerical value assigned to the signifier, based on either the Majority View table or Minority View table above. The signifier card counts as 1, and then count up to the number assigned to the signifier. When that card is reached, place the card next to the signifier, based on the directionality.

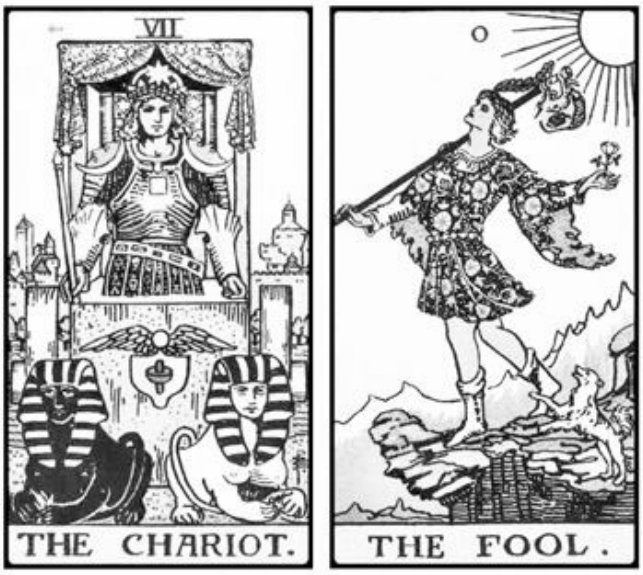
Case Study: Ringo

Ringo is a tarot enthusiast and has always used as his signifier card not a court card, as conventionally used, but rather a Major Arcana card, Key 0: The Fool. Note that The Fool is assigned the number 9 per the Minority View, which is the approach that will be observed herein. (If the practitioner adopts the Majority View, then The Fool card would be assigned the number 3.)

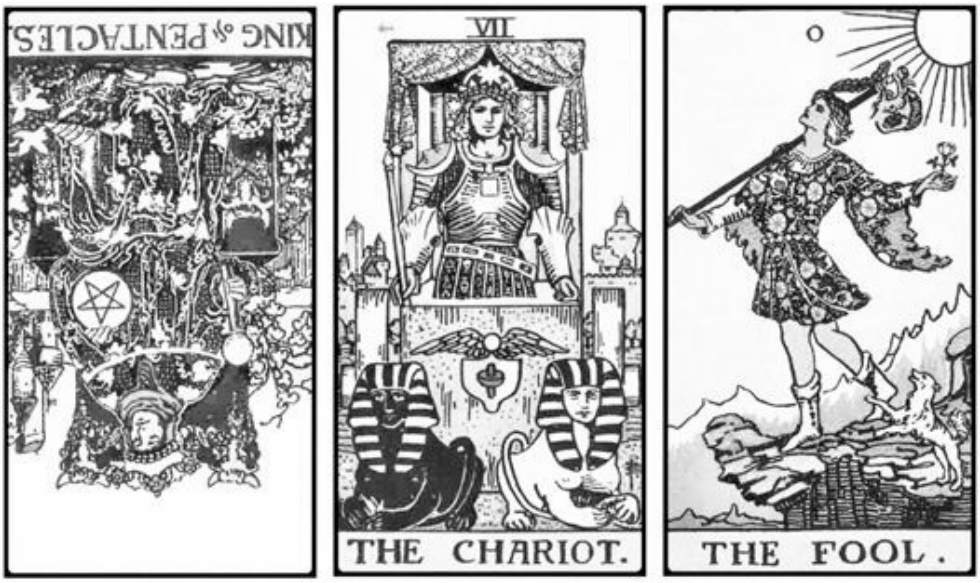


The Fool appears to be facing left, so as the card counting begins, cards drawn will be placed to the left of the card, right to left. At this time it may be worth mentioning to the Seeker the left-right symbolism in the signifier card. If the signifier card faces left, as it does in Ringo's case, then the answer to the question at hand or the path for the Seeker to take is an unorthodox one, more intuitive and rooted in emotion, and more attuned to the unconscious. Yin energy will be relevant. If the signifier card faces right, then the answer to the question at hand or the path for the Seeker to take is a more conventional one, more logic-oriented and rooted in standards, guidelines, codes of conduct, or righteousness. It will be more attuned to the conscious part of the mind and yang energy will be relevant.

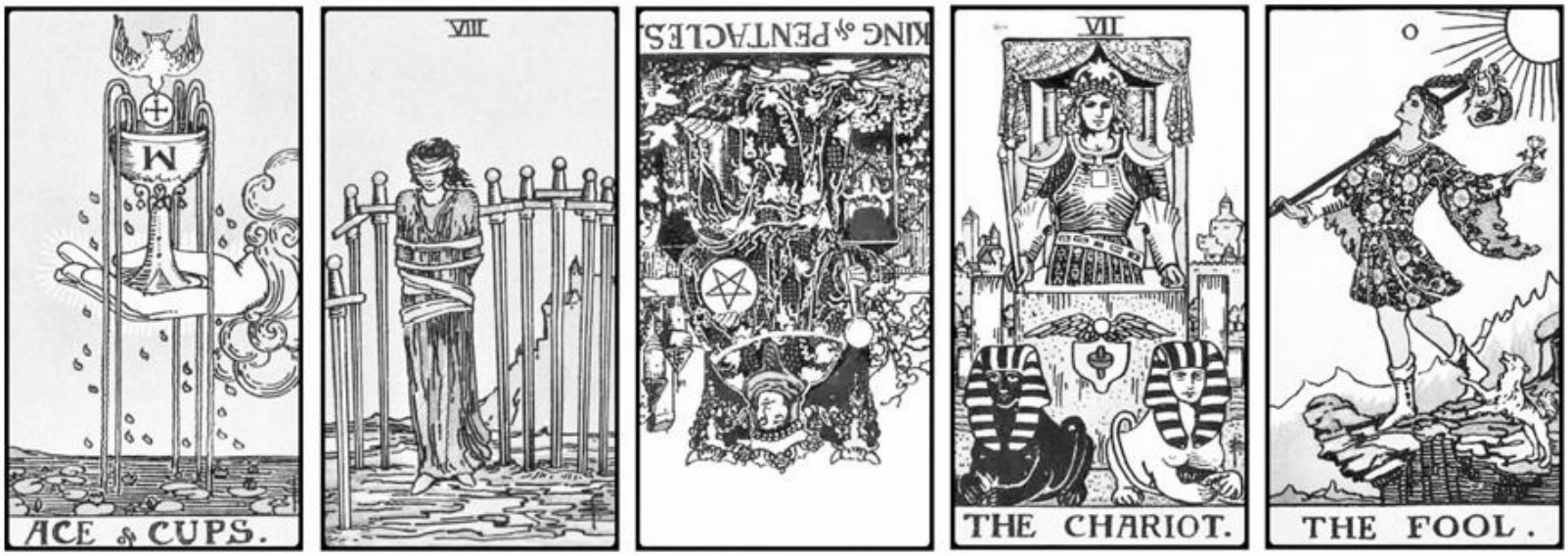
To count, the signifier card counts as 1. The practitioner holds the deck face-down in his or her hand and the first card at the top of the deck, face-down, is 2. The second card face-down in order is 3. Now count up to the number assigned to the signifier, which in Ringo's case is 9. The card drawn is Key 7: The Chariot.



Revisit the table corresponding with the Minority View. The Chariot is a Zodiac Card, so it is assigned the numerical value 12. The Chariot card is counted as 1, then the remaining deck in the practitioner's hand is counted up to 12. The twelfth card is placed down next to The Chariot. In Ringo's case, the card drawn was the King of Pentacles, reversed.



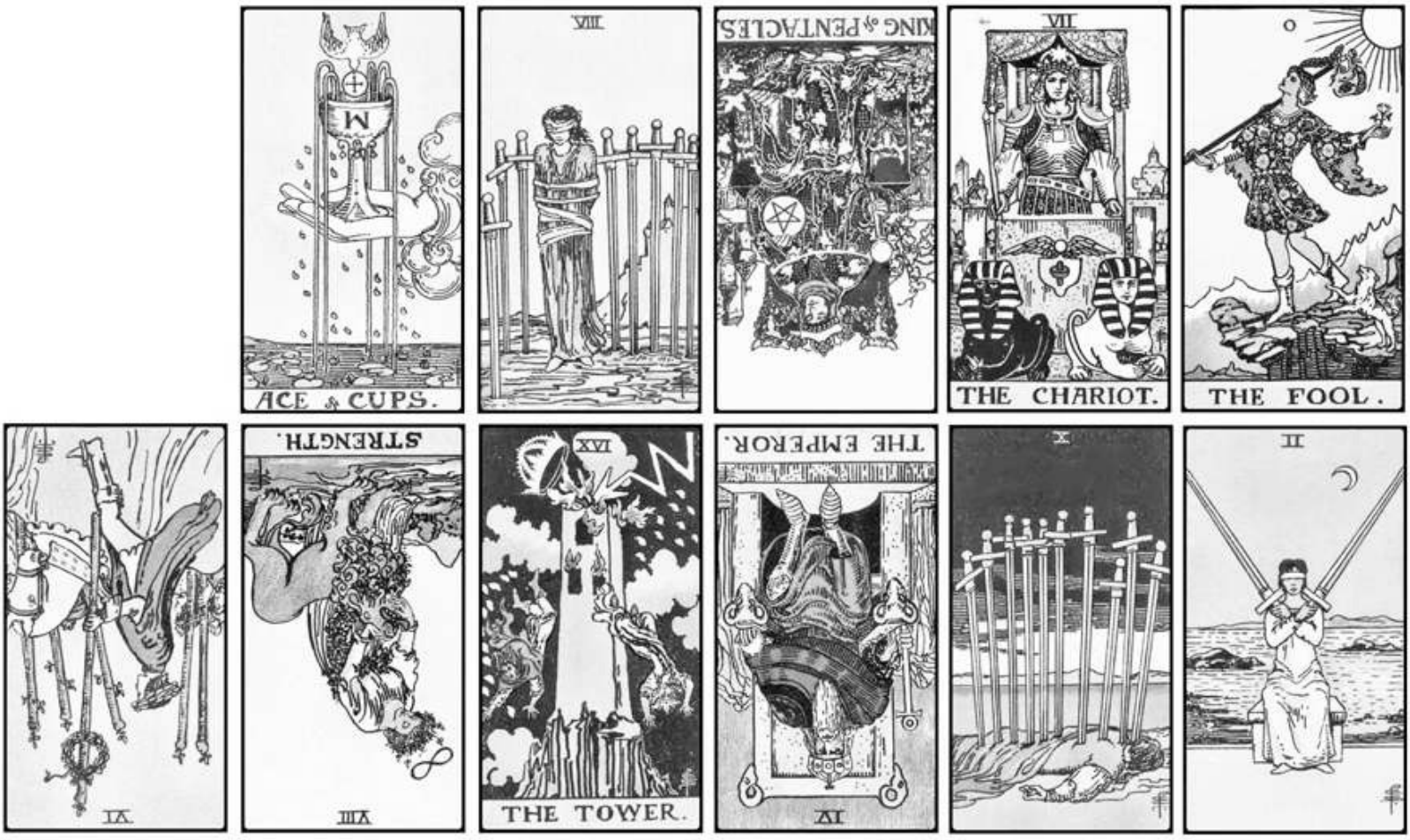
Kings are assigned the number 4. Counting the King of Pentacles as 1, count the remaining deck up to the number 4. The fourth card is placed down next to the King of Pentacles. In Ringo's case, the card is the Eight of Swords. The face value of the pip is used, so the Eight of Swords corresponds to the number 8. The Eight of Swords is counted as 1, and as the remaining deck is counted, the eighth card is placed down next to the Eight of Swords. In Ringo's case, the card is the Ace of Cups.



Note that the Ace is assigned the value 11, not 1. Count up to 11 and place down the eleventh card. The procedure continues until the entire deck has been exhausted and there is a large (probably chaotic) spread of cards before the Seeker and practitioner.

At the end, if the numerical value of the final card drawn is greater than the number of cards remaining in the deck, discard the remainder of the deck and set down that final card. The reading analysis begins. In the example for Ringo, ten cards were drawn (not counting the signifier). The exact positions of the cards that the practitioner sets them down in during the counting process are not relevant, though the practitioner should maintain the order, left-to-right or right-to-left, that the cards are drawn in to preserve chronology.

When the counting is completed, the practitioner may arrange the cards on the table into neater rows or columns for easier reading. Tally the elemental correspondences of the cards.



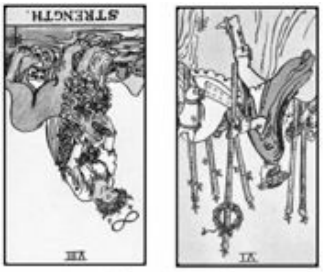
In Ringo's case, the tally would be as follows:

	Fire	Water	Air	Earth
Majors	3	1	0	0
Minors	1	1	3	1
TOTALS	**4**	**2**	**3**	**1**

First, note that Fire dominates. Air comes in second. Both are active energies, so the Air cards amplify the Fire and strengthen the Fire cards. Among the Fire cards, the majority are Majors, which suggests strong external forces relating to Fire at play. Also look at what Majors were drawn: The Chariot, Strength, The Tower, and The Emperor, all forceful cards indicative of strong willpower and an intense personality, which resonates as true for Ringo.

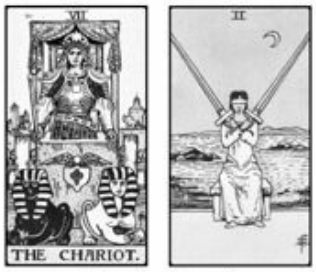
There is only one card in the spread that corresponds with Earth, suggesting to Ringo that his life lacks stability. That makes sense in light of his signifier card facing left, suggesting a character who takes the path least traveled, a character who opts for the alternative route, someone more interested in the occult and the indie rather than the conventional or canonical. As much as that may be Ringo's preferred lifestyle, the practitioner should note to him that such a lifestyle results in imbalance. His future won't be secure if he doesn't take more active measures to add stronger Earth elements to his present life.

From here, there are myriad ways a practitioner can follow through with the reading. Some adhere to the instruction of the Golden Dawn and will pair the cards together: the first card drawn with the last card drawn; the second card drawn with the second-to-last card drawn, etc. Then each pair is read as a two-card reading and the pairs in totality are read as one narrative, each representing a chapter of the Seeker's life or one phase of the matter at hand. In the event of an odd card out after the pairings, the odd card out is read as either the Adjustment Card or the Shadow Card, depending on the practitioner's preferred methodology. In Ringo's case, the cards that were drawn yielded five pairs exactly. These five pairs are now read as five separate two-card readings. The five messages provide a holistic narrative of Ringo's life (since the card counting technique was applied for a general reading). If a specific question had been asked in Ringo's case, then the five pairs are read as five separate two-card readings that answer the matter at hand. It can be read in the same way a Six Points (or Six Controversies) spread is read, or the Six Faiths, only in Ringo's case, it would be Five.



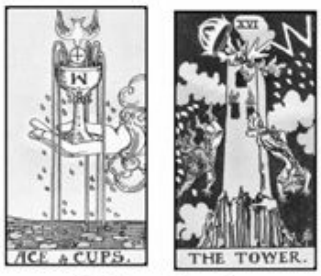
5th Pair

3rd Pair

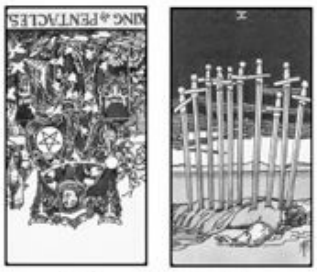


1st Pair

SIG.



4th Pair



2nd Pair

Other practitioners may take the drawn cards from the counting process and shuffle and cut them once more, then draw the cards into a specific tarot spread, and thus proceed with a reading analysis of that tarot spread. In Ringo's case, if the practitioner had decided to use a set spread for the reading, then the ten cards drawn would be shuffled by Ringo, cut, and then drawn into any reading spread that utilizes ten cards (for example, the Insight Spread, the Celtic Cross, or the Tree of Life).

Note that neither the Majority View nor the Minority View needs to be followed when applying the card counting technique. For example, in Eden Gray's Three Aces Spread, the number invoked is 13. By way of another example, a Seeker's Life Path number could be used, which may be particularly significant if the request is for a general reading.

Telling Time with Tarot

You should not predict the future with tarot, because fortune-telling is a distraction that keeps us from focusing on what *does* need to be done to ensure the best possible future outcome. Using tarot as an analytical tool is likened to casting milestone projections in a business plan or using present sales data to project future earnings. It is taking into consideration the known variables to give a best guess for the unknown, with the full caveat that such calculations are but calculations only, based on the assumption that the Seeker travels the direct path, and thus cannot account for unexpected interferences or for the Seeker's decisions to wander off trail. That should be distinguished from fortune-telling, which implies a certain hubris with regard to knowing future outcomes.

Projections, however, can offer some insight into timing issues, based on current known factors. For instance, the tarot might be consulted for insight into the best suggested deadline, or an optimal time when the desired outcome is more likely to manifest. When such questions involving time are asked, certain symbology in the tarot cards might disclose revelations that can help keep a Seeker on track toward his or her target.

When an inquiry is specifically crafted to ask about timing, look to the elemental correspondence of the card, which for the Major Arcana is provided in a number of tables set forth in this book[17] and for the Minor Arcana would be Fire for Wands, Water for Cups, Air for Swords, and Earth for Pentacles.[18] The astrological correspondences set forth in the subsequent table apply specifically to the Minor Arcana.

Elemental Correspondence Of Card	*Seasonal Correspondence*	*Astrological Correspondence*	*Moon Phase*
Fire	Spring	Aries Leo Sagittarius	New Moon
Water	Summer	Cancer Scorpio Pisces	Waxing Moon
Air	Fall	Gemini Libra Aquarius	Full Moon
Earth	Winter	Taurus Virgo Capricorn	Waning Moon

The below Major Arcana timing correspondences are based in part on the author's approach to astrological and numerological attributions. These timing attributions will work once a practitioner has attuned him- or herself to the cards and established such rapport with the tarot that the cards "know" how they will be interpreted timing-wise to the practitioner.

The Major Arcana and Timing Indications

Key 0: The Fool. The number eight may be relevant, as would be Uranus. There are Air associations. Could suggest fall or the full moon.

Key 1: The Magician. The numbers one or four may be relevant, as would be Mercury. There are Earth (or Air) associations. Could suggest fall/winter; period between full and waning moon.

Key 2: The High Priestess. The number two may be relevant. There are Water associations. Could suggest summer or a waxing moon.

Key 3: The Empress. The numbers three or six may be relevant, as would be Venus. There are Earth associations. Could suggest winter or the waning moon.

Key 4: The Emperor. Aries: March 21 to April 19. There are Fire associations. Could suggest spring or the new moon.

Key 5: The Hierophant. Taurus: April 20 to May 20. However, could also suggest Winter. There are Earth associations. Could suggest a waning moon.

Key 6: The Lovers. Gemini: May 21 to June 20. However, could also suggest fall. There

are Air associations. Could suggest a full moon.

Key 7: The Chariot. Cancer: June 21 to July 22. There are Water associations. Could suggest summer or a waxing moon.

Key 8: Strength. Leo: July 23 to August 22. However, could also suggest spring. There are Fire associations. Could suggest a new moon.

Key 9: The Hermit. Virgo: August 23 to September 22. However, could also suggest winter. There are Earth associations. Could suggest a waning moon.

Key 10: Wheel of Fortune. The number five or ten could be relevant, as would be Jupiter. There are Fire associations. Could suggest spring or the new moon.

Key 11: Justice. Libra: September 23 to October 22. There are Air associations. Could suggest fall or the full moon.

Key 12: The Hanged Man. The number nine or twelve may be relevant, as would be Neptune. There are Water associations. Could suggest summer or a waxing moon.

Key 13: Death. Scorpio: October 23 to November 21. There are Water associations. Could suggest a waxing moon.

Key 14: Temperance. Sagittarius: November 22 to December 21. However, could also indicate spring. There are Fire associations. Could suggest a new moon.

Key 15: The Devil. Capricorn: December 22 to January 19. There are Earth associations. Could suggest winter or the waning moon.

Key 16: The Tower. The number three or sixteen may be relevant, as would be Mars. There are Fire associations. Could suggest spring or the new moon.

Key 17: The Star. Aquarius: January 20 to February 18. However, could also suggest fall. There are Air associations. Could suggest a full moon.

Key 18: The Moon. Pisces: February 19 to March 20. However, could also suggest summer. There are Water associations. Could suggest a waxing moon.

Key 19: The Sun. The numbers one or nineteen could be relevant. There are Fire associations. Could suggest spring or the new moon.

Key 20: Judgement. Depending on tradition, could indicate Water or Fire, thus summer or spring; waxing moon or new moon. Pluto may be relevant.

Key 21: The World. The numbers seven or twenty-one could be relevant, as would be

Saturn. There are Earth associations. Could suggest winter or the waning moon.

For the Minor Arcana, in addition to the correspondences set forth in the above table, also look to the card number. The subsequent table provides suggested timing interpretations for each card, which should be read in combination with the seasonal, astrological, and lunar correspondences.

	Wands	Cups	Swords	Pentacles
Ace	Quite quickly	Quite quickly	Very likely, but after a battle	Strong prospects
Two	Seeker will make it happen; proactive	See Water correspondences	Uncertainty abounds	Some uncertainty
Three	Some period of waiting	Very likely to take place	Disappointment likely to occur	Very likely to take place
Four	Great fruition	But be more proactive, or there will be delays	Unexpected setbacks	Greater investment needed to ensure success
Five	Obstacles before goal manifests	Disappointment likely to occur	Quite quickly (and by force)	Disappointments; keep the faith
Six	Great fruition	Great fruition	During a holiday or out of town	Quite quickly; Affirmative
Seven	Be careful of those attempting to delay Seeker	Take care: falsehoods abound	When Seeker least expects it	Quite quickly; Affirmative
Eight	Quite quickly	Seeker may abandon own intents mid-way	Disappointment; does it create more problems than it solves?	Beginning signs of progress only
Nine	Some delays, but it's by Seeker's own conduct	Great fruition	Disappointment likely to occur	Likely, but success not as enjoyable as anticipated
Ten	Delays due to lack of focus	Great fruition	Take care: others do not want Seeker to succeed	Quite quickly; Affirmative
Page	Receipt of news only in corresponding time period	Receipt of news only in corresponding time period	Receipt of news only in corresponding time period	Receipt of news only in corresponding time period
Knight	Action takes place in corresponding time period	Action takes place in corresponding time period	Action takes place in corresponding time period	Action takes place in corresponding time period

Queen	See Fire correspondences	See Water correspondences	See Air correspondences	See Earth correspondences
King	See Fire correspondences	See Water correspondences	See Air correspondences	See Earth correspondences

There is for sure a training period involved in becoming capable of telling time with tarot. Meditation is a powerfully effective technique for programming a tarot deck to assist in telling time. For a practitioner to incorporate time-telling into tarot practice, he or she must program the deck through meditation, learn how to be receptive to the symbology of the tarot, and have full conviction and faith in the capability of telling time with a deck. The way to program a deck to tell time through meditation is to focus on each card one by one, and while focusing on the card, also focus on the corresponding time frame that the card is to be associated with. Through such consistent exercises, an advanced practitioner will be able to tell time with the tarot.

However, the more important question to ask is: Why does a practitioner need to tell time with tarot? While this section provides a path to learning how, it comes with the caveat that telling time isn't useful. Not only is it not useful, but it could even jeopardize a Seeker's success if time-telling becomes fortune-telling. The tarot should never interfere with a Seeker's karmic path, and thus if telling time would risk interfering, the practitioner is strongly advised not to.

Case Study: Raquel

Raquel is a bachelorette at the moment and anxious to find her one true love and get married. She has been actively seeking potential mates, but to no avail. Raquel consults the tarot for some insight on timing. Specifically, she wants to know when she is likely to meet her future husband. We will be using Raquel as a case study to demonstrate how timing might be read from the tarot.

Generally I am averse to accepting such inquiries as the one Raquel has presented. In her case, however, I made an exception because she is a dear friend of mine and I was certain that she would not rely on a tarot reading in any detrimental way. We all knew it would be for good fun. So I proceeded.

A single card, Key 8: Strength, was drawn. Strength corresponds with the element Fire, and so I proposed a suggestion of love born in the springtime to Raquel. Also, Key 8 corresponds with the astrological sign Leo. Again, since there is the Leo correspondence in Key 8, there could be an indication of a late-summer manifestation of love. The meaning of Key 8: Strength should also be provided to the Seeker. Here, I mentioned to Raquel that she'd attract the fellow with gentle yin energy as true strength, not our more common perception of strength, or yang. Her demeanor, as best expressed by the woman depicted on Key 8, is what will manifest romance.

Now for a few hypotheticals: Let's say that the King of Pentacles was drawn instead. Since Raquel is seeking a man for marriage, I might interpret the card as indicating a man coming into her life who is a Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn. I'd tell Raquel that the suit of Pentacles corresponds with the season of winter. Also, it corresponds with the waning moon, so she should look at a lunar calendar for the times when the moon is waning, as that may be significant in her spouse hunt.

What if instead of the King of Pentacles, the Page of Pentacles was drawn? Since Raquel is seeking a male for love, the Page court card here would take on a figurative meaning rather than literal. If, however, Raquel was seeking a female for love, then the Page here could be a literal indication. Taking the figurative meaning for Raquel, though, I might interpret the card as indicating that Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn will suggest corresponding months, rather than astrological signs. Also, the Page card symbolizes receipt of news, so I might offer the interpretation that news or communication about such a man may be received in winter, which she should be attentive to, as it will provide even further insight in helping her achieve her goal.

If, say, the Three of Swords was drawn in response to Raquel's timing inquiry, then I'd tell her that the suit of Swords corresponds with fall, and that perhaps in some way Gemini, Libra, or Aquarius would be significant. The full moon might also be significant, as that is the correspondent for the suit of Swords. Also, I would not neglect to mention the meaning of the Three of Swords. Raquel should tread carefully and do her due diligence on the fellow represented by this Three of Swords. I'd show her the card. Is an expert tarot reader really necessary for interpreting the Three of Swords?

If, however, the Three of Cups was drawn instead, I'd note all the timing correspondences for the suit of Cups and also mention the significance of the number three.

It may be early on in a summer month that the meeting takes place. Also, it may be at a social gathering of some sort, as that indication is hinted at in the Three of Cups. I might smile at Raquel and point out that there may be other women around as well, so she should be sure to look her best at any parties she attends this summer.

Let's say the Three of Wands was drawn. After noting that Wands corresponds with spring, and that Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, and the new moon, may be significant, I'd also tell Raquel that it may not be this year exactly, but the next. The Three of Wands denotes a period of waiting, so I'd question any timing indications that suggest otherwise. The depiction on the Three of Wands seems to indicate waiting for love to come and waiting longer than expected.

Now, if the Eight of Wands was drawn, that card suggests the opposite: it suggests the arrows of love rushing toward Raquel. If the Nine of Wands was drawn, I'd tell Raquel that if she wants to find love, she needs to let her guard down just a little. She is in a defensive fighting stance, trying too hard to protect her heart, and that's not exactly conducive for romance.

A best practice for reading tarot for Seekers interested in timing is to not give a specific time, but rather to offer the attributes of the card that has been drawn and suggest the significance of these attributes as applied to the Seeker's inquiry. Let the Seeker then reflect on those significances to arrive at his or her own understanding.

If from the outset a Seeker asks a question about timing, then the most expedient way for a practitioner to answer the question is by drawing one card only. If, however, a full multi-card reading was performed for the Seeker and then a follow-up question about timing is presented, then look to either the card in the spread that indicates the future or a future prospective event to read about timing. Alternatively, if the Seeker asks about timing in a follow-up question after a full reading has been given, the practitioner may opt to draw another card from the remaining deck to answer the timing question.

It is important to note that each practitioner will develop a unique bond with his or her tarot deck, and that correspondences will probably vary. Per my experience, the cards of the tarot have come to indicate the foregoing to me. That does not suggest that the cards will hold the same indications for every other practitioner. As a practitioner gains experience, the practitioner will come to develop his or her own set of timing indications. Finally, when attempting to tell time with tarot, I won't absolutely follow these correspondences. At all times, my gut and intuition trumps all. If a card's given correspondent doesn't *feel* right, I'll skip it and go with what does.

Chapter 15

Consideration of the Spread Landscape

READING TAROT SPREADS IS not a game of mix and match. The cards tell the Seeker a story, and the answer to the Seeker's question is embedded in that story. That is how the tarot works. What's more, it is a story with a clear message, perhaps a warning or note of caution to the Seeker, perhaps confirmation to the Seeker that he or she is on the right path, or counsel for what the Seeker should be focusing on at that given moment.

By itself, each card can potentially take on multiple meanings. For example, the Ace of Cups upright can indicate the beginning of prosperity in a Seeker's life that will bring emotional fulfillment. It can indicate abundance in love, joy, beauty, or health. It could also mean the birth of a creative, emotive, intuitive, possibly an indigo child. It could mean a new romantic relationship that will bring a lot of happiness to the Seeker. It could mean productivity in a pursuit of spiritual value to the Seeker.

So when the Ace of Cups appears in a spread, which one of those meanings is it? Hard to say, unless you know what the other cards are and where the Ace of Cups is positioned. The overall landscape of the spread must be considered. Is it the only ace? Are there many aces? Multiple aces indicate strength and power. Three aces indicate wealth. Four aces indicate exceptional greatness. So in spreads of five or more cards, after all the cards have been drawn, look at the overall picture presented. You may note a consistent theme, a recurrence of a particular suit or number, dominance of a particular color, or other features of note that should be mentioned to the Seeker.

Choosing Spreads

Make a good faith effort to try a variety of spreads. Then let your intuition guide you to decide which will work best for your readings.[1] Keep in mind that your first attempts with a new spread will not likely yield fluid results. You need to train yourself to use the new spread. Each card position in a spread has a meaning that you must understand. The card drawn and placed in that position not only has its own message, but its application to the Seeker is significantly affected by the card position, which is further affected by its relation to the other cards in the spread. All those variables change on a case by case basis, which is why the only way to truly be sensitive to the patterns and multidimensional interpretations is to practice, practice, and practice some more.

In a way, you are also training your unconscious by teaching yourself how to use a deck of cards to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious. Hence, one explanation for why the Celtic Cross spread is an ideal spread to start on is because it has acquired a strong unconscious energy about it as a result of frequent, universal use. The theory goes that the preexisting link between the tarot deck, the cosmic qi of the Celtic Cross spread (i.e., the frequency of use by masters throughout the ages), and your unconscious is already strong to begin with.

The Significance of the Major Arcana

There are two main interpretations when Major Arcana cards dominate a spread: The first is be cautious, dear Seeker, the decisions you make now will have a profound and permanent effect on your future. The second is that there are powerful natural or external forces at play and the Seeker may have little control over what *happens*, though there is always full control over how the problems are handled and the Seeker's own emotions in response.

If Major Arcana cards dominate in a spread, they could indicate that the matter at hand for the Seeker is of great significance in his or her life. The Seeker must think through each step and decision he or she takes carefully, as the actions taken in the present will have a substantial, even a profound, effect. Another interpretation when Major Arcana cards dominate is that powerful external forces are at play and that the actions taken by the Seeker may have little to no effect on the outcome.

These two different interpretations seem to contradict each other or may be confusing to the novice practitioner. However, note the wide spectrum of human conditions presented in the Major Arcana. Thus, which Major Arcana cards appear will determine which interpretation to use. Through experience and intermediate study, the practitioner will learn to accurately interpret the appearance of Major Arcana cards in a spread. Appendix B provides tables, astrological complements, and elemental associations that will help the practitioner interpret the Major Arcana.

The Significance of Court Cards

Review Chapter 12 until you've attained fluency with the court cards' interpretation. In general, a dominance of court cards indicates that strong personalities in the Seeker's life are of influence. If the Seeker is a man, two or more kings may indicate competition or confrontations; if a woman, the same indicates a conference or networking opportunity. Two or more queens when the Seeker is a man indicates a conference or networking opportunity; in a woman, it indicates competition or confrontations. Multiple knights may suggest interpersonal conflicts. Multiple Pages may suggest positive social gatherings.

No book of possible meanings and interpretations can ever replace intuition. Thus, while the discussion here is meant to be informative to the reader, if a meaning does not make sense as applied to a given spread, then let gut instinct and intuition trump this book.

Card Reversals

I surmise that the majority approach adopted by practitioners is to observe card reversals. Thus, a significant aspect of tarot study is to understand the dual nature of each card: how it communicates to the practitioner when it appears upright and what it says differently when it is in reverse. However, there is a thriving minority of practitioners who do not observe reversal distinctions. For such practitioners, each card has a set meaning, and so when the cards are drawn into a spread, they are always placed upright.

My personal preference is to read with reversals. Most traditional Rider-Waite-Smith decks will print reversible designs on the card backs, which are best for reading with reversals since the Seeker

(and the practitioner) cannot tell whether a card is upright or in reverse when that card is face-down. However, some contemporary decks, such as the Russian Tarot of St. Petersburg by Yury Shakov (U.S. Games Systems, 1992), have a highly stylized back that is nonreversible. Therefore, when using the Russian Tarot to read, I won't observe card reversals. Curiously, though, while the Thoth deck that I have (U.S. Games Systems, 2005) also has a non-reversible back, I'll observe card reversals when reading with the Thoth. I go with my intuition. Readers are encouraged to practice reading both ways for whichever tarot decks they choose. Each practitioner should determine for him- or herself whether reversed meanings should be observed.

If reversed meanings are observed, note that they are not necessarily the negation of the card's upright meaning. The card reversed could indicate that certain energies represented by that card are not yet fully developed in the Seeker. It could also indicate a delay. At times, a card reversed indicates that the influence of the card over the matter at hand is to a lesser degree or is waning. In certain instances, the card reversed suggests a very positive omen, especially if the card itself was negative.

In the beginning, I used a mnemonic to help me remember how to interpret card reversals. Just remember: WIND. "W" is for "weakened energy." "I" is for "inverted meaning." "N" is for "negative influence." "D" is for "delay." When a card appears in a spread in reverse, immediately think WIND and go through the four-step analysis of what the reversal could mean.

Mnemonic for remembering card reversals: WIND.

W Weakened energy of card meaning due to being overpowered by other forces.

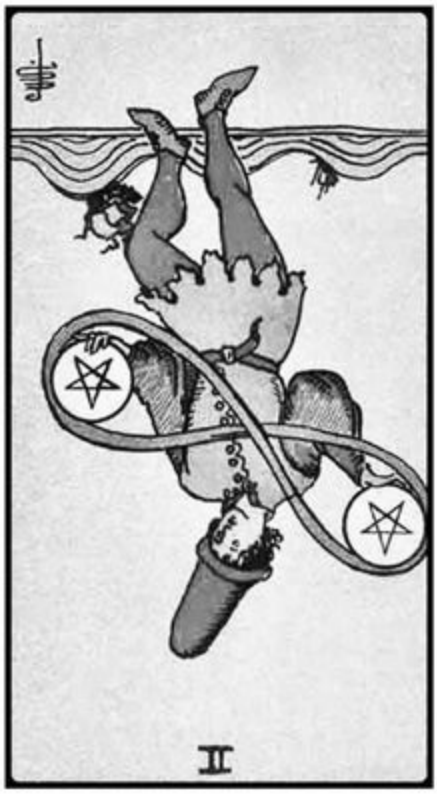
I Inverted meaning of card, i.e., the opposite of what the card would mean upright.

N Negative influence on Seeker (most notably in court cards; think N for nobility).

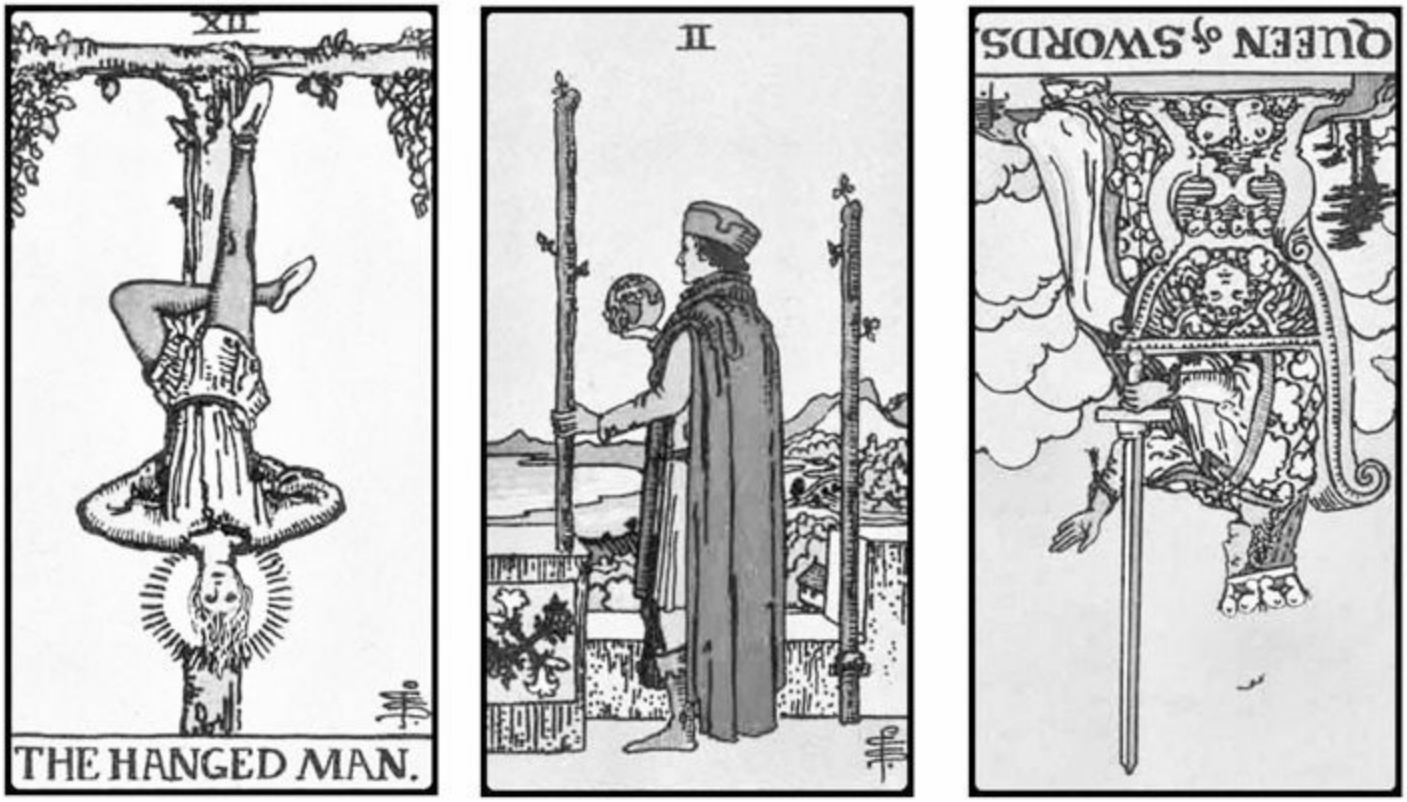
D Delay before outcome will materialize. Not all factors have fully matured yet.

Case Study: Bill Revisited

The same hypothetical given in Chapter 12 is presented here again to practice reading card reversals. Recall that Bill, a male Seeker, wanted to know whether his current creative project would enjoy financial success. You drew three cards for him: Two of Pentacles, reversed; Knight of Wands; and Three of Pentacles. Let's focus on the first card only, the Two of Pentacles, reversed.



Immediately think WIND. Weakened energy? Upright, the Two of Pentacles would suggest a great multitasker and Bill's success at juggling multiple projects at the same time. Could the card in reverse indicate that same multitasking capability, weakened? What about "I" for the inverted meaning? Perhaps, contrary to the card's meaning upright, Bill bit off much more than he could chew and part of the challenge obstructing success in his current creative project is all the white noise created by his other side projects on the burner. Or is the card suggesting a negative influence on Bill? Similar to the inverted meaning analysis, perhaps Bill's tendency to take on many tasks at once is having adverse effects on the progress of his current project, which could block success. "D" for "delay" typically applies when the card in the spread indicates a future probable outcome. Since the Two of Pentacles here is positioned as a past influence, it most likely does not indicate a delay. Thus, you the practitioner would return back to the first three prongs of analysis, W, I, and N. Now consider what Bill's question is. Apply it directly to the question. What could the Two of Pentacles in reverse be trying to tell you about Bill's specific question? Here is where logic takes a backseat and your intuitive abilities kick in. The analytical part of tarot is done. Now let your intuition lead you to the right answer.



Candace, a female Seeker, asked for a general reading. You drew the above three cards: Key 12: The Hanged Man; the Two of Wands; and the Queen of Swords, reversed. Again, here we'll focus only on the reversed card. Since the card is a court card, your mental analytical flowchart for court cards should be applied, too. Start by analyzing whether the court card here takes on a figurative or literal meaning. You will use a little bit of deductive reasoning, comparing the card to the Seeker, and you will use your intuition to guide you.

Since Candace is a female Seeker, there is a greater likelihood that the card takes on a figurative meaning, representing a facet of herself. However, that is certainly not always the case. It could take on a literal meaning, representing a mature woman embodying the traits of the Queen of Swords, who has a strong influence over Candace's future. That is where you let intuition guide you. Here, let's assume your intuition said that there is a figurative meaning and the card represents a facet of Candace's self. What are the Queen's character traits, positive and negative? Upright, the Queen of Swords is a woman who is highly intelligent, high-achieving, and striking. She is a matured woman who holds executive powers, is probably career-oriented, powerful, capable, and maybe childless.

Since the card appears in reverse, apply the analysis for card reversals: WIND. First, W for weakened influence. Perhaps the Seeker is all those qualities, only to a lesser degree. If that does not seem to fit intuitively, move on to the second prong of analysis, I for inverted meaning. The inverted meaning of the Queen of Swords suggests snobbery and elitism, possibly a small or merciless heart. She may still be highly intelligent, high-achieving, and striking, but the negative attributes of those traits are dominant. This reading of the card seems plausible, but to be comprehensive, continue the analysis. N is for negative

influence. If you had sensed that the Queen of Swords represented a literal person in Seeker's life, then in reverse it would most likely suggest a negative influence. Here, you had already determined a figurative interpretation, therefore the Queen represents a facet of the Seeker's self. The final prong of the analysis is D, for delay. Perhaps the Seeker has not yet matured to being a Queen yet, but she's getting there. The Queen of Swords reversed suggests a delay, but inevitable embodiment of the Queen's traits someday.

If the signifier card for the Seeker was a Page, then that further reinforces the D for delay interpretation. If the card reversal appears in a future position in the spread, that is further validation. In the present case, Candace was an actual young female and the Page of Wands was selected for her signifier card. What's more, the Queen of Swords reversed appears in the future or most probable outcome position of the spread. Thus, the likely interpretation of the Queen of Swords for Candace is a suggestion of who she is to become. In light of a less than pristine past, indicated by The Hanged Man, and her ambitions and aspirations, expressed by the Two of Wands at the present, it is very probable that Candace could harden over the years and embody both the positive and negative traits of the Queen of Swords: accomplished and incredible, yet somewhat spiteful, defensive, and deep down, lonely.

As a tarot student advances in his or her studies, the WIND mnemonic for card reversals will no longer be needed, and instead the symbology of each card will express the card's particularized meaning to the practitioner. This book provides my interpretations of each card's reversal. However, the reader is encouraged to read multiple references and eventually develop his or her own approach.[2]

The Significance of Numbers

Is there a particular number or numbers that repeats across the spread or seems to leap out at you and call your attention? Numbers are significant. Lower numbers, between aces and fours, indicate that the Seeker's matter is in its early stages of development. Higher numbers, between sixes and tens, indicate that the matter has progressed for quite some time in the Seeker's life, but certain issues or concerns are cropping up, demanding the Seeker's diligence. A prevalence of fives indicates uncertainty, possible unexpected changes, and other shifts to come.

	3 in a spread	*4 in a spread*
ACES	Wealth; Success	Exceptional Greatness
TWOS	Cliques; Segregationn	Conference; Dialogue
THREES	Warning of Deceit	Definite Plan Implemented
FOURS	Abundance; Industry	Order; Peace
FIVES	Competition	Unusual Power
SIXES	Success; Balance	Pleasure; Full Control
SEVENS	Alliances	Disappointment
EIGHTS	Short Journey	Gossip; Rumors
NINES	Delays; Debates	New Responsibilities
TENS	Good Time to Buy/Sell	Overburdened; Exhausted
PAGES	Youth Support	New Ideas
KNIGHTS	Unexpected News/Events	Fast Change Is Coming
QUEENS	Strong Allies	Female Influence
KINGS	High Honor	Important Meeting

In general, note the following:[3]

Aces: Beginnings. Creation. Power. Essence. A repeating pattern of ones or aces in a reading could indicate the need for success in competition for the Seeker to feel fulfilled. Thus, the Seeker's objective is victory.

Twos: Balance. Relationships. Cooperation. Duality. Choice. Yin and yang. Existence. Experience. A repeating pattern of twos in a reading could indicate an overriding need for love and harmony. Thus, the Seeker's objective is to find balance.

Threes: Trinity. Procreation. Fruition. Expansion. Results will come into being. Amplification of current state. New additions. A repeating pattern of threes in a reading could indicate that Seeker's primary objective at the moment is for a creative endeavor or project to yield fruition.

Fours: Reality. Realization. Logic. Rationality. The universe. Stability. Boundaries. Order. The material world; the physical body. A repeating pattern of fours in a reading could indicate that the Seeker is after financial or professional security.

Fives: Shifts. Crisis and transformation. Uncertainty. Changes expected. Adversity. Much activity; events in motion. Strong force majeure at play. Matters of health and wellness. A

repeating pattern of fives in a reading could indicate a Seeker with a strong, compelling need to feel in control. The Seeker's objective is a sense of control, though Seeker's present is one that is in transition, filled with uncertainty.

Sixes: Spiritual balance. Expression. Emotion. Harmony. Enlightenment. Compassion. A repeating pattern of sixes in a reading could indicate a Seeker with a strong desire for acknowledgment, and that the undercurrent motivating the various factors of the Seeker's situation is simply the feeling of being needed and appreciated. The Seeker just wants to be appreciated.

Sevens: Developmental stage. Wisdom. Spirituality. Great importance. A power number of sages. A repeating pattern of sevens in a reading suggests a theme of spirituality, of acquiring wisdom and knowledge. Thus, the Seeker's objective is understanding.

Eights: Justice. Judgment. Business and wealth. Success. Abundance, harvest. Manifestation. Fortuity. A repeating pattern of eights in a reading suggests a Seeker who is motivated primarily by material achievement. The Seeker's objective is material abundance or to be in a position of authority and power.

Nines: Change will be for the better. Idealism. Optimism. Positive change is coming. Longevity. A repeating pattern of nines in a reading reveals an idealistic Seeker, someone who truly wants to contribute to humanity. The Seeker's objective is to make a difference, to have an impact.

Tens: Pinnacle. Depths. Success. Great bliss. Or great tribulation. A repeating pattern of tens in a reading suggests that climax is coming. The Seeker's objective has been control and the correspondences of the number five apply here as well, though here, with the number ten, those uncertainties, shifts, and the desire for control will soon reach a final conclusion.

Appendix F provides additional tables on numerological associations in the tarot.

The Significance of Suits

Look at the frequency that each suit appears in the spread. A majority of Wands indicates that the Seeker should focus on his or her work, career, and motivations. A majority of Cups indicates a need to focus on emotions and relationships. Swords indicate the intellectual realm, but also warn of destruction or loss. Pentacles indicate material matters and finances.

In general, note the following:

Wands: Motivations. Growth. Energy. Entrepreneurship. Career or work. The element of Fire is pertinent. Reflect on the symbolic representations of the lion in the matter at hand.

Cups: Sensitivity. Emotions. Love. Sentimentality. Interpersonal relationships. The element of Water is pertinent. Reflect on the symbolic representations of the Water Bearer in the matter at hand. A modern interpretation also associates the Cups with fish or the dolphin. Emotions are intensified in the Seeker's situation.

Swords: Intellectualism. Ambition. Destructive forces. Aggression. Ferocity. Loss. Disappointment. The element of Air is pertinent. Reflect on the symbolic representations of the eagle in the matter at hand. There may be trouble and losses ahead.

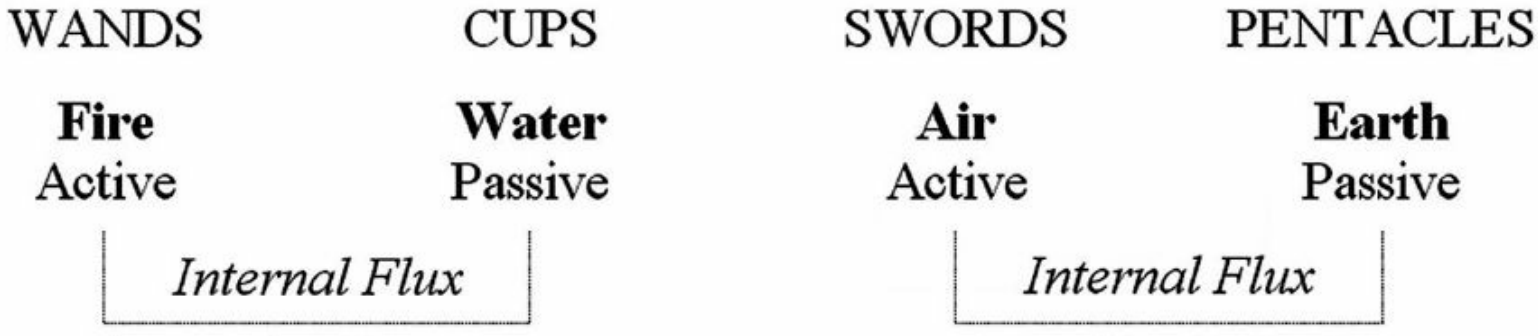
Pentacles: Material matters. Finances. Wealth. Business. Money. Material gains. Material pleasures. Hard work and industriousness. The element of Earth is pertinent. Reflect on the symbolic representations of the bull in the matter at hand. The Seeker's focus right now is on business, wealth, or material matters.

FIRE	WATER	AIR	EARTH
When a spread is Fire dominant:	*When a spread is Water dominant:*	*When a spread is Air dominant*	*When a spread is Earth dominant*
Highly motivated Strong vitality Strong enthusiasm Adventurous Dynamic energy	Spiritual energy Emotional energy Compassion Intuitive; empathic Genuine; heartfelt	Objective, analytical Knowledge-oriented Rational mind Strong abilities for communication	Practical, pragmatic Hands-on Reliable, stable Stubborn Conservative
When a spread is Fire weak:	*When a spread is Water weak:*	*When a spread is Air weak:*	*When a spread is Air weak:*
Unmotivated Lack confidence Lack enthusiasm Lack drive and focus Lack leadership	Emotional imbalance Dispassionate Detached Inability to express personal feelings	Lack objectivity Indecisive Irrational Lack of knowledge Inexpressive	Lack foundation Difficulty with concentration Lack common sense Lack security

Also, Fire and Air, or the Wands suit and the Swords suit, are active. They may indicate an extroverted Seeker or a Seeker of strong willpower, determination, and action. Wands and Swords dominating together in a spread indicate a Seeker who displays masculine qualities and who is open, active, and assertive. The key to resolving the Seeker's issues is in the intellectual, physical, and practical planes of the Seeker's consciousness.

Water and Earth, or the Cups suit and the Pentacles suit, are passive. They may indicate an introverted or introspective Seeker, one who needs "a push" before he or she acts. Cups and Pentacles dominating together in a spread indicate a Seeker who displays feminine qualities and who is concealing thoughts, being passive and yielding. The key to resolving the Seeker's issues is in the emotional and spiritual planes of the Seeker's consciousness.

The prevalence of a particular element in a spread will suggest the personality traits of significant influence over the Seeker's situation.



Equal or competitive dominance of both Wands and Cups in one spread may indicate flux within the Seeker. Equal or competitive dominance of both Swords and Pentacles in a spread also could indicate flux. The practitioner should note that such flux is influencing the Seeker's situation. How that flux manifests itself in the Seeker's situation will depend on what the other cards in the spread are. Prevalence of Major Arcana cards could suggest volatile natural forces at play. Prevalence of

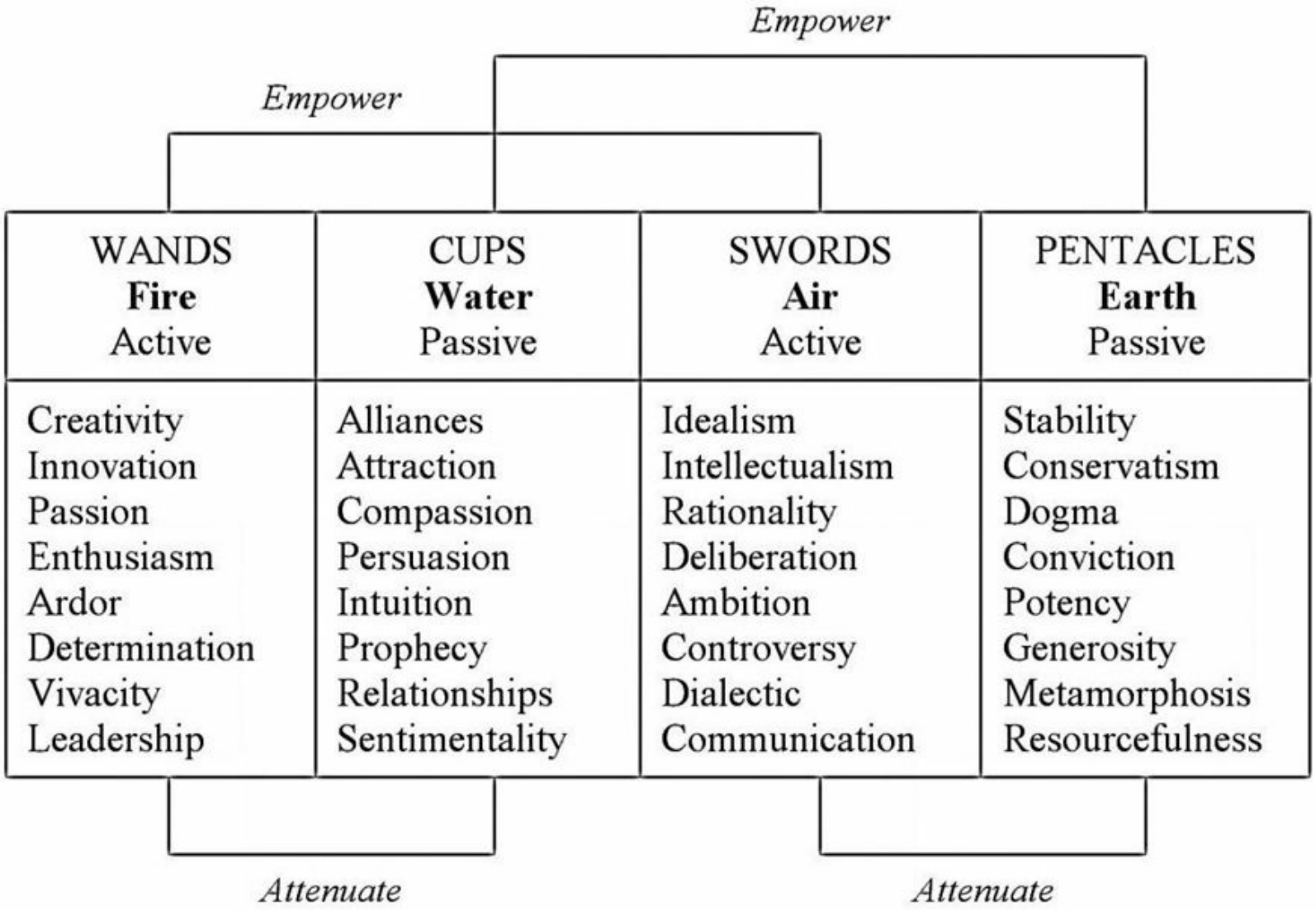
court cards could suggest that the flux is attributable to the people in the Seeker's life.

Elemental Dignities

Elemental dignities are the series of complementary, conflicting, and relational energies between the four classical elements[4] that make up the physical, spiritual, and emotional planes of our existence. "Dignity" as used in this context is defined as external manifestation of the card's innate properties. It is the state of being activated with the full potential of its essence. An "elemental dignity" describes that state with more specificity—it is the external manifestation of a tarot card's innate elemental essence, given that each card is governed innately by one of the four elements, Fire, Water, Air, or Earth, and thus has the potential of fully embodying the traits associated with that element. (Note, however, that the card's energies would further be modified by the numerological correspondence and other factors.)

To deepen an understanding of a spread, look to the elemental dignities at play. Dominance of a particular suit could suggest what element is most relevant to the matter at hand. Applying elemental dignities analysis to a tarot reading helps identify the precise points of imbalances in a Seeker's life or situation. The various energies and traits of a person (or even a situation) per Western theosophy can be categorized as Fire, Water, Air, or Earth, in essence. For harmony in one's life, there should be a balance of the four elements within. When two elements seem to vie for dominance and those elements are also in opposition, there will be flux, uncertainties, a sense of instability and insecurity. When active elements dominate, there may be a lack of peace, and instead, too much competition, battling, conflict, and strife. When passive elements dominate, there may be little progress, a feeling of overwhelm, of being controlled rather than in control. As noted in the previous section, the four elements are associated with the four suits of the Minor Arcana. Their relations with one another are the elemental dignities of a spread. Interpreting a tarot reading by the card meanings helps the Seeker understand what is going on; interpreting elemental dignities enhances that understanding by explaining why.

For example, if the majority of cards in a spread are from the suit of Wands, then the Seeker should pay attention to the energies corresponding with the element of Fire. Forces such as creativity, innovation, passion, determination, vivacity, and leadership will be imperative for the Seeker to harness to get over his or her obstacles. Through the ordinary course of a tarot reading, the Seeker can get a sense of what is going on in the matter at hand, but by adding elemental dignities analysis, the practitioner can also convey why the Seeker is being presented with these obstacles.



When only single cards are drawn for a reading, pay closer attention to whether the card is upright or in reverse. An upright card may suggest that the card's corresponding element is strong in or around the Seeker. A reversed card may suggest that the corresponding element is important to the Seeker's answer, but that the Seeker is not adequately harnessing those powers at the moment. Thus, the reversal will indicate that the Seeker should command those energies better.

If a card from the suit of Wands is said to be dignified, it means it is fully charged and activated with the energies of its corresponding element, the element of Fire. A dignified Ace of Wands is the Ace of Wands appearing upright in a tarot spread during a reading (as opposed to its nonactivated state in the deck, not in use). When the Ace of Wands appears upright in a tarot reading, it is charged and activated with all the corresponding energies and traits we associate with the Ace of Wands. Thus, it is dignified.

If, say, that Ace of Wands appears in reverse in a tarot spread during a reading (assuming reversals are read), then the reversal itself has changed the energies of that card in some way. The energy of the reversal is interacting in a particular way with the general energy of the Ace of Wands. That reversal is said to (1) weaken the essential state of the Ace of Wands, (2) invert the essential state, (3) negate the essential state, or (4) delay the manifestation of the essential state (the WIND mnemonic from Chapter 15). Which of the four possibilities applies will of course depend on the reading itself, on a case-by-case basis. As a result of that adjustment, the card is now said to be ill-dignified.

The classic theory of elemental dignities taught to tarot practitioners is as follows: The

corresponding energies of Fire tend to be attenuated by the energies of Water, in which case a practitioner might note that the dignities of Fire and Water here are weakened. The corresponding energies of Air tend to be attenuated by the energies of Earth. Fire and Air are empowered by each other, however, as are Water and Earth. When Fire and Air appear in equal dominance in a reading, a practitioner might note that the dignities of Fire and Air are strengthened.

Weakening Elemental Energies

Wands (Fire) and Cups (Water) conflict and weaken each other. If both suits seem to compete for dominance in a spread, then there is flux between the energies corresponding with the two suits. The Seeker is urged to proceed with caution, as there is negativity surrounding the matter at hand.

Likewise, Swords (Air) and Pentacles (Earth) conflict and weaken each other. When these two suits vie for dominance, the meanings of the Sword cards will be in flux with the meanings of the Pentacles. Likewise, the flux indicates the presence of negativity.

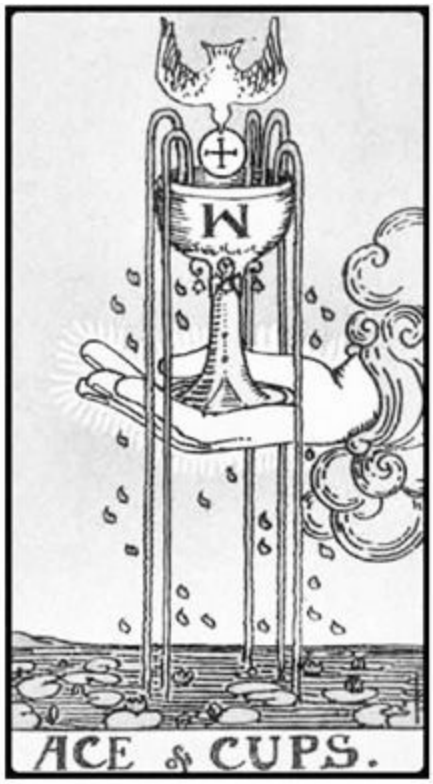
Strengthening Elemental Energies

However, when Wands (Fire) and Swords (Air) are equally dominant in a spread, they intensify and help support each other. These energies have a strengthening effect. They also suggest an aggressive, confident Seeker. Cups (Water) and Pentacles (Earth) also intensify and support each other, though they suggest passivity in the Seeker. Equal dominance of Wands and Pentacles has a neutralizing effect. Equal dominance of Swords and Cups also has a neutralizing effect. The primary points to look out for in considering elemental dignities are the cards representing elements in flux (Fire vs. Water, Air vs. Earth).

Case Study: Cassidy

Perhaps the most direct way to learn and understand elemental dignities is through two-card readings. A Seeker, Cassidy, a woman in her early thirties, feels like her career has hit a plateau. She hasn't been able to figure out how to move on and advance to the next level of her life ambitions.

Cassidy consults the tarot for a two-card reading and the following two cards are drawn: the Five of Swords in reverse and the Ace of Cups. For the purpose of understanding elemental dignities, only the cards' corresponding elements will be analyzed here.



The Five of Swords in the above reading corresponds to Air. Note that it is also in reverse, suggesting a weakened or dormant state. The Ace of Cups appears to be the stronger card in the pair and corresponds to Water.

Air and Water have a neutralizing effect on each other. There is neither a strengthening nor a weakening effect. What the two cards together show is impotence, or an ineffectual use of the corresponding energies.

The Air reversal may suggest that over the years Cassidy has not adequately developed her ambitions or her communication skills, or exercised her intellectualism in an effective manner for her career. The Water tells her that she needs to look to her social and professional network for relations that can help her secure more stimulating work. That work is likely to be more creative and innovative in nature. The power of persuasion is what Cassidy needs in order to move beyond the current plateau, but that power is neutralized right now by her past as indicated by Air.

Case Study: Josephine

Josephine has just entered into a new romantic relationship and she wants to know what to expect. Again, for the purpose of understanding elemental dignities, only the corresponding elements of the cards will be examined. The cards drawn are the Page of Cups and the Five of Pentacles, or Water and Earth respectively. Water and Earth intensify each other, though they are both passive energies.

Applied to Josephine's inquiry, the attraction between the two individuals will endure for a significant amount of time, as suggested by the Water element, for attraction, coupled with the Earth element, for stability. The consistent passive energy of both cards suggests that the relationship is not going to be one of those crazy, passionate loves with extreme ups and downs. It is a quiet, gentle, but sweet romance. The Page of Cups also indicates the artistic, spiritual strength of this relationship.

Note, however, that the Five of Pentacles suggests that both Josephine and her new love should be encouraged to pay attention to their health, lifestyle, and spending habits to preserve financial stability. There may be trouble ahead, so they should do what they can now to prepare for a coming figurative winter that the two will need to navigate together.

Major Arcana cards also have elemental correspondences, as follows:

FIRE	WATER	AIR	EARTH
The Emperor	The High Priestess	The Fool	The Magician
Strength	The Chariot	The Lovers	The Empress
Wheel of Fortune	The Hanged Man	Justice	The Hierophant
Temperance	Death	The Star	The Hermit
The Tower	The Moon		The Devil
The Sun	Judgement*		The World

Note: As indicated earlier in the book, Judgement's solar attribution to Pluto has led to two differing elemental attributions for the card. One school of practitioners attribute Pluto with Vulcan, the Roman god of fire, and therefore Key 20: Judgement is associated with Fire. However, another school looks to the astrological association of Pluto as the ruling planet for Scorpio, a water sign, and therefore Key 20: Judgement, to this second school, is associated with Water. When I look at Key 20: Judgement in the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, the intuitive association of the card for me is to Water. Thus, it is my personal approach to associate Judgement with Water, but every practitioner is encouraged to understand both schools and arrive at his or her own practical adoption. Note also that I associate The Magician with Earth, which is a minority view, compared to the majority view of associating the card with Air.

Case Study: Timothy

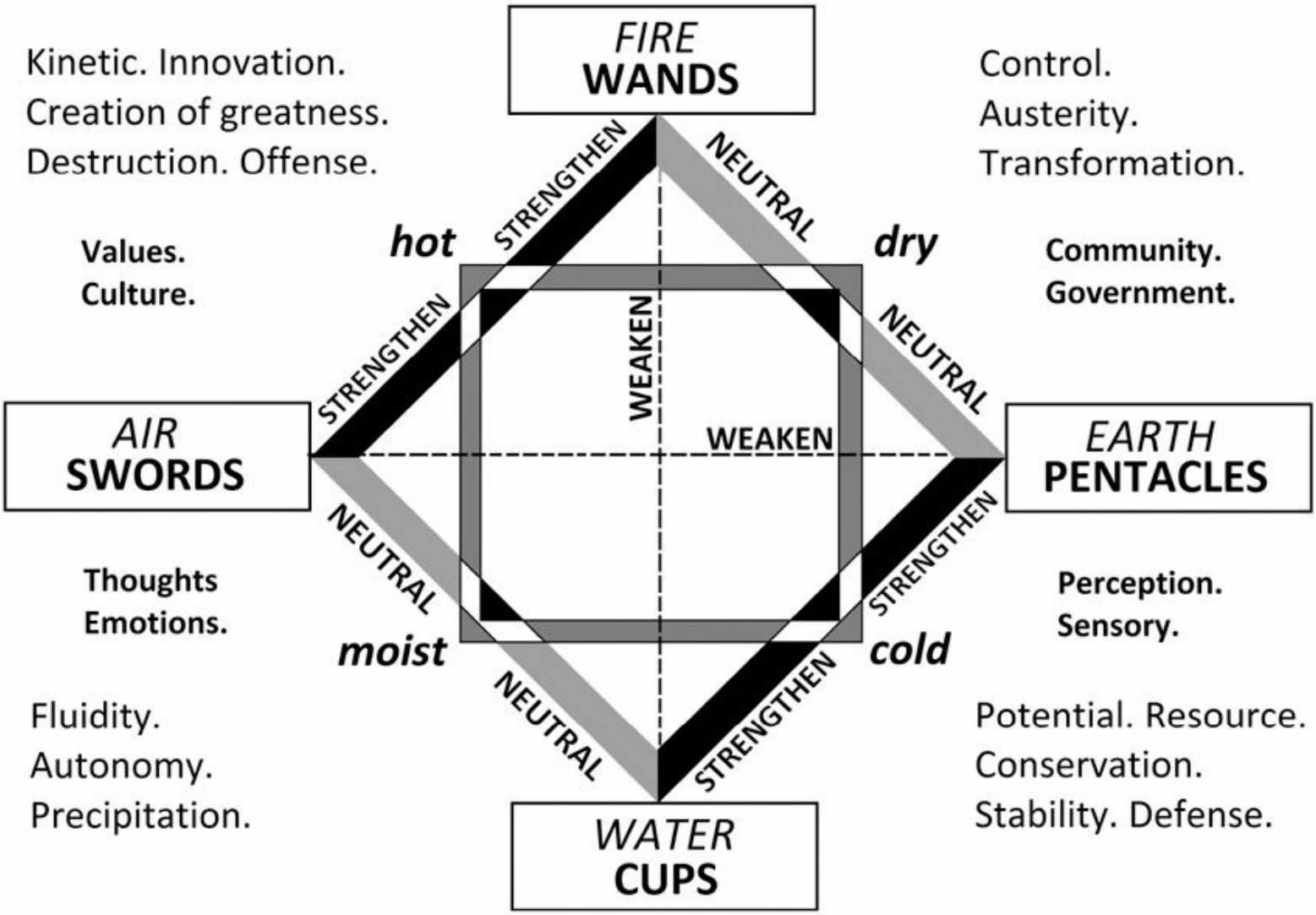
In the next two-card reading example, Timothy consults the tarot to help him with his considerations in a start-up business he wants to launch. The two cards drawn are Key 19: The Sun and the Seven of Cups. The cards correspond with Fire and Water respectively. These two elements conflict and weaken each other.

Timothy's new venture looks highly promising, as indicated by The Sun. Its corresponding element of Fire also confirms innovation, enthusiasm, determination for success, and strong leadership. These energies are further reinforced by the appearance of a Major Arcana card, The Sun. However, the energies in the Seven of Cups threaten to weaken Timothy's potential success. Notwithstanding the card meaning of the Seven of Cups, the suit of Cups here indicates Water, which could suggest that some of Timothy's relationships, current allies, or people he perceives as partners could endanger the success of his start-up. Coupled with the meaning of the Seven of Cups, i.e., materialism and temptations, this indicates that Timothy should stay cautious and not be too trusting of those who seem to be his allies right now.

In Timothy's case, an actual reading I performed, his start-up company did become highly successful. He and a partner, a college friend of his, had launched the company together, though Timothy did most of the work. His friend just happened to be a more charismatic and influential individual, who helped with marketing, branding, and public relations for Timothy's company. Timothy thought he could trust his friend, since the two had known each other since their school days. However, that friend ended up selling Timothy's trade secrets to a competitor company. After that happened, Timothy came back to me and said he should have paid greater heed to the reading. He hadn't taken the tarot reading seriously enough and, with hindsight, now saw that if he had been more careful and

less naive, he could have prevented the leak of his trade secrets.

In a reading, always consider the elemental dignities. They are instrumental in helping us parse through the seemingly chaotic combination of energies that make up a given situation. Elemental dignities help to deconstruct a situation into its foundational building blocks and reorganize it in your mind into complements and conflicts. Doing so helps to identify exactly which category of traits will be most helpful to us in solving our problems and which traits present the greatest obstacles. It also helps the practitioner to understand the underlying philosophical principles in tarot.



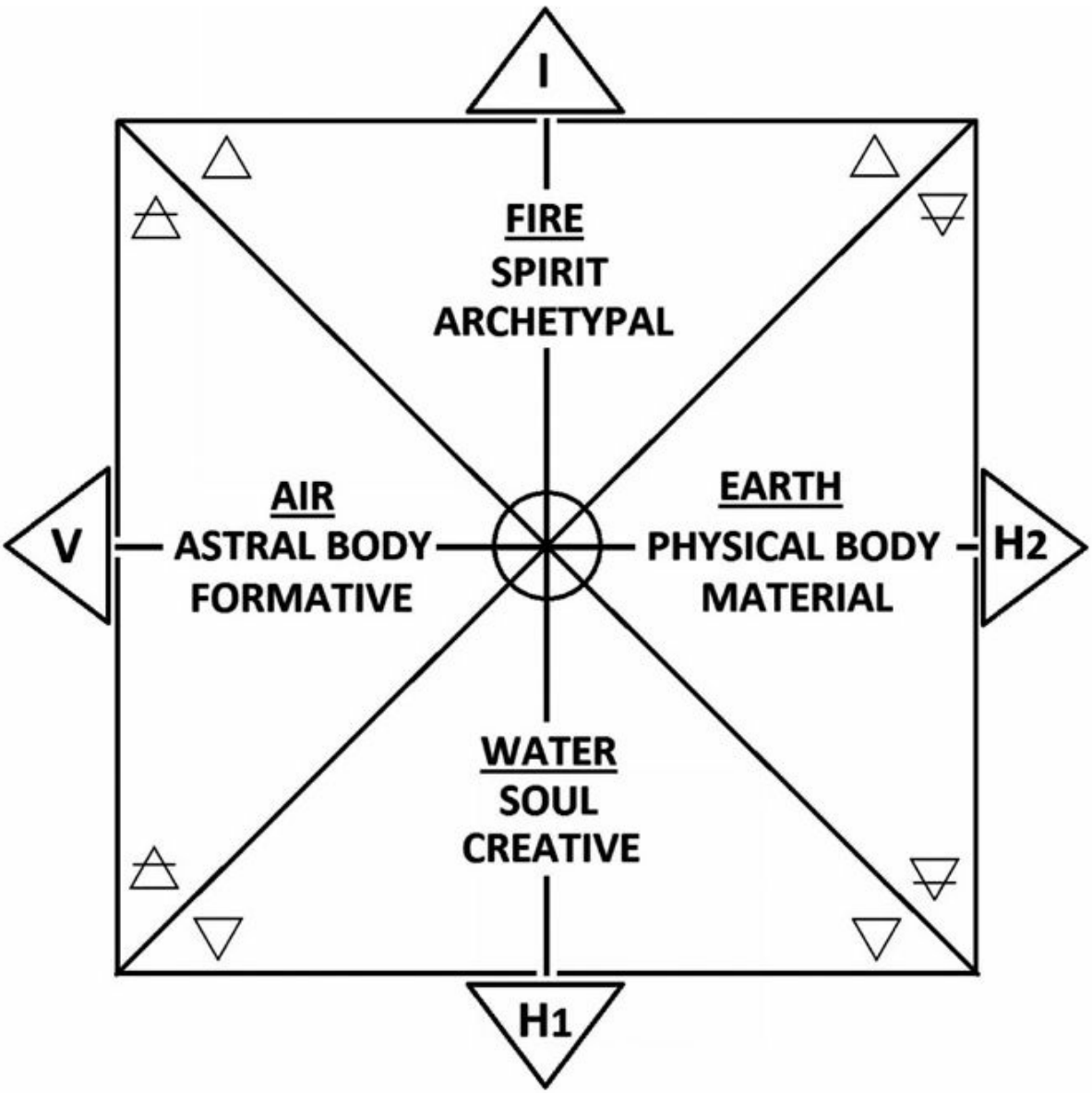
Not only does each Minor Arcana suit and corresponding element possess its independent qualities, but combinations also yield particular qualities that make up the foundation of human life, physical and metaphysical. Air plus Water (or Swords plus Cups) puts the Seeker in a neutral, pensive state of thought and emotion. Fire (Wands) plus Earth (Pentacles) positions a Seeker for community action or government involvement.

Also, the preceding diagram offers some general insights on the energies that manifest when two elements combine. When Swords and Cups meet in co-dominance, for example, the Seeker may be a free-thinking, free-spirited, progressive individual, likely a poet, writer, or philosopher. When Wands and Pentacles meet, there is thriving activity in the community, and/or government/institutional work.

In addition to understanding elemental dignities through an Aristotelian framework, Paul Foster

Case provides metaphysical attributions to the four elements. Golden Dawn–based theosophy holds that every human being has both a physical body and an astral body. The physical body is the body we can see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. The astral body is believed to be the metaphysical body that contains the unconscious. The soul is where karma is accounted for, where the good and the evil of a person are accumulated. Spirit is what enables human beings to be conscious. It is the vitality that animates us.

Case attributed these four principles of existence to the four elements. A diagram adapted from both Case's and Papus's approach[5] is as follows:

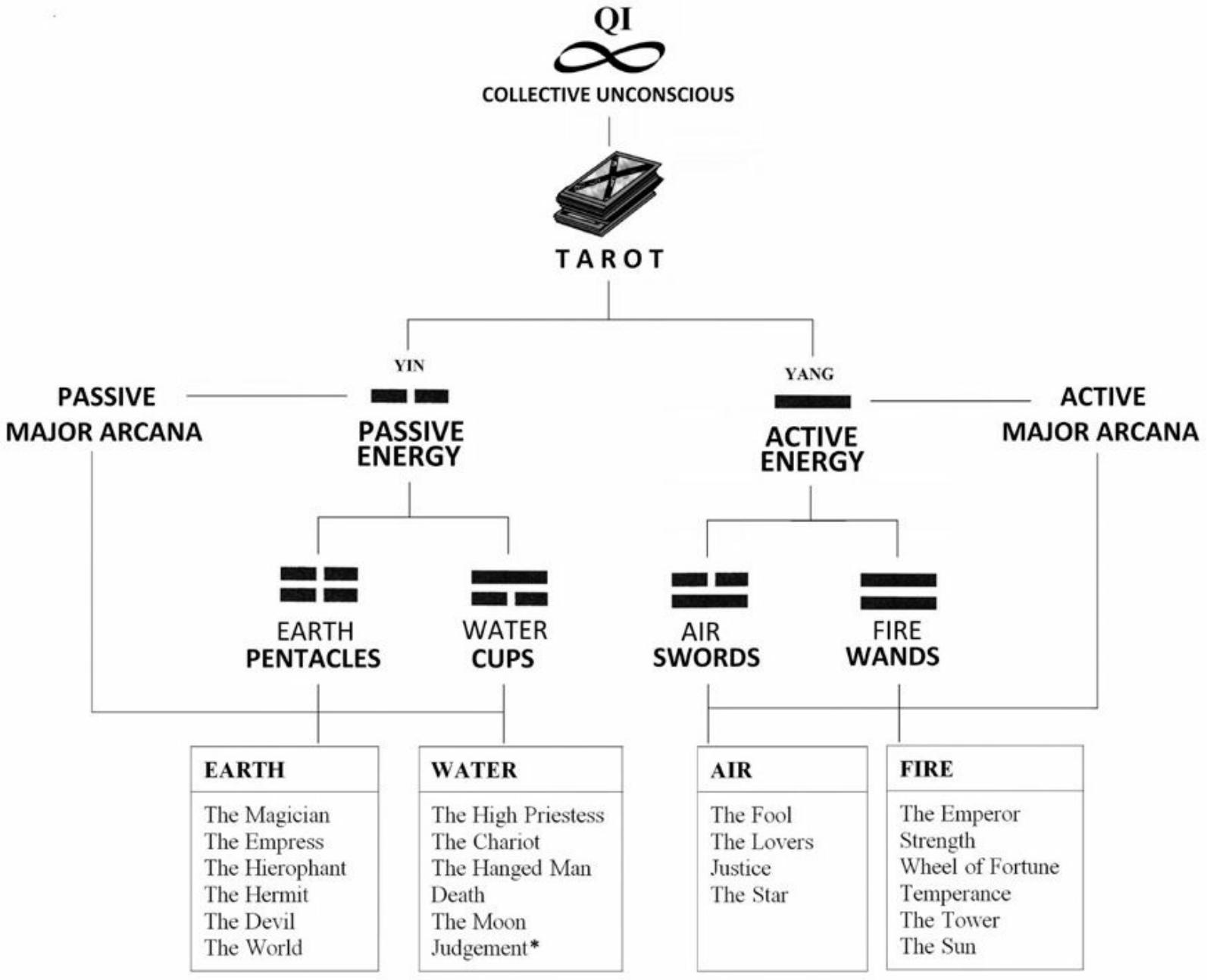


In practical tarot application, it is not likely that a practitioner will utilize Case's or Papus's metaphysical attributions to the four elements in any significant way. The Aristotelian framework is not only more practical, but more readily understood. Understanding the theoretical origins, however, helps a practitioner to build a stronger foundation in tarot studies.

Analyzing elemental dignities in a tarot reading means that the practitioner will compare the elemental essences of two juxtaposed cards in a spread to determine whether, together, the cards provide a dignified or ill-dignified energy. Dignified energy means the two cards, due to their interaction, strengthen each other's essences. Ill-dignified energy means the two cards, due to their interaction, weaken each other's essences or modify the way that essence manifests in that particular

Seeker's situation.

Novice practitioners often overlook elemental dignities in the interpretive method they apply to tarot. Elemental dignities are part of tarot theory. It is the metaphysical chemistry of tarot. Dignities help the serious tarot student to understand how tarot works, to examine the language and the notations of tarot symbology. They are also the most intuitive way for a practitioner to identify patterns in a tarot reading. To understand elemental dignities is to understand the underlying philosophical principle of tarot: tarot is the complete symbolic representation of the universe, the collective unconscious, the cosmic qi, the god principle, or the Akashic records, whichever terminology is preferred pursuant to one's subscribed theosophical beliefs. These symbolic representations of the universe cover the metaphysical ebb and flow of the fundamental energies that form life, life as it exists in the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual manifestations. The tarot cards use archetypes and allegory to express the microscopic context of a Seeker's situation and bridge the Seeker to the collective unconscious, to understand the macroscopic context of Seeker to world.

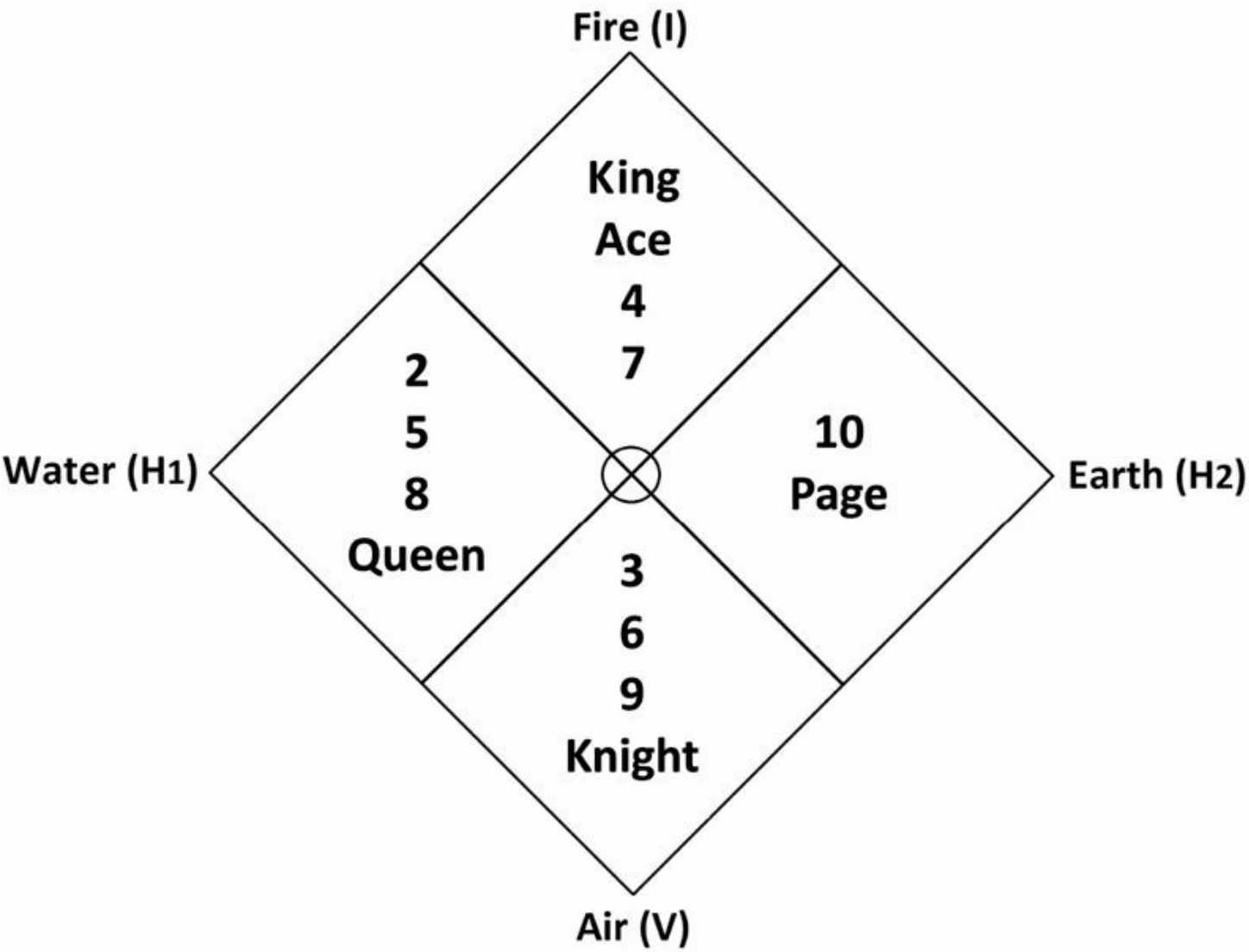


*** The Golden Dawn approach is to attribute Key XX with Fire. The astrological approach is to attribute Key XX with Water.**

All matter is interconnected, which is why we experience causation and synchronicity, and understanding how one element relates to another is crucial for understanding how one event or aspect of a Seeker's life relates to another seemingly disparate event or aspect of life. To help a Seeker understand what those energies mean when a spread is drawn, the practitioner must understand the building blocks of tarot, i.e. the building blocks of the universe. Now, how one deconstructs those building blocks, and how those building blocks correspond, are not yet provably known, which is why there are still many differing schools of theoretical esoteric thought. Appendix B provides further reference material for understanding elemental dignities in tarot.

Elemental Affinities in the Minor Arcana

While the four suits of the Minor Arcana correspond to the elements of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth respectively, the cards within the Minor Arcana, i.e., the pips and courts, also possess an elemental affinity.[6] The elemental *dignity*, or classical element attributed to each suit, was discussed in the previous section. The elemental *affinity* is what a particular card within the suit in the Minor Arcana relates to. It denotes a card's behavioral tendencies and inclinations when appearing in a spread.



By way of example, the elemental dignity of the King of Wands is Fire, because the suit of Wands is attributed to Fire, and the card's elemental affinity would also be Fire, because kings are attributed to Fire. On the other hand, the elemental dignity of the King of Cups would be Water, because the suit

of Cups is attributed to Water, but its elemental *affinity* would be Fire, like the King of Wands. All kings possess an elemental *affinity* of Fire. The elemental dignity for the Queen of Swords would be Air, but the card's elemental affinity would be Water, because the queens in tarot all contain Water in their essence, the way all kings contain Fire.

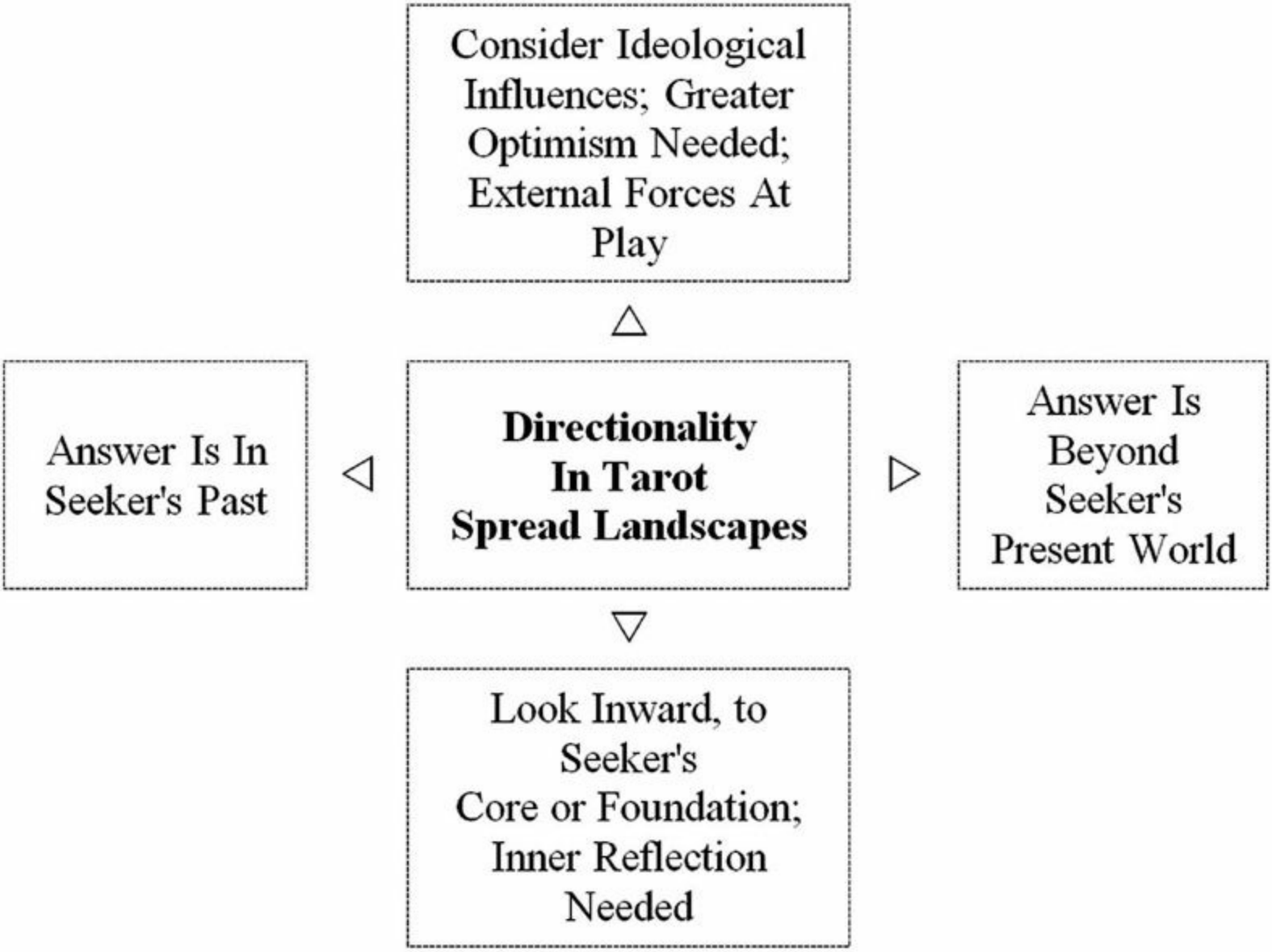
The elemental dignity governs a card's bearing. It indicates the energetic essence of the card. An elemental dignity of Fire will denote an active essence, one of passion, innovation, and creativity. The elemental affinity goes one step beyond the elemental dignity and characterizes the development of a card into a distinct likeness. Thus, it indicates how a card will behave within its elemental dignity. An elemental affinity of Fire within an elemental dignity of Fire suggests formidable determination and resolve. An elemental affinity of Fire within an elemental dignity of Water (such as an Ace of Cups) suggests passion, vivacity, and active development in the area of life governed by Water, i.e., interpersonal relationships. Understanding elemental affinities will offer the intermediate to advanced practitioner insight into how certain cards will behave.

Appendix B and the tables in B11 will provide further reference and detail to interpreting elemental affinities.

Directionality

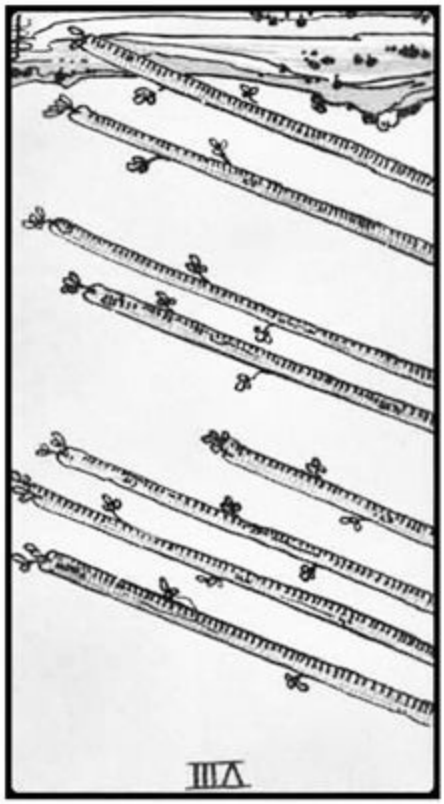
Any striking patterns in directionality observed in a tarot spread should be considered. As you practice multiple-card spreads, you will start to notice that in some spreads the majority or even all of the cards seem to be pointing in a particular direction: either the tips of the wands and swords push in one direction or the faces of people depicted in the cards are looking the same way, away from each other as if they were back to back; or they are facing each other, either in cooperation or in a confrontational manner.

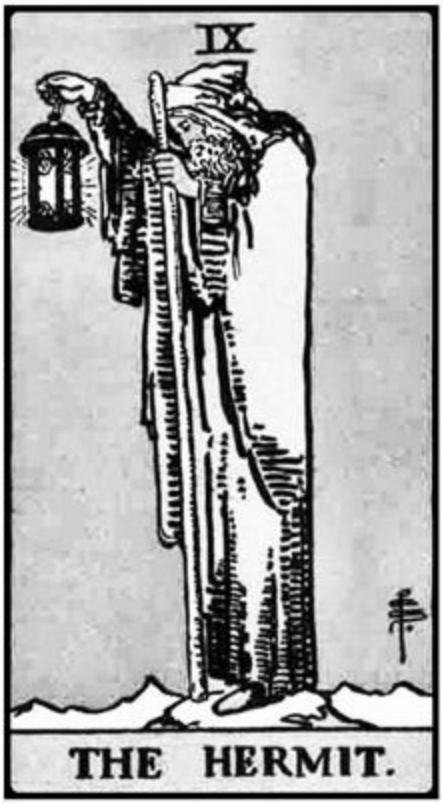
The following diagram sets forth the indications when one direction dominates in a spread:


Consider Ideological Influences; Greater Optimism Needed; External Forces At Play
Answer Is In Seeker's Past
Directionality In Tarot Spread Landscapes
Answer Is Beyond Seeker's Present World
Look Inward, to Seeker's Core or Foundation; Inner Reflection Needed

Case Study: Felicity

The following three-card spread is from a larger multi-card reading and provides a good example of how to apply directionality analysis.

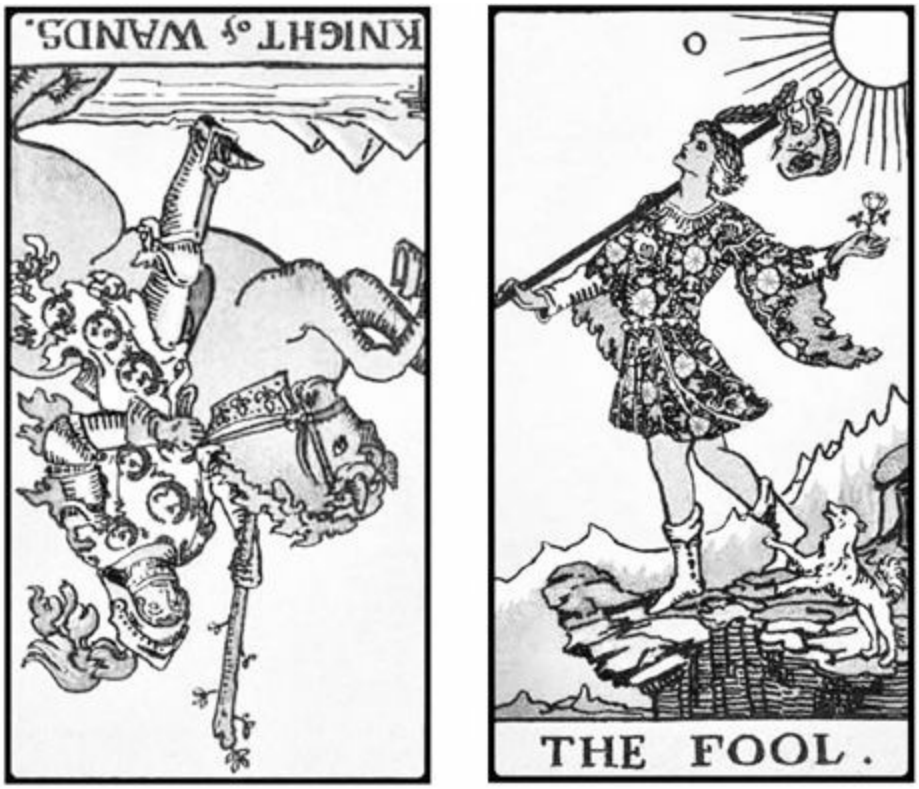




The Eight of Wands was drawn in reverse, then The Hermit, and then the Knight of Swords. As illustrated above, the upper tips of the wands, the Hermit's lantern, and the charging Knight all seem to point left and upward. That suggests two important points. First, the Seeker, which in this case is Felicity, will find the answer to her problem in what has already come to pass. Those in her life already, or the assets she has developed and possesses, are all she needs for the resolution. All tools for success are available to her already. Second, her ideologies will come into play in the situation at hand. Politics, faith, a fairly authoritative or influential institution that she is affiliated with, or even social class will relate unequivocally to the matter.

Those points are then tied to the main reading and how those meanings apply to Felicity's specific question. Note further that in this particular case, the Knight of Swords took on a literal meaning, representing an Air sign. The Knight was her current boyfriend, a fellow she had been with for several years. Shortly after the tarot reading, her boyfriend proposed. The engagement ended up being highly relevant in answering Felicity's question.

Case Study: Daniel



The above two cards are taken from a part of a larger reading for a young male, Daniel. Here the Knight of Wands appears in reverse and seems to be facing The Fool. A relationship can be sensed between the cards. The Fool, however, with that chin up, doesn't seem to pay any heed to the negative, inverted Knight. Also consider the elemental dignities at play. I've attributed Wands to the element of Fire and Key 0: The Fool to Air. As you may have noted in a previous section, Fire and Air are both active energies and strengthen each other. However, with the Knight in reverse, his energies are weakened or even negated. These thoughts should be going through the practitioner's mind as the reading proceeds.

The Knight here reflects Daniel's inner insecurities and hesitation. He is ordinarily a fiery, creative fellow, but he has been holding back out of a disabling fear of failure. That side of him, however, will get quashed by The Fool in him, a soul of unbound potential. When it comes time to make the important career decision, Daniel will attempt to fly over that proverbial cliff. Overall, this is a positive reading for a man with the inner fortitude to overcome his existential fears.

The Color of the Sky

Be sure to note the color of the sky in the cards. Bright cards filled with yellow daylight indicate active, engaged energy. Clear blue skies represent clear consciousness and cogent thought: great possibilities, creativity, and freedom of expression.

Dark nights represent passive, recessive energy. A black, opaque sky or background means dense grief and sorrow. Dark gray indicates conflict, internal conflict or the propensity to engage in external conflicts.

Light gray indicates internalized thought and reflection. In some of the cards, a light gray sky indicates neutrality, neither foreboding of good nor foreboding of bad. Generally, light gray symbolizes rational thought, intellectualism, and clear logic, while a light blue sky symbolizes creative thought, freedom, and emotions at peace.

Clouds, too, are significant. You may want to recall earth science classes from your past. Cumulus clouds symbolize the simultaneous extreme of both fair weather and acid rain in the Seeker's life. Like the Page, Queen, and King of Swords, the person represented by the court card will live the good life, but provoke him or her and the Sword personality will bring down acid rain on their worlds; Sword personalities are capable of great destruction.

Cirrus and stratus clouds are a foreboding of rain and possible thunderstorms to come. See, for example, the Five of Swords or Knight of Swords. There may be figurative fog or inclement weather, but the setbacks the Seeker faces per these cards will be minor. The Seeker will manage to overcome them.

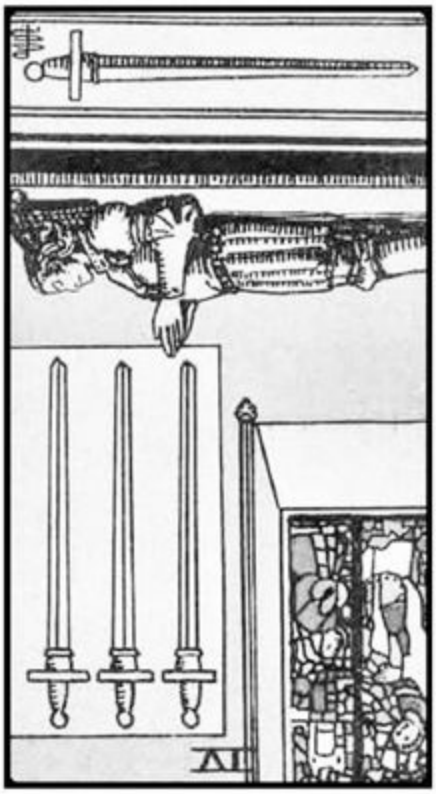
Intuitive Reading

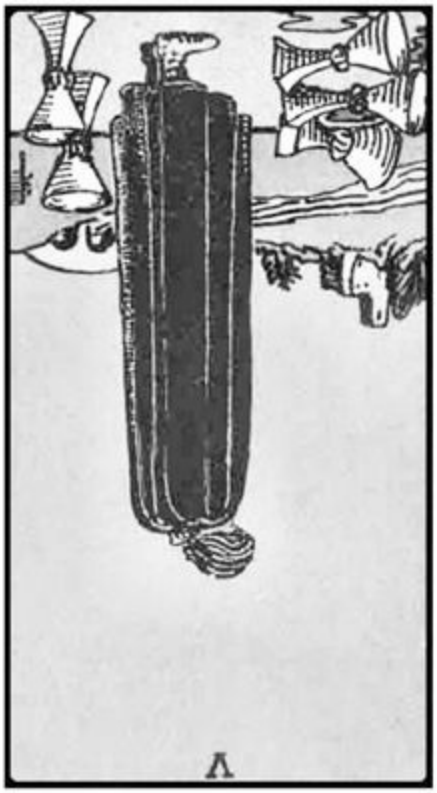
To a limited extent, card meanings can be deconstructed, as this book attempts to do. Understanding the deconstructed components will make an adequate tarot reader, but to become a practitioner, the reading must become intuitive. You must open yourself up to your own unconscious, access the collective unconscious or cosmic qi, and *feel* the reading. You should be able to feel the synergy between the cards, the Seeker, and you, and tune in to that unique vibration. Do certain cards seem to be facing each other, or have their backs turned? Cards facing each other suggest cooperation between those elements. The cards that seem to have their backs turned suggest detachment, tension, or discord between those elements. The practitioner may want to point out that discord to the Seeker and suggest an attempt at reconciliation of those elements.

Think of the spread as forming a painting. Do certain colors demand your attention? Does one color dominate? Are there colors that seem in competition for dominance? Blacks and grays suggest despair, loss, mourning, and painful transitional periods. Blue suggests spirituality and clarity of thought. Browns and umbers are of the earth. Vibrant colors, yellows and golds, suggest majesty, activity, energy. Red is passion, ambition, anger, strong willpower, or even blood, for vitality and body.

Case Study: Kaya

I cannot stress the importance of interpreting beyond set meanings for the cards and focusing on how the cards apply specifically to the Seeker's inquiry. For instance, a woman, Kaya, was contemplating the purchase of a new house. In reading about her house hunting endeavors, I drew two cards, the Four of Swords reversed and the Five of Cups reversed, which appeared side by side as depicted.





Generally the Four of Swords is about reclusion and rest after strife, and warns of illness. It is a card about needing recovery. In reverse, the card suggests that the recovery period is over. The Five of Cups is about loss and regret. In reverse, it suggests restoration after loss.

When the two cards appeared for Kaya's reading about her search for a home, I saw the cards taking on a slightly different meaning. The three gray swords at the bottom left of the Four of Swords as it appears in reverse reminded me of iron bars, so I warned Kaya that she might be contemplating a home in an industrial part of town, perhaps a home with iron gates or a lot of steel. This home that she was thinking about buying was someplace gray with a lot of metalwork and would be in an environment constantly under construction.

I advised against selecting such a home, as it could bring with it a higher chance of illness and fatigue, and would be a location that would drain Kaya of energy. Also, the colorful stained glass prompted me to tell Kaya that colorful detailing from this home might initially attract her, but I urged her to take a step back and study the location, environment, and setting, and if it was predominantly gray and dark yellow, then she should think twice before purchasing. The Five of Cups in reverse suggested to me possible regret or buyer's remorse. Since both cards were in reverse, I took that to mean that none of the events depicted in the cards had come to pass yet, and these were mere warnings.

As it turned out these points were accurate reflections of a house she was contemplating, which she was already intuitively having second thoughts about. The reading confirmed her instincts and she opted not to purchase the home. In time, she ended up finding a much better and more suitable place for herself. The intuitive tarot practitioner will pick up on these nuances and be able to note when a card takes on a different shade of meaning for a particular Seeker at a particular time for a particular question. No single card in tarot means the same thing every time.

How Frequently May Seekers Consult the Tarot?

This question is akin to asking how frequently a person may use a calculator to solve math problems. Use it as often as you like. However, it should be concerning when the calculator becomes a crutch. In grade school I was a whiz at doing addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in my head. Then I was introduced to the calculator, and today in my adulthood I am embarrassed to say that I need a calculator to perform even the simplest of math functions. There have been times I reached for the calculator, out of habit, to punch in 25 + 11—only to blush with realization that I know the answer and am just being silly.

Aside from doing practice readings while the novice is learning how to read tarot, consulting the cards every day with mundane questions is more of a waste of time than it is an effective way to solve problems. If a Seeker panics and feels unable to move a step in any direction without first consulting the tarot, then that Seeker is abusing the tool.

I have used the tarot to track the progress of milestones for a particular project or goal I am working on, or to gauge the development of a particular relationship. That is to be distinguished from reading for the same question twice, which is discouraged by almost all tarot practitioners.

Allowing yourself to consult the tarot repeated times for the same question breeds carelessness. It means you won't invest your focus into analyzing and getting the most out of a given reading. If the first impression of the cards you have drawn is not to your liking and you know you are going to just read twice about it, you will give up immediately on interpreting those cards, draw more cards for a second reading, and continue to do so until you get a set of cards you like. By indulging in that way, you are not mining the unconscious part of your mind for the answers, but rather you are looking for the cards to validate the prejudices in your conscious, which defeats the entire purpose of consulting the tarot. The bridge between the conscious and the unconscious is not being formed. You are just grasping at the superficial and not reflecting deeply inside of you for the truth.

Consult the tarot with the intent of acting on the messages that the reading provides. Never consult the tarot for a question until you have given a good faith effort to answer the question consciously. If the good faith effort does not yield a result, then you may consult the tarot to help in your decision-making process. After you have consulted the tarot on the question, do not consult it again until you have acted on the issue in a substantial way. By adhering to those guidelines, you will be able to keep your tarot use in moderation and not let it become a crutch.

Checklist of Consideration Points for a Reading

The Signifier. Select the signifier card for the Seeker. Generally, opt for court cards that correspond with the Seeker's disposition. However, let your intuition guide your judgment. There are times when your intuition may tell you that a card from the Major Arcana will suit better for the Seeker.

First Operation. If the practitioner will be subscribing to the Case Method, then has the First Operation been performed successfully? If the reading set by the tarot during this phase is not of the subject matter the Seeker asked about, does the Seeker still consent to going forward?

Spread Selection. Select a spread that is tailored to answer the Seeker's question at hand. Some spreads, no matter how much you love them, are not well equipped for answering specific questions; others are made for specific questions and are terrible at offering panoramic insights for a general reading. Do not underestimate the importance of selecting an appropriate spread.

Basic Card Meanings. Start with each card in the spread one by one, from Card 1. What is the meaning of the card? For a concise summary, consult the Keywords in Chapter 8. Once you have reviewed the keywords of all the cards in a spread, you can begin to piece the cards together into a narrative. Consult the Cyclopedia and other glossaries of card meanings for in-depth review of each card. Also consider what the position in the spread the card appears in indicates. How can you apply the meaning of the card to the subject matter or category indicated by that position in the spread?

Patterns in the Major Arcana. Which Major Arcana cards are present? If there are more than one, is there a discernible pattern or link? Which forces and archetypes represented by the Major Arcana are most prevalent in the Seeker's life right now? What does this mean for the Seeker? Do the Major Arcana cards dominate in the spread? Are there *no* Major Arcana cards present? That is noteworthy, too. What do you think that means for the Seeker?

Patterns of Suits. Does a particular suit dominate? What does that mean about the Seeker's present situation? Do two suits seem to compete for dominance? If yes, per the elemental dignities, are the suits active or passive? Do they intensify or weaken each other? What could that mean as applied to the Seeker's life or present situation? Are there exactly the same number of cards in each suit? That's a noteworthy outcome, too. What could that mean for the Seeker?

Patterns of Numbers. Are there any series of cards where numbers appear consecutively? (For example, Card 2 in the spread is the Seven of Wands and Card 3 is the Eight of Wands.) Do any numbers repeat throughout the spread? (For example, there are three or more fives in a single spread.) What is the significance of the dominant numbers?

Reconciling Suits and Numbers. Are there any patterns or relationships between the

dominant suits and the dominant numbers? What is the meaning of one? What is the meaning of the other? How do you reconcile the two together to communicate a single message to the Seeker?

The Relevance of Court Cards. Do the court cards take on a literal or a figurative meaning in the spread? Are there two or more court cards? If yes, what are they and what could that mean? Are there three or more court cards? If yes, what are they and what could that mean? Continue the inquiry and analysis of the court cards to the fullest extent possible. Look at the neighboring cards and the positions the court cards fall in to see where these individuals will appear in the Seeker's life.

Shadow Cards and Essence Cards. If Shadow Cards and/or Essence Cards are included in the reading, how would the meanings there reconcile with the overall message of the spread?

Ending on a Positive Note. At the conclusion of the reading, revisit the most positive card in the spread and remind the Seeker of that card's meaning and how it applies to the Seeker's life or the shifts in the Seeker's attitude that should be made, positively, pursuant to that card.

The foregoing checklist is by no means complete. Intuition and the *art* of tarot is 80 percent of the reading. The only purpose of the checklist is to help deconstruct the reading process for the beginner tarot practitioner.

Checklist of Recommended Exercises

- Clear your mind and shuffle your new tarot deck. In a relaxed, meditative state, shuffle the deck for a minimum of five minutes. Then take your time organizing the deck back in order: Major Arcana, Keys 0 to 22; Wands, Ace to King; Cups, Ace to King; Swords, Ace to King; and Pentacles, Ace to King. When connecting to a new deck of cards, this is a great exercise to repeat daily until the connection has been established.
- To get acquainted with the cards, shuffle the deck, then draw one card from the top of the deck. Before consulting any references, study the card's imagery and formulate your own meaning for the card. Then consult any reference or glossary of meanings to learn its established meaning.
- Practice ten or more hypothetical readings "open book" (you may consult this book's Cyclopedia, meaning glossaries, and other references). Record all readings and write afterthoughts in your journal.
- Memorize keywords or summary meanings for each of the seventy-eight cards in their upright position. Test yourself.
- Memorize keywords or summary meanings for each of the seventy-eight cards in their reverse position. Test yourself.
- Practice ten or more hypothetical readings "closed book" (may not consult any references; go off memory only). Record all readings and write afterthoughts in your journal.

- Practice the First Operation. Use the logs in Appendix H to record your First Operation results.

Spreads to Practice

- Consult for a specific question using a one-card spread.
- Consult for a specific question using a two-card spread.
- Consult for a specific question using a three-card spread.
- Consult for a specific question using a four-card spread.
- Consult for a general inquiry using the Simple Cross.
- Consult for any type of question using the Dyadic Cross.
- Consult for a general inquiry using a seven-card spread, such as the V Formation or Horseshoe spread.
- Consult for a specific question using the Celtic Cross.
- Consult for a general inquiry using the Celtic Cross.
- Consult for a specific question using the Insight spread.
- Consult for a general inquiry using the Insight spread.
- Consult for a specific question using the Rose spread.
- Consult for a specific question using the Seashell.
- Consult for a general inquiry, including a First Operation, using the Seashell.
- Consult for any type of question using any of the other spreads set forth in this book that intuitively speaks to you.

(Quick-reference sheets for each spread discussed in Chapter 14 are provided in Appendix A.)

Before the beginner practitioner moves on, he or she should be fluent at reading the foregoing types of spreads. This is not to say that all of these spreads will be incorporated into regular readings. The practitioner will identify the ones that work best for him or her and will most likely stick to those. However, all of the above should be familiar to any serious tarot practitioner.

Learning tarot takes time and intensive study, like any art form or serious pursuit. There is no "quick and easy" way to learn it. You can compare it to learning piano. Perhaps you can pick up "Chopsticks" or "Heart and Soul" in an hour—but that doesn't make you a pianist. Years, even decades, of concentrated practice are necessary before one may legitimately hold him- or herself out as a pianist. The tarot is no different.

Chapter 16

Devising Tarot Spreads

DEVISING YOUR OWN TAROT spreads generally requires knowledge beyond the tarot. A theoretical or philosophical principle that is meaningful to the practitioner is applied to the formation of a spread layout. Indications or meanings for each card position in the layout are assigned based on that principle. The following is an outline of the five-step design process:

Step 1. Articulate the purpose and objective of your spread.
Why are you devising a new spread? What nature of inquiries will the spread cover? What is your purpose?

Step 2. Decide on the theoretical or philosophical principle.
Which principle or doctrine will be integrated with the tarot? The principle is the foundation upon which you will design the spread.

Step 3. Apply the principle to a tarot spread layout.
What will the spread layout look like and how is that spread related to the applied principle?

Step 4. Determine the total number of cards.
How many cards will be used for the spread? What is the significance of the card numbers? Are there numerological principles in the spread?

Step 5. Determine the indication of each card position.
How does the indication of each card position relate back to the principle? What will each card position reveal about the Seeker?

Each step will subsequently be discussed in detail. A case study will be applied to illustrate the steps. This case study spread is detailed and highly accurate, fusing both traditional Eastern and traditional Western divinatory practices, and therefore worth committing to the practitioner's spread repertoire.

Step 1: Articulate the purpose and objective of your spread.

The first and most important step is to identify the purpose of your spread. Why are you designing a new spread? Does it answer specific inquiries? Yes or no questions? Does it provide a general cross-section snapshot of the Seeker's life? Will it be a spread designed to answer questions about love and relationships? Or about the Seeker's career path? Perhaps you are designing a versatile spread, like the Celtic Cross, which can be used for both general and specific inquiries. The purpose of the Personality Tree spread is to get a sense of the Seeker's personality at his or her current phase

in life. The Simple Zodiac spread is suited for general readings.

To illustrate how to apply the five steps, a case study is provided. In the case study, I will design a tarot spread that is inspired by my cultural heritage. Chinese/Taiwanese divinatory tools are rooted heavily in the concept of destiny, which I'll loosely reinterpret as nature, since I don't believe in destiny. I'd like to compare destiny/nature to nurture. That will be my purpose and objective for the newly devised spread.

Step 2: Decide on a theoretical or philosophical principle.

Consider a few of the spreads provided in this book: the Zodiac spread, based on Western astrology and the constellations; the Six Faiths spread, based on the six articles of faith of Islamic theology; the Ba Gua spread, based on Chinese Taoism; the Tree of Life spread, based on the Kabbalah; or even the universally known Celtic Cross spread, based on Judeo-Christian symbology.

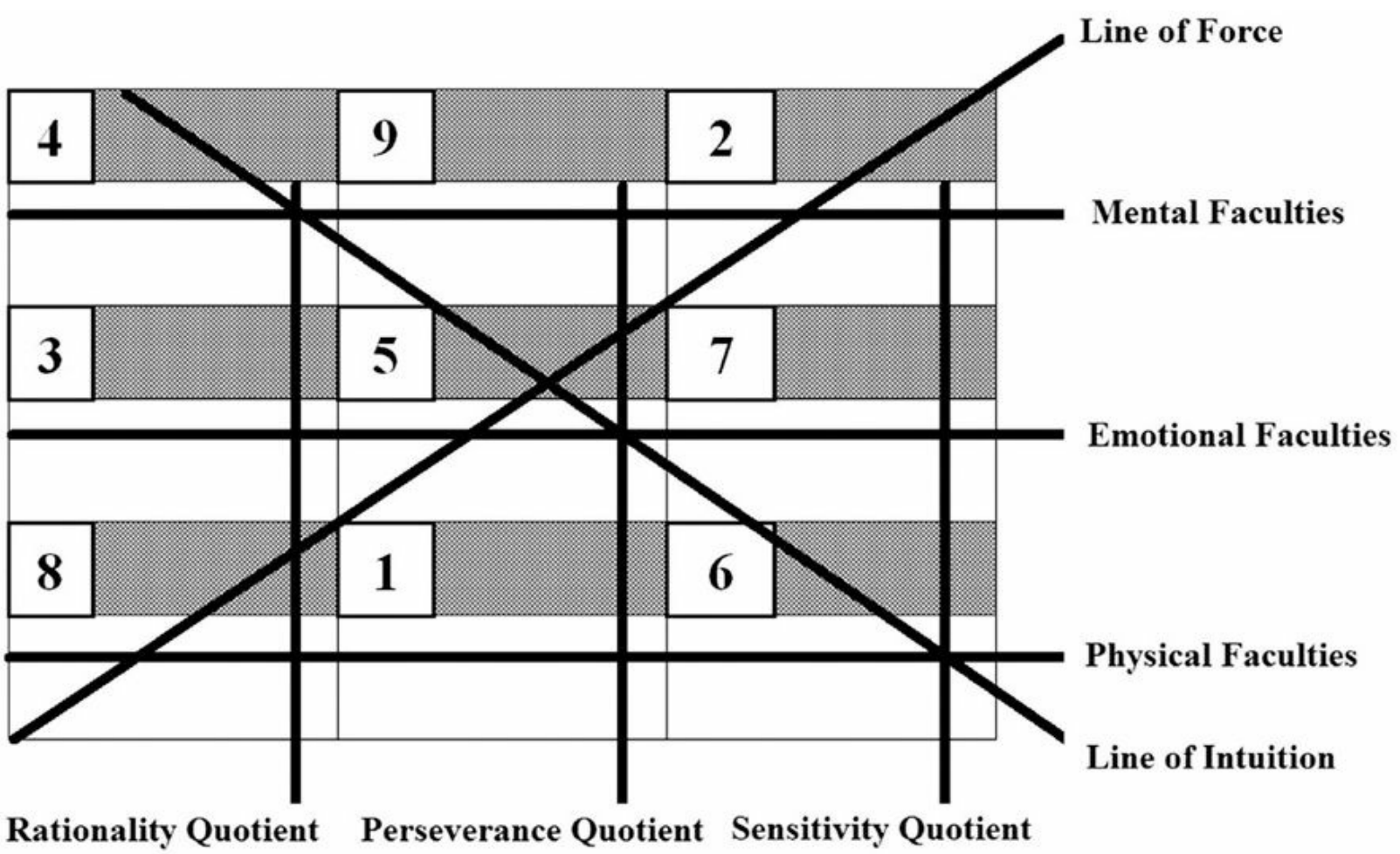
Most tarot spreads are rooted in a particular philosophical, religious, mystical, or esoteric paradigm. In devising your own spread, you should start with a purpose for the new spread and then augment it with a theoretical principle that is of significance to you.

In the case study, I've decided to incorporate the principles of the Chinese Lo Shu Square and numerology. The Lo Shu (洛書) Square is a Chinese numerological assessment of an individual's destiny based on his or her date of birth (and by some methodologies, also the time of birth). It is a fundamental concept in I Ching, dating back to 2000 BC and used in feng shui practices and geomancy.[1]

The Lo Shu Square consists of the numbers one through nine, written in a particular pattern into nine sectors where any column, row, and diagonal adds up to fifteen. Legend has it that during one of the great floods in prehistoric China, a turtle emerged from a flooding river and appeared to the emperor with the magical Lo Shu square imprinted on its shell. Thereafter, the Lo Shu has been used in the areas of mathematics, philosophy, and divination.

Like I said, I'll be referring to the Lo Shu assessment to nature. I would like to compare that nature to a Seeker's nurture, which I hope a tarot reading will shed some light on. Thus, for the case study, the spread will essentially be a two-step process. I'll be preparing both a Nature Chart and a Nurture Chart. The corresponding tarot spread will be called the Lo Shu spread.

Lo Shu Square

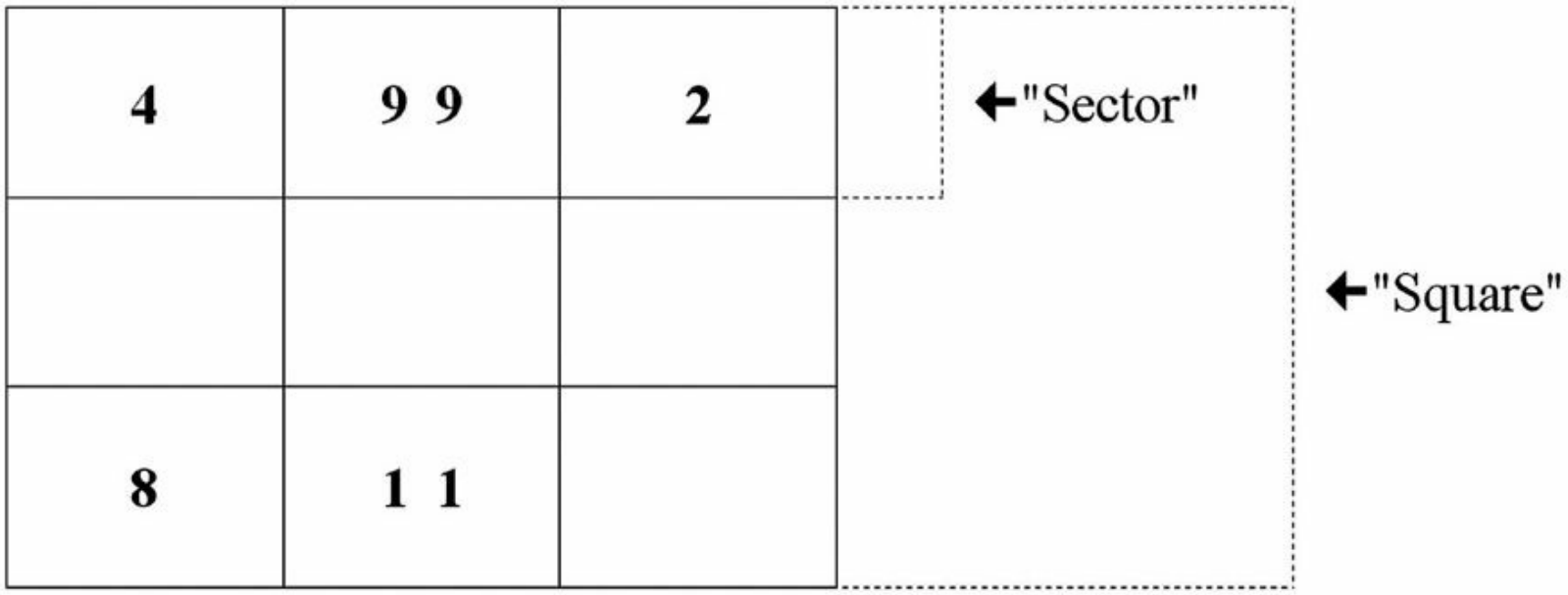


One simplified numerological application of the Lo Shu Square is to subscribe a date of birth into the square and analyze which sectors are covered and which are empty, to understand the individual's innate personality. Some practitioners also incorporate the time of birth, but for the purposes of this basic Nature Chart the date of birth is sufficient.

Also, a complex Lo Shu Square analysis will take into consideration the exact calendar that the practitioner is using to determine the date of birth (and time of birth), but for the basic application with the square, keying in your local date and time of birth will suffice.

Next, following the number positions in the Lo Shu Square diagram pictured above, write in each digit from the date of birth into the corresponding numbered sector. For a person born in September, the "0" is discarded and the "9" is placed into the "9" sector in the square. Zeros are always ignored. When a number appears twice, write it twice in the same square.

For example, a person born on 09/24/1981 would draw the following square:



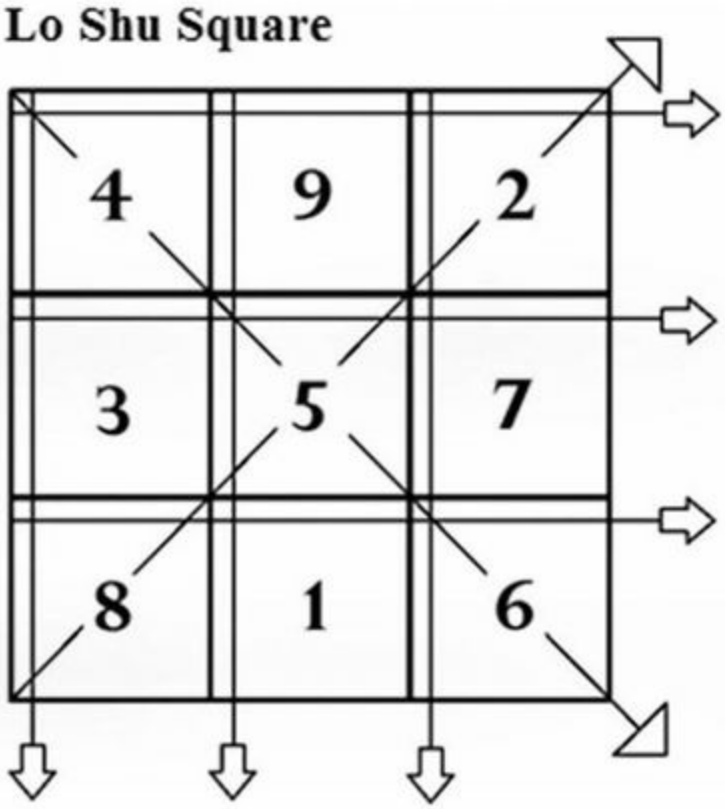
Note how the zeros in the numerical sequences are ignored. The square is then analyzed based on which planes are completely covered (i.e., all three sectors of the plane have a number subscribed in them) and which are completely empty (i.e., all three sectors of the plane have no number). The vertical planes are attributed as follows:

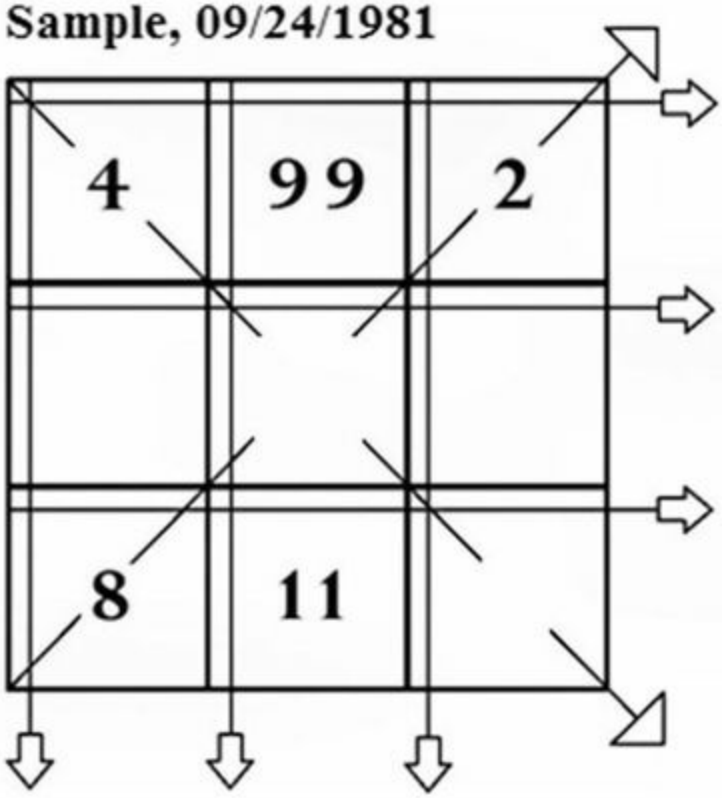
VERTICAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Rationality Quotient ("Rationality") 4–3–8	A highly analytical and logical mind. Seeker deliberates on facts and merits and does not yield to emotion, personal relationships, or intuition.	Seeker makes decisions on instinct and intuition. Seeker does not require every situation in life to be explained rationally. Makes judgments on a case by case basis, always considering the human element.
Perseverance Quotient ("Tenacity") 9–5–1	Incredible drive, determination, and focus. Stubborn. Does not give up easily, but Seeker also resistant to change. Seeker is the most hardworking of character archetypes.	Acquiescence; a softer personality. Seeker yields so that there may be peace and harmony. Dislikes confrontations. Gives up too easily. Need to be more perseverant in life to achieve goals.
Sensitivity Quotient ("Attitude/Outlook") 2–7–6	Optimistic and positive outlook on life. Seeker is sensitive to others, empathic, compassionate, warmhearted, and benevolent. Seeker cares about other people's problems and is always empathetic to their troubles.	A realist, and also someone who could be predisposed to melancholy and pensiveness. Can also forget to consider the feelings of others. May appear aloof or detached. Stiff, firm, and often unyielding. Often thinks others brought their problems on themselves.

In the given example, there are no completely covered or completely empty vertical planes. That means no trait from that plane is particularly dominating in the individual. Rationality, tenacity, and attitude are all relatively balanced here. Next, the horizontal planes are analyzed.

HORIZONTAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Mental Faculties 4–9–2	An inclination to devote life path to ideas, big picture dreams, ambitions, and intellectualism. Seeker is a thinker and solves problems with his or her mind.	Does not devote enough to nurturing ideas, philosophy, and intellectualism. A master at interpersonal relationships, but may not be as self-aware as Seeker believes self to be. Devote more time to scholarly pursuits.
Emotional Faculties 3–5–7	An inclination to devote life path to persuading others, to understanding the emotional temperature of any setting. Seeker is a romantic at heart. Believes in love and compassion.	Does not devote enough to nurturing emotions and relationships. Seeker is more thoughts and ideas driven. Do not forget about E.Q. (emotional quotient).
Physical Faculties 8–1–6	An inclination to be hands-on and to devote life path to understanding Seeker's world as perceived through the five physical senses. Very practical, pragmatic, and possesses a great deal of strength and vitality.	Seeker may be physically fragile. Pay closer attention to health and body. May be prone to lethargy and fatigue. Seeker relies more heavily on intellect, mind, or the emotional plane, and not so much on the physical plane.

In the given example, all three sectors of the mental faculties are covered. Also, all three sectors of the emotional faculties are empty. That indicates an individual who is highly intellectual, who devotes much time to nurturing ideas and the mind. The individual is thought-driven and does not devote enough time to nurturing emotions and relationships. This person tends to be stoic and dismissive of sentimentality and romanticism.





The diagonal planes are also examined. In the 09/24/1981 Lo Shu Square, there are no covered o
empty planes. Thus, willpower and spirituality are relatively balanced in the subject individual.

DIAGONAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Line of Force ("Willpower") 8–5–2	A leader, but perhaps one who is too forceful or aggressive. Temperance needed. It should not be "your way or the highway." Find compromise. Seeker may be too pushy. Learn to yield.	An inclination for group identification. Seeker cares about how others perceive him or her and that causes Seeker to yield more often than he or she asserts the self. Learn to be more self-assured and decisive.
Line of Intuition ("Spiritual Faculties") 4–5–6	Seeker devotes time to seeking the higher truths of the universe.	A born skeptic, someone who wants fact-based conclusions, and not intuition or emotion based. Seeker trusts what can be seen and proven. A primary lesson in Seeker's karmic life path is to seek out spirituality and learn to respect and rely on intuition as much as Seeker does logical analysis.

An additional use of the Lo Shu Square that will apply to the case study spread is related tofeng shui. Each sector of the square also corresponds to a sector of an individual's life as follows:

4 **Finances**	**9** **Ambitions / Life Dreams**	**2** **Relationships**
3 **Family**	**5** **Health**	**7** **Innovation (or Offspring)**
8 **Acquired Knowledge**	**1** **Career**	**6** **Allies/Community**

Here, a simple approach will be offered. All sectors containing numbers correspond to the areas of the individual's life that will be well taken care of. Empty sectors show weaknesses, areas that the individual needs to work harder at. When numbers repeat themselves, the repetition indicates greater reinforcement that the corresponding attribute will be strong in the individual.

Take the 09/24/1981 example again:

4 Finances	9 9 Ambitions / Life Dreams	2 Relationships
----- Family	----- Health	----- Innovation (or Offspring)
8 Acquired Knowledge	11 Career	----- Allies / Community

Sectors marked with "—" indicate an empty sector. Thus, the 09/24/1981 individual will need to work hard in her lifetime to nurture family relationships, her health, and possibly children or her creations. (However, the health issues will be minor, since none of the adjacent vertical or horizontal planes are empty.) Note also the empty sector for allies/community. The 09/24/1981 individual may also be a loner type, or self-reliant and independent rather than leaning on the support of others. However, she will likely accomplish most of her life dreams and be ambitious, and she will enjoy great career success, as indicated by the double 9s and the double 1s. Her finances (4), her marriage or romantic relationships (2), and her education (8) will be fairly balanced and strong in her life as well.

It has been purported that the feng shui attributions can be used to prophesy the individual's future potential; there are simple approaches and far more mathematically complex approaches to such divinations. Personally, I like to see it as a personal diagnostics tool for nature assessment and further recognize that, at the best that it can be tested, it is just pseudoscience. I enjoy the divinations of my heritage anyway.

Typically, a thorough analysis of the Lo Shu Square can get quite complex. The precise line pattern created by the covered sectors is analyzed in detail, beyond the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal planes. Each variation or combination of covered and empty sectors bears significance. For example, if the center sector (5) is empty *plus* an entire vertical or horizontal plane adjacent to it, which does not *include* the empty sector (5), this indicates risks of ill health, and the individual should be warned to devote more attention and diligence to his or her health and wellness. An empty sector (5) *plus* an empty vertical or horizontal plane *plus* an empty diagonal plane will suggest not only someone at risk of ill health, but someone who willfully neglects to care of his or her health, even someone with self-destructive tendencies. In other words, Lo Shu Square analytics can stop where the line of analysis here in this book has stopped, for the purposes of the spread, or they can continue with much greater insight.

To apply the Lo Shu spread in professional practice, consider creating a template for yourself similar to the following:

Step 1: Sample Lo Shu Spread Nature Chart

D.O.B. 09/24/1981						Willpower. (✓)
Finances	4	Ambitions/ Achievement	9	Relationships	2	**Metal Faculties.** (+) Born thinker. Intellectual. Naturally clever. Devotes time to develop ideas and the mind.
4		9 9		2		
Family	3	Health	5	Offspring/ Innovation	7	**Emotional Faculties.** (--) Thought-driven. Does not devote enough time to developing emotions and relationships.
Knowledge/ Education	8	Career	1	Allies/ Community	6	**Physical Faculties.** (✓) NOTE: May be recluse, introspective type. Difficulty socializing or emerging out of personal shell.
8		1 1				
Rationality. (✓)		**Tenacity.** (✓) NOTE: Repeat of double digits indicates a great deal of strength and tenacity in sectors 9 & 1.		**Attitude/Outlook.** (✓)		**Spiritual Faculties.** (✓)

The 09/24/1981 example is entered into the above chart to show how it may be used. In plotting the chart, use a (+) to indicate any plane that has all three sectors covered. Use a (—) to indicate any plane that has all three sectors empty. Use a (–) to indicate when the plane is a combination of covered and empty, to note balance, or nothing out of the ordinary. A client's information can be entered into such a template.

Then the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal planes can be assessed quickly and efficiently. Generally, empty sectors will indicate areas of the Seeker's life that he or she should devote more work to. Covered sectors indicate areas that will seem to come naturally to Seeker. With just a little effort, the Seeker can go very far in these areas.

Supposedly, the Lo Shu Square identifies a Seeker's predetermined potential and the traits he or she was born with. Whether the qualities have manifested in the Seeker's life experiences depends on nurture, the decisions Seeker has made, and his or her attitudes and outlook. In the case study spread I am devising, I intend to use the tarot to assess the nurture component to Seeker's life and compare that to the nurture component, the Lo Shu Square.

Step 3: Apply the principle to a tarot spread layout.

The third step of devising your own tarot spread is to design an appropriate layout. The layout and positioning of cards should correspond with the principle. Spreads based on Judeo-Christian

principles tend to be in the formation of a cross. The Ba Gua spread positions the cards in the formation of the I Ching ba gua. The Kabbalah-based Tree of Life Spread takes on the formation of the sephirot, with cards positioned on the ten emanations of the sephirot. The Six Faiths Spread positions cards in six groupings, each grouping representing one of the six articles of faith. Also consider whether any traditional cartomancy techniques will be incorporated, such as card counting, as in Eden Gray's Three Aces spread.

In the case study for the Lo Shu spread, the application is rather straightforward: it will be in the formation of the Lo Shu Square. As the cards are drawn from the deck, they will be placed in the corresponding sectors of the Lo Shu Square.

Not only can a numerological assessment be prepared, based on the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal planes, but the cards themselves will be read to understand the conditions in the Seeker's life that each sector of the Square represents.

THE LO SHU SQUARE: CORRESPONDING SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS

4 **Finances**	**9** **Ambitions / Life Dreams**	**2** **Relationships**
3 **Family**	**5** **Health**	**7** **Innovation (or Offspring)**
8 **Acquired Knowledge**	**1** **Career**	**6** **Allies/Community**

Step 4: Decide total number of cards.

Next, you need to determine the number of cards that will make up your spread. What is the significance of that number?

In the Ba Gua spread, there are eight cards, to correspond with the eight trigrams. The Celtic Cross consists of ten cards. Perhaps the designer of that spread believed the ten cards were needed to divine ten facets of a question. While the number of cards in your spread will likely correspond with certain numerical constants from your theoretical or philosophical principle, also be sure that the number will be useful for a complete diagnosis and will meet the objective you stated for the spread in Step 1.

Keep in mind that having more cards does not mean a more in-depth reading. Selecting the right number of cards is both an art and science. It also depends on the practitioner's reading approach. Some can offer an impressive reading with one card. Some like to draw out dozens of cards into rows and columns and meditate on an overall theme.

For the Lo Shu spread, there will be a total number of eight cards in the tarot spread. The eight cards correspond with the eight digits of the Seeker's date of birth. However, there is an exception to the eight-card rule. If there were zeros in the Seeker's date of birth, which were ignored in the Lo Shu Square assessment, then the actual number of digits that were entered into the square will be the actual number of cards the Seeker should draw, which will be less than eight. For example, the

9/24/1981 individual only has one digit for the month, since September is construed as “09.” The “0” was ignored. Therefore, only seven digits were entered into the square, rather than eight.

The Seeker will be asked to shuffle the cards thoroughly. Then the Seeker will be asked to draw the corresponding number of cards at random from the deck via the Fan Approach, and hand the cards to the practitioner.

The Lo Shu number of each card drawn by the Seeker is then assessed: one through nine. Aces correspond with one. All pip cards will correspond with their number. Tens will correspond with one (10: 1 + 0 = 1).

Similarly, take the sum of the digits for all court cards to arrive at a number below nine.

Pages will be two (11: 1 + 1 = 2).
Knights will be three (12: 1 + 2 = 3).
Queens will be four (13: 1 + 3 = 4).
Kings will be five (14: 1 + 4 = 5).

All Major Arcana cards will correspond with the key number. For key numbers above nine, add the digits as with the court cards. See below for card examples and corresponding Lo Shu numbers. The Fool is treated as a zero, and like zeros in the Nature Chart, is ignored.

Thus, if The Fool is drawn, it would simply be set aside and not included in the Lo Shu spread. The rationale for setting aside Key 0: The Fool is similar to the theoretical rationale of the Lo Shu Square for setting aside zeros from the dates of birth.

Ace of Swords
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 1.

Key 9: The Hermit
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 9.

Five of Wands
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 5.

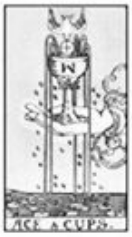
Key 18: The Moon
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 9.
Key 18 = 1 + 8 = 9

Queen of Pentacles
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 4.
Queen = 13
1 + 3 = 4

Key 19: The Sun
The corresponding number for the Lo Shu Square is 1.
Key 19 = 1 + 9 = 10
10 : 1 + 0 = 1

As the Lo Shu number is calculated for each card, that card will be placed in the appropriate sector. In the case study example, the 09/24/1981 individual drew seven cards, since one digit from the date of birth was a "0." The seven cards were placed in the square for the Nurture Chart as follows:

STEP 2: SAMPLE LO SHU SPREAD NURTURE CHART

Finances 4	Life Dreams 9	Relationships 2
Family 3	**Health 5**	**Innovation/Offspring 7**
Knowledge 8	**Career 1**	**Allies/Community 6**
		

Step 5: Determine indication of each card position.

The positioning of each card in the spread formation will indicate a particular aspect of the issue, if it is a specific reading, and a particular facet of the Seeker's life, if it is a general reading. In a typical three-card spread, for example, the cards will be placed in a row, the leftmost card indicating the past, the center card indicating the present, and the rightmost card indicating the future. In the twelve-card Simple Zodiac Spread, each card position corresponds with one of the solar houses of a standard Western astrological chart. As you design your spread, decide what each card in its respective position will indicate and also consider intuitively why that card position indicates what you've attributed it with.

In the case study, the tarot spread based on the Lo Shu Square will reveal who the Seeker has become and where he or she is at in the present stage of life. Let's take a look at the sample reading. After the cards were drawn, three of the seven cards drawn—Key 11: Justice, Page of Wands, and Page of Cups—were positioned in sector 2. These cards reveal the conditions of love and relationships in the Seeker's life right now. The Three of Cups and Key 3: The Empress are positioned in sector 3. They represent the conditions of the Seeker's family. The two cards may suggest a new birth among her relatives. (Note that this is not likely to indicate the Seeker giving

birth, or the cards would have appeared in sector seven instead.) The King of Cups in sector 5 represents her health, showing strong holistic management of her physical faculties. The Ace of Cups in sector 1 represents her current career path, one that should be spiritually and emotionally fulfilling to her.

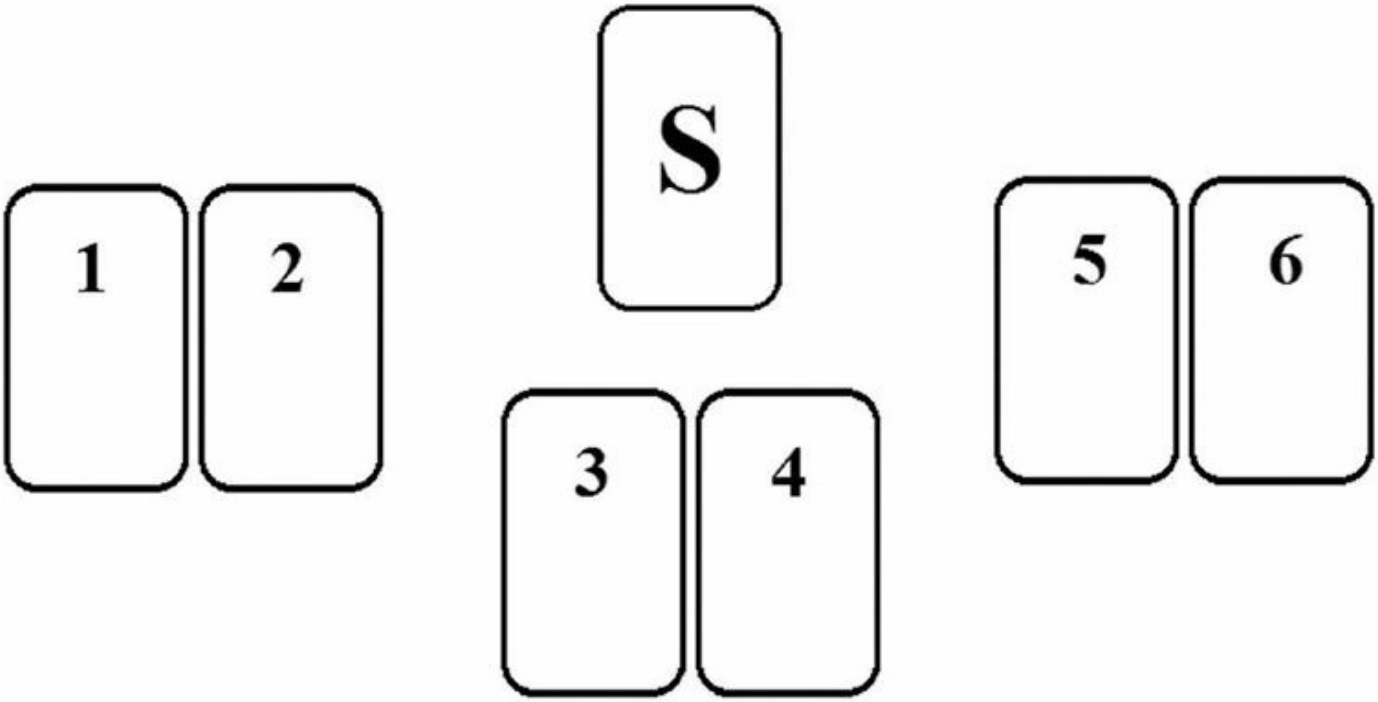
From there, the practitioner proceeds with reading the cards in the ordinary way that he or she interprets spreads. The sectors of the Lo Shu Square populated with cards will indicate the main areas that the Seeker has focused on in his or her current stage of life. Read those card meanings and apply them to the respective sector attribution. For example, the Ace of Cups in the foregoing example is indicative of the Seeker's current career situation. Justice, the Page of Wands, and the Page of Cups offer insight into her love life and relationships.

After the Nurture Chart is assessed, it is compared to the Nature Chart. While fundamentally, in the given example, the Seeker may be analytical, thought-driven, and lackluster when it comes to showing her affections (per her Nature Chart), it seems she has learned to embrace the sentimental side of herself, as indicated by the dominance of the suit of Cups in the subsequent Nurture Chart and the cards populating the horizontal emotional plane, which was initially empty.

Career-wise, the Seeker in the sample reading has lived up to her birthright and has enjoyed a promising career, as suggested by the Ace of Cups. At her current stage, she has not yet reached her potential in terms of wealth accrual, as indicated by the empty sector in the Nurture Chart. If that aspect of her life is one she wants to materialize, then she must channel more energy and determination into making that happen. Her focus lately has been very much concentrated on family and relationships, which is detracting her from some of her greater life dreams and ambitions. She has also remained recluse and a bit antisocial, not maximizing her network to get ahead. That is indicated by the empty sector 6 in both the Nature and Nurture Charts. One area she needs to work on is to develop her networking abilities. She is weak in this area and needs to get out and be with the world and society more, gain some exposure.

Here, the tarot reading aspect of the Lo Shu spread can be taken in any direction, to any depth and detail that is customary for the individual practitioner. Be sure to draw comparisons to the Nature Chart to help the Seeker understand which areas of his or her life have gone neglected, where potential has not yet been reached, and areas of weakness that the Seeker needs to devote greater attention to.

Of course, not all devised spreads will be as complex or require as many steps as the Lo Shu spread. A very simple spread could be devised. For example, the practitioner might like to design a simple spread for love and romance. The number corresponding to Venus is six, as is the key number for The Lovers card, and the practitioner could decide that the number six will be the grounding principle and thus also the total number of cards. The practitioner wants to divine the past influences on the Seeker's love life, the present influences, and the future. The following spread could be designed, grouping the cards into three sections:



The newly designed spread can now be integrated into the practitioner's repertoire and used when Seekers request readings on love. As every seasoned tarot practitioner will attest, questions on love are among the most popular from Seekers. Thus, archiving a spread that will address the romance issue may not be a bad idea for practitioners to consider.

For the nonconformist at heart, devising your own spreads will be essential to your tarot practice.[2] However, note that devising a new spread requires "training" between practitioner and tarot deck. Envision the spread layout and the indications of each card position while you shuffle the deck. Focus intently on the layout and mentally fuse the principle to you, and then from you to the deck. If the practitioner subscribes to any particular religious faiths, consider calling upon such supreme energies to aid your conception.

Be sure to record copious notes and instructions on the new spreads in your tarot journal. Keep personal notes on how Seekers respond to the spread when you use it in readings. Record any feedback about the spread you receive from other tarot practitioners.

Chapter 17

Tarot Readings: A Step-by-Step Analytical Process

	General Inquiry		Specific Inquiry
	First Operation Performed	Direct Reading; Spread Only	
STEP ONE. Restate the present issue addressed by the reading.	Recall the pile that the signifier card was found in. Recall category indicated by that pile.	Remind Seeker that this is a general reading of Seeker's present situation and what the cards suggest Seeker should focus on.	Restate the question Seeker asked to you.
STEP TWO. Identify the card drawn.	Let the Seeker know which card was drawn by specifically identifying it. Identify whether it appears upright or in reverse and the significance of that. For example, say, "The Two of Wands..." or "Key 2, The High Priestess from the Major Arcana appears in reverse..."		
STEP THREE. Tell Seeker the general meaning of that card.	Determine whether a literal meaning or figurative meaning of the card is relevant in the present reading and offer a few reasons for why you are interpreting the card literally or figuratively in the given reading.		
STEP FOUR. Apply the meaning of the card to the card's position.	Connect the independent meaning of the card to the indication of the card position in the given spread.		
STEP FIVE. Apply the meaning of the card to the present issue being addressed.	The card meaning as it applies to the position is indicative of an aspect of Seeker's life per the category revealed by the First Operation.	The card meaning suggests what is relevant in the aspect of Seeker's life indicated by the card position.	The card meaning as it applies to the position is indicative of what sub-issues Seeker needs to focus on in the specific issue inquired about.

Continued from previous page.	**General Inquiry**		**Specific Inquiry**
	First Operation Performed	Direct Reading; Spread Only	
STEP SIX. Draw connections between the card at hand and the other cards in the spread.	(a) Does the card echo the meanings of any of the other cards in the spread? (b) Does the object of the card relate to the object of any other cards? (c) Consider numerological significances. (d) Consider the significance of the suit. Consider elemental dignities. (e) Consider the dominance of any dominant, complementary, or contrasting colors in the overall spread. (f) Consider the significance of any clear directionality.		
STEP SEVEN. Once all cards have been reviewed, provide closure by summarizing the overall reading by touching on the main points that Seeker should be aware of.	Summarize the overarching thesis of the cards in the spread as it pertains to the category indicated by the First Operation pile.	Reiterate what the cards suggest Seeker should focus on in life right now. Note the most apparent patterns in the cards and convey to the Seeker its significance.	Summarize the overarching thesis of the cards in the spread as it pertains to the specific issue at hand that Seeker asked about.
CONCLUSION. Come full circle for the Seeker and provide a summary conclusion of the reading and remind the Seeker of the points to focus on.	(a) Identify which suit seems to dominate. (b) Reiterate the significance (or dominance) of Major Arcana cards in the spread. (c) Reiterate the significance of the court cards in the spread, if any. (d) Remind Seeker of reverse card meanings, whether there are negative influences to look out for or whether Seeker must be patient about certain delays in fruition of what the reversed cards indicate. (e) Identify any numbers that repeat three or more times in the spread and its significance to the matter at hand. (f) Revisit the most positive card in the spread and remind the Seeker of its meaning. End the reading on that positive note. (g) *Optional.* Determine whether an Adjustment Card or Shadow Card should be drawn.		

APPLYING THE OUTLINE STRUCTURE by the preceding table, here are a few examples of how to proceed with a reading. Although the steps are dissected into blocks here and your first few readings may be awkward, after practice you will become expert at transitioning seamlessly from step to step.

Example One. The Seeker is Bonnie and her signifier is the Queen of Cups. A Celtic Cross was used for a general inquiry. The First Operation was performed and the signifier card appeared in the "I" pile for *work/career*, personal and/or professional development. For card position 1 in Eden Gray's interpretation of the Cross spread, the Eight of Swords was drawn. For context, note that the Four of Wands, reversed, and Seven of Cups also appeared in the spread.

EXAMPLE 1	General Inquiry. First Operation Performed ("I" Pile).
STEP ONE. Restate the present issue addressed by the reading.	Bonnie, although you haven't asked a specific question today, the First Operation suggests that we should turn our attention to your work or professional life, so I will be interpreting the cards through that lens. However, the "I" pile could also indicate health and wellness issues, so I'll stay alerted to that as well.
STEP TWO. Identify the card drawn.	The first card drawn, which covers you, is the Eight of Swords. A woman in red is bound and blindfolded. She is surrounded by eight swords spiked into the ground, and she seems to be confined by them.
STEP THREE. Tell Seeker the general meaning of that card.	The Eight of Swords is a card about feeling bound by your circumstances, a mental self-imprisonment. There is a sense of being stuck in one's current situation and feeling like there is no way out. That feeling is in the mind, however. In reality, there is a way out of your situation, one that will require creative maneuvering.
STEP FOUR. Apply the meaning of the card to the card's position.	Appearing here, the Eight of Swords suggests your present state of mind, and also the heart of what is going on right now in your personal and professional development, which as you recall, corresponds with the pile we found your signifier card in.
STEP FIVE. Apply the meaning of the card to the present issue being addressed.	It seems you are presently in the process of transcending a job that you feel imprisoned to. It isn't giving you the sense of freedom you're seeking in a career, so efforts have been made on your part, such as an active search for a new job. These efforts are occupying the bulk of your consciousness, this desire to just break free of your work situation. It's also indicating a negative toll on you. The sense of feeling tied down to your job is wearing you thin.
STEP SIX. Draw connections between the card at	I am already seeing how the card might relate to the Four of Wands in reversed here, which suggests work/life imbalances. I will get to that later, but do note that your current job has an adverse effect on other areas of your life that you cherish more, and so that contributes to your sense of feeling tied down to this job. Also, see here the Seven of Cups, which suggests that you have actually been receiving several tempting

hand and the other cards in the spread.	offers or you definitely have alternative options that look appealing right now, but may not be as good as they seem. Again, we'll get to that later, I'm just painting a broad picture for you right now, Bonnie, to show you the context of the Eight of Swords.
STEP SEVEN. Once all cards have been reviewed, provide closure by summarizing the overall reading by touching on the main points that Seeker should be aware of.	At this point we have gone over some options for you. Remember the imagery on the Eight of Swords. The woman is blindfolded and so she can't see the solution. She is bound, but she could use the blades of the swords surrounding her to cut herself loose. The lesson here is that of creative problem-solving. The solution to your problem is going to be an obvious one, but one you aren't able to see right now because you're figuratively blindfolded. You have to trust that it's around you and that you will figure it out. It is going to take creativity on your part, though.
CONCLUSION. Come full circle for the Seeker and provide a summary conclusion of the reading and remind the Seeker of the points to focus on.	Note how I mentioned that the majority of cards bear images that appear to point upward. When that happens, the indication is a greater need for faith and optimism. Our outlook and disposition can have profound effects on our lives, and that is something you may tend to forget, looking back at the Ten of Wands here. Also, the overall directionality corroborates with the very first card drawn, the Eight of Swords reversed. Greater forces are at play that have blown you into this position, or at least it sure feels that way to you. Adjust your attitude to be more positive and you'll be able to see the creative solution you need to break free of your present job and find a better work/life balance.

Example Two. You perform a one-card reading for a specific inquiry from Kylie and skip the First Operation. Kylie senses that she is far more committed to the relationship than her boyfriend, Matthew. She wants to know whether she should continue trying with Matthew or move on. Key 6: The Lovers in reverse is drawn.

Note: Example Two is based on a real-life professional reading. I am consistently stunned at the appearance of The Lovers, the Two of Cups, and the Three of Swords in love and relationship inquiries. As you practice tarot, you too will be baffled by the uncanny synchronicities.

EXAMPLE 2	Specific Inquiry.
STEP ONE. Restate the present issue addressed by the reading.	No one and no tarot cards can tell you what to do. Your future is governed strictly by your free will. Whether you are wasting your time with Matthew is up to you and your own frame of mind, but the cards can reveal to us the consequences of our decisions, so let's see what card is drawn to express what's going on right now between you two.
STEP TWO. Identify the card drawn.	The card drawn is Key 6 of the Major Arcana, The Lovers* card in reverse. A red-winged angel with flaming hair appears in the clouds over the primordial man and primordial woman. Behind the pair is a single mountain peak. A snake is coiled around an apple tree by the woman. Since The Lovers appears in reverse, the meaning applied to your situation will differ from what it would have meant if the card was drawn upright.
STEP THREE. Tell Seeker the general meaning of that card.	The Lovers denote passion, temptation, and partnership. It's governed by the element Air and its energies are quite active. In reverse, the card suggests interference in the relationship, most likely from a third party.
STEP FOUR. Apply the meaning of the card to the card's position.	(Not applicable, since only one card was drawn.)
STEP FIVE. Apply the meaning of the card to the present issue being addressed.	A meddling parent, meddling friend, or maybe someone who is jealous of you is standing between you two. This person has Matthew's ear and I wonder if the person is having a subconscious negative influence on Matthew's thoughts of you or the relationship. If you can find some way to address this interference and clear it, you could find that Matthew has a change of heart.
STEP SIX. Draw connections between the card at hand and the other cards in the spread.	(Not applicable, since only one card was drawn. Instead, other dimensions of the card's meaning are reviewed by the practitioner to the Seeker. See Step Seven.)
STEP SEVEN. Once all cards have been reviewed, provide closure by summarizing the overall reading by touching on the main	The Lovers card can take on another shade of meaning: it could represent a choice you face, one between vice and virtue, an ethical quandary of sorts. The male figure in the card represents mind and rationality, suggesting that intellectually you understand that you might have to let go of Matthew and just move on. Your mind seems to be convinced that he isn't right for you. Yet the female figure represents heart and emotion. What the heart wants, the heart wants, right? There is definitely a division between the mind and heart. But note how the female looks up to the angel. Looks like right now you're inclined to side with your heart. Since the card appears in reverse rather than upright, I would take that as

points that Seeker should be aware of.	a strong urging to re-evaluate the decision you make and be absolutely convinced that whatever you choose to do, it is the right decision. Right now you're tempted to do what you know isn't right. Remember: what's right will always be the harder option. You have to pick the harder option here.
CONCLUSION. Come full circle for the Seeker and provide a summary conclusion of the reading and remind the Seeker of the points to focus on.	The card reversal suggests to me present imbalance and instability. You will continue to face uncertainty with Matthew unless you can feel secure with him. Watch out for interferences. Your feeling of insecurity could be intuition that there's third party involvement. Someone is tampering with the relationship and that is why the love doesn't seem to have a fighting chance. Someone is meddling. Find out who this third party is and see if you cannot resolve the matter and find some peace and harmony with yourself again. And remember: you do need to come to your own decision soon, and the right decision will be what's hardest for you to do.

Chapter 18

The Five Components of Circumstance

As the practitioner assesses a reading for the Seeker, consider the five components of circumstance. The five components of circumstance are the factors that determine what happens to you: force majeure, karma, disposition, education, and action. Each person has a different level of control over the various components, and an empowering tarot reading will offer insights to the Seeker as to how the Seeker can tilt the components in his or her favor.

A well-known saying among Chinese feng shui practitioners—"一命 二運三風水四積陰德五讀書," which translates to "one: fate, two: luck, three: feng shui, four: karma, and five: education"—inspired my conception of the five components. To summarize, the phrase suggests that success is dependent on the five factors of fate, luck, feng shui, karma, and education.

Eastern esoteric schools tend to believe in destiny, that your life is predetermined at birth, which you can divine through your month, day, year, and hour of birth. When you were born can reveal how the five factors stack up for you. The first one is fate. Fate determines whether you have good luck or bad luck, and if you have bad luck, then you need to employ the art and science of feng shui to readjust the universal energies around you in your favor. If feng shui is also not in your favor, you can adjust your karma by doing good deeds. The good deeds will offset the bad, and the hope is that will change fate in your favor. Even when the first four elements are not in your favor, there is education. Education can and will change your fate. A person's success is predicated on the right alignment of all five factors.

While I agree strongly with karma and education, I'm less sure about the other three. I've reinterpreted the concept to fit my own philosophy. The first of my five components is a synthesis of fate and luck, but it's also more existential than that. I call it force majeure, or "acts of God." That's when the hurricane sweeps in overnight and takes off with your roof and it turns out the damages aren't covered by your insurance. That's being born in one country as opposed to another. That's having the brother you have, your color of skin, and what the society you're born into thinks of that color of skin.

My idea of karma is based on the idea of karma I grew up with, which I will grossly simplify as "what goes around comes around." I do believe wholeheartedly in that. Whether it extends as far as past lives and reincarnation, well, the jury for me is still out. But the fundamental concept of karma is plausible. Disposition, though, I find to be far more telling of one's success, and it isn't related to fate, luck, feng shui, karma, or education. You can change your disposition, and it evolves. Our dispositions are organic. Education is the integration of knowledge others have learned through experience into your own, so that you do not need to reinvent the wheel. Finally, the most important: action, which somewhat fits in with feng shui, though it's more than that. You need to take action with a greater force than the combined force of force majeure and karma against you. When the force of your action is greater, you'll be successful.

I have found that tarot readings offer the Seeker insight into which of these five areas are governing, and whether that governance has a positive or negative effect on the Seeker. They also

show areas of weakness for the Seeker to bring in greater forces for. Balance of the five components is what helps us prevail over our circumstances. To truly help a Seeker in a tarot reading, identify how the five components play out in the spread.

Also, a reading can be framed around the five components. Thus, in analyzing a spread, draw connections between the card meanings, the Seeker's situation at hand, and how the five components are presently affecting the Seeker. Look at which of the five are strongest, and which are weakest, and through that, diagnose which components the Seeker needs to focus on to increase his or her chance of success.

Force Majeure

I've taken the term "force majeure" from law; it means an overriding superior force that profoundly affects the outcome. They are chance occurrences and they are inevitable. As applied to a tarot reading, force majeure suggests an event that the Seeker did not put into motion; it "just happened" to him or her. There is also the sense that it was unknowable in advance. Based on the Seeker's trajectory, it couldn't have been predicted that such an event would occur. In contract terms, these are usually unforeseen disasters, like sabotage, riots, terrorism, hurricanes, market conditions, floods, or natural events that are considered to be the "acts of God."

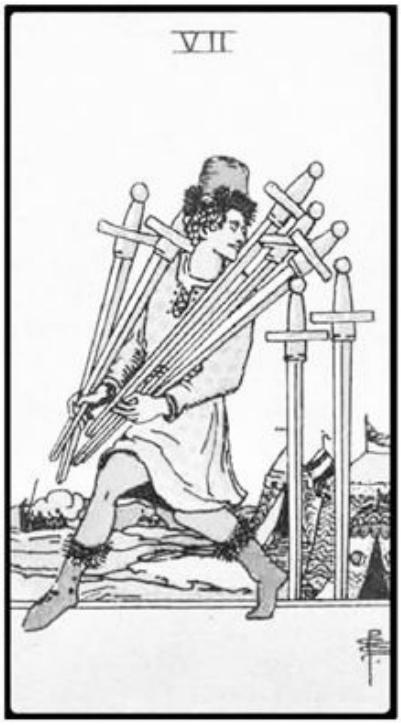
These types of force majeure affect us all to different degrees. In tarot, force majeure is most prominently seen in the Major Arcana of a spread: Key 10: Wheel of Fortune, Key 12: The Hanged Man, or even Key 13: Death. Although most of the time Key 16: The Tower represents a downfall that comes about as a result of our own hubris, there are times it indicates the inevitable. In rare but clear instances, The Tower can represent a natural disaster, such as an earthquake.

When a Seeker's spread is dominated by Major Arcana cards or there appear to be many events depicted in the spread that seem beyond his or her control, force majeure is strongly stacked against or sometimes in favor of the Seeker. Force majeure in life isn't necessarily bad. It simply indicates to

the practitioner that universal or cosmic qi is intense around that particular Seeker. If these forces seem to be hindering the Seeker, then he or she must look to the other components to determine how to mitigate the aftershock.

Karma

Karma is cause and effect. It is related to the action component, but also embodies the results of past actions; in contrast, the action component pertains to the Seeker's pending actions going forward. Karma is the universal qi seeking to regain its equilibrium. It isn't justice. There isn't anything subjectively fair about karma. It is the flow of energy that naturally balances itself out. If there are actions or forces you put into motion, natural actions or forces will be returned so that there is no net flow. When you give out, you have lost a little, so equivalent energy will come back to you to restore balance. Karma as analyzed in a tarot reading for the Seeker represents the equilibrium that the universe strives to maintain with the Seeker.



Key 10: Wheel of Fortune can represent force majeure, but it can also represent karma. Many cards from the Minor Arcana also fit here. Five of Cups, Nine of Swords, and Ten of Swords might alert the practitioner to bad karma at play. The Five of Swords or Seven of Swords can hint at the temptation to accrue potential bad karma. The Six of Swords could be said to show someone trying to run away from his or her karma. And the Six of Pentacles, Seven of Pentacles, even Nine and Ten of Pentacles can all suggest good karma. Some of those cards, though, could also indicate action, depending on where the cards fall in a spread. In the past position, it more likely indicates karma. In the future, it more likely indicates action.

Charity is often the most powerful force a Seeker can put into the universe to affect the balance in his or her favor. By assessing the overall landscape of a reading, the practitioner can identify the karmic tensions in a Seeker's present situation and help the Seeker understand how karma has affected the matter at hand.

Disposition

Disposition as applied here is character. Character makes or breaks a story. Character governs how a protagonist reacts to the force majeure he or she faces. It's outlook. It's optimism or pessimism. How does the Seeker view the glass? Half full or half empty? How does that view affect the Seeker's current situation? What are the dominant character traits in the Seeker? How do these dominant traits help the Seeker in his or her questions? How do they get him or her into trouble?

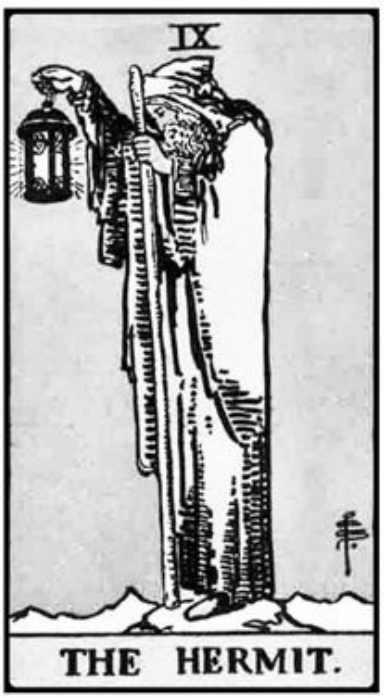
To me, character is almost everything. In a tarot reading, court cards often denote the Seeker's character, as do many other cards in the deck. When court cards appear figuratively as facets of the Seeker's self, you are looking at the prevailing disposition of the Seeker. Key 0: The Fool, Key 1 The Magician, Key 2: The High Priestess, Key 8: Strength, and a great many more of the Majo Arcana cards indicate very strong aspects of disposition at play.

Look to the narrative that the Minor Arcana tell in the spread to understand the Seeker's actions, past and present, and how the Seeker's disposition has played a role. The Seven of Wands shows a Seeker's character at play in the face of action against him or her. Both the Four of Pentacles and the Six of Pentacles reveal disposition, the Four being a Seeker more possessive and miserly, less empathetic of others, while the Six is a Seeker who is benevolent, generous, and deeply empathetic of others.

How we use our money tells a lot about our disposition, so look at what the suit of Pentacles says about a Seeker's character when they appear in a spread. The suit of Swords can hint at how the Seeker's disposition is being built. How does the sum of the other components in a Seeker's life affect the Seeker's current disposition, or even the progressive (or regressive) development of disposition?

It will become apparent to the practitioner when a Seeker's own disposition is what holds him or her back. When the tarot reading suggests that, urge the Seeker to reevaluate perspective, point of view, and personality to understand why there have been obstacles, and on the other side, what aspects of disposition have been key to the Seeker's success.

Education

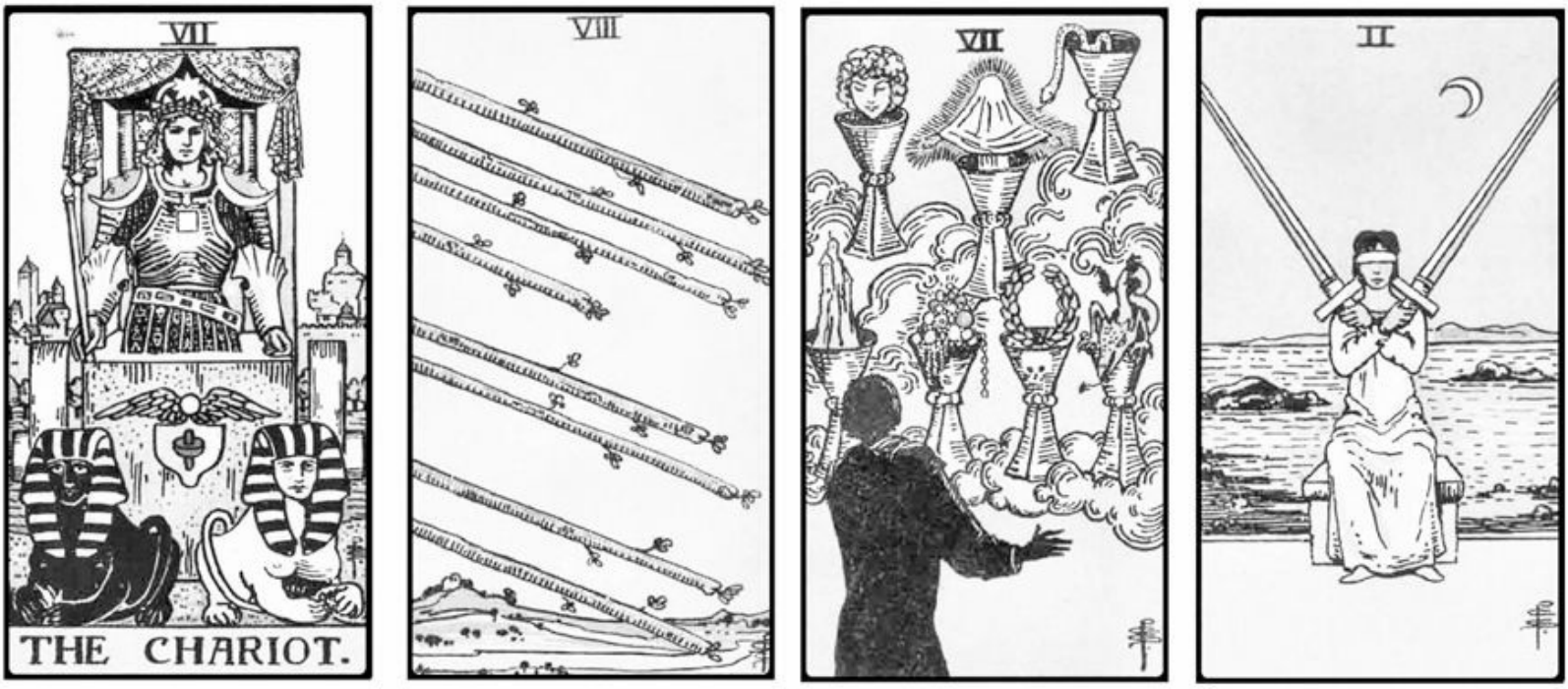


Acquiring knowledge and skills, forming positive habits, receiving or giving training, researching, and even the personal learning experience of trial and error all form our education. When every other component is stacked against the Seeker, vigorous education can change the outcome.

The Two of Wands is the start of one's education or entry into the world of knowledge, the arts, and science. The Three of Wands is about trying to put that education to practical use. The Eight of Pentacles is the apprentice on the right track and the Three of Pentacles is initiation into the higher echelons of one's field. Key 5: The Hierophant can suggest institutionalized or formal education and Key 9: The Hermit can suggest tutelage from a mentor. Key 20: Judgement represents a spiritual form of education.

Action

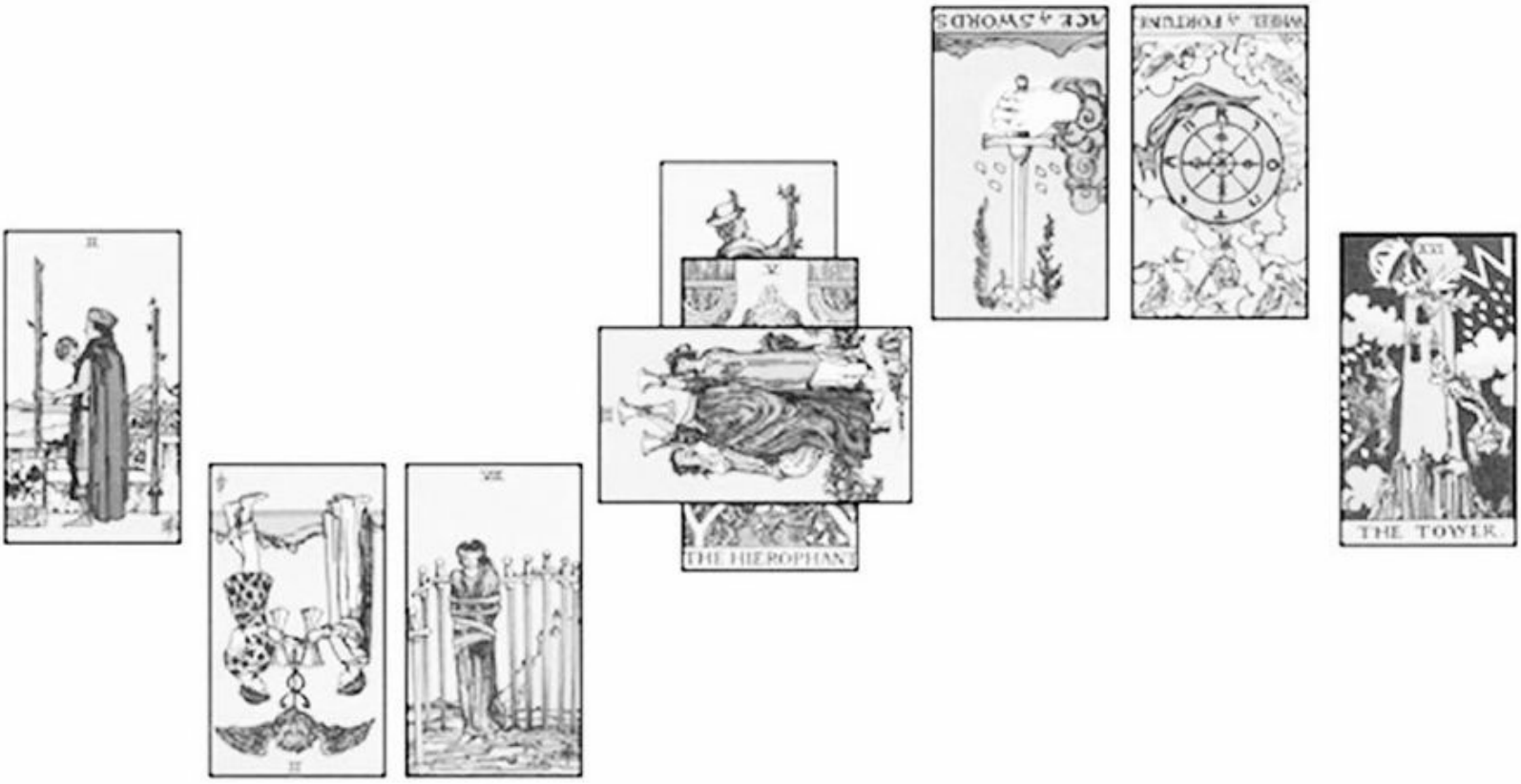
To explain action, I think of the fable of the little bird who heard that the sky was falling, so to do what he could to help hold up the sky when it came down, he prepared by lying flat on his back with his little feet in the air. That is action: doing everything within one's power to counter the forces against us.



Key 7: The Chariot can represent assertive action, while Key 14: Temperance is signaling to the Seeker to be more balanced with his or her action. The four Knight cards when they assume a figurative meaning can also symbolize action. The nature of the action contemplated will correspond with the suit. Many of the Wands, such as the Five of Wands or Eight of Wands, suggest action. The Two of Swords suggests an inability to take action. While the Five of Swords or Seven of Swords can represent karma when they appear in the past positions of a spread, the same cards can indicate adverse or potentially adverse action when they appear in a present or future position. Many cards from the suit of Pentacles show diligence as the dominant action driving the Seeker's situation.

In analyzing a spread, think about the following: What do the cards identify as being present from the five components? What is missing? You can empower a Seeker by pointing out to him or her where an imbalance is coming from that is tipping a circumstance against the Seeker's favor.

The five components should be filed in the back of the practitioner's head while he or she performs the reading. As you read the cards, think of what each card indicates about the force majeure in the Seeker's life, what the Seeker might need to adjust in his or her disposition or action to offset any negative force majeure, and what kind of karmic profile the Seeker has. Also, if the Seeker is unhappy with his or her present situation, think of what aspects of education can help improve a Seeker's chances of success. Remember that education is broad here. It means more than just schooling. It can indicate the seeking out of mentors, independent study, or self-help. Cards, such as the Four of Cups and Eight of Cups, that suggest reflecting on past actions and disposition to learn from experience can also be classified under education.



Laney is a young woman whose signifier card is the Page of Wands. She wants to know what her future career will look like. Here I have used the Insight Spread. When I put down the first card, Key 5: The Hierophant, I note the traditional, institutionalized education that embodies her present. It seems conservative and maybe even rigid in nature. Laney confirms that she is a sophomore attending an East Coast Ivy League school. After all the cards have been drawn, the last card, the Ace of Swords, seems to be the object of the Page of Wand's focus; her face is turned in that direction. The Ace of Swords here suggests a career in communications, law, a highly specialized, technical, or analytical career, which is typically the association with the Swords. However, in reverse it suggests that she may not achieve the success that she aspires to if she continues on her current path. There may be disappointments, but since she is still quite young, there are concrete measures she can take now to change that outcome.

The Three of Cups crossing her is read in reverse here. The way the Three of Cups not only blocks The Hierophant, but also seems to be the bridge leading from the Two of Wands in her past to The Tower in her future suggests that her flippancy toward her college education right now may have permanent effects if not corrected. The pleasure-seeking and, let's face it, the partying that the Three of Cups represents is distracting to her. I note that she is female and that the Three of Cups in spreads for women tend to indicate sisterhood, so I ask Laney whether she is a member of a social sorority, because the Three of Cups in reverse may be indicative of negative influences from that new element in her life.

The Two of Wands in her past suggests to me that she has traveled far from home for schooling. She is from a good family, but doesn't want to inherit her family's world. She seeks adventure beyond her castle walls. She is bold and ambitious, but it won't be a straightforward ascent to the top. The Tower card suggests hubris and ego. The Tower seems connected to the

Three of Cups in reverse, and also the Wheel of Fortune.

How I analyze The Tower will be grounded in my analysis of the other two cards. Also, rather than help, her great capabilities are harming her, as past accomplishments have clouded her view of the inevitable downfall that will come if she continues on her current reckless path. In Laney's past are the Eight of Swords and Two of Cups, reversed. The Two of Cups reversed here suggests a relationship that has ended, one with a strong element of friendship and camaraderie.

There was also a sense of being tied down to her circumstances, feeling a sense of imprisonment, and an intense yearning for release. The Eight of Swords paired next to the Two of Cups in reverse suggest that Laney was the one who ended the relationship. Also, part of her recklessness right now is attributed to that past sense of being tied down and restricted. The Eight of Swords is part of the cause for the Three of Cups.

The Wheel of Fortune in reverse isn't a good sign for her. There will be setbacks that she won't be able to overcome because she did not lay the foundation and groundwork for her strengths and for developing her assets the way she should have. Those setbacks will lead to the Ace of Swords in reverse, rather than upright.

Noting her age and the points raised in the cards, Laney definitely has time to make substantial changes that will bring about a better future for her. Though she will most likely end up in the career indicated by the Ace of Swords, she will not be promoted to the high level she wants if she doesn't remove the blockage represented by the Three of Cups and allow The Hierophant to fully develop the education component of her life circumstances.

There also needs to be a change in her disposition—one showing more humility. I might also mention the relationship suggested by the Two of Cups in her past. Was that relationship so bad? Its appearance in her spread could indicate that she hasn't seen the last of that person yet. It turns out that Laney was in a long-term relationship with a high school sweetheart, but she had left him behind before flying across the country to attend college.

After I mention this, Laney spends a full ten minutes talking about the sweetheart, but then says to me, "He's kind of boring, and too safe." She had in fact been the one who called things off. I say nothing more than, "He seems like a nice guy." Also, Laney is a member of a social sorority and she acknowledges that it has been taking a severe toll on her schoolwork. The Three of Cups makes a lot of sense to her, she notes. What's more, the Ace of Swords does reflect her career ambitions. Laney aspires to become a lawyer. She's been thinking of law school, but so far her grade point average has been floundering. She sighs and admits that it may have something to do with the sorority. So I ask her point blank: Which is more important, your sorority events or your future career path to become an accomplished lawyer? Laney nods.

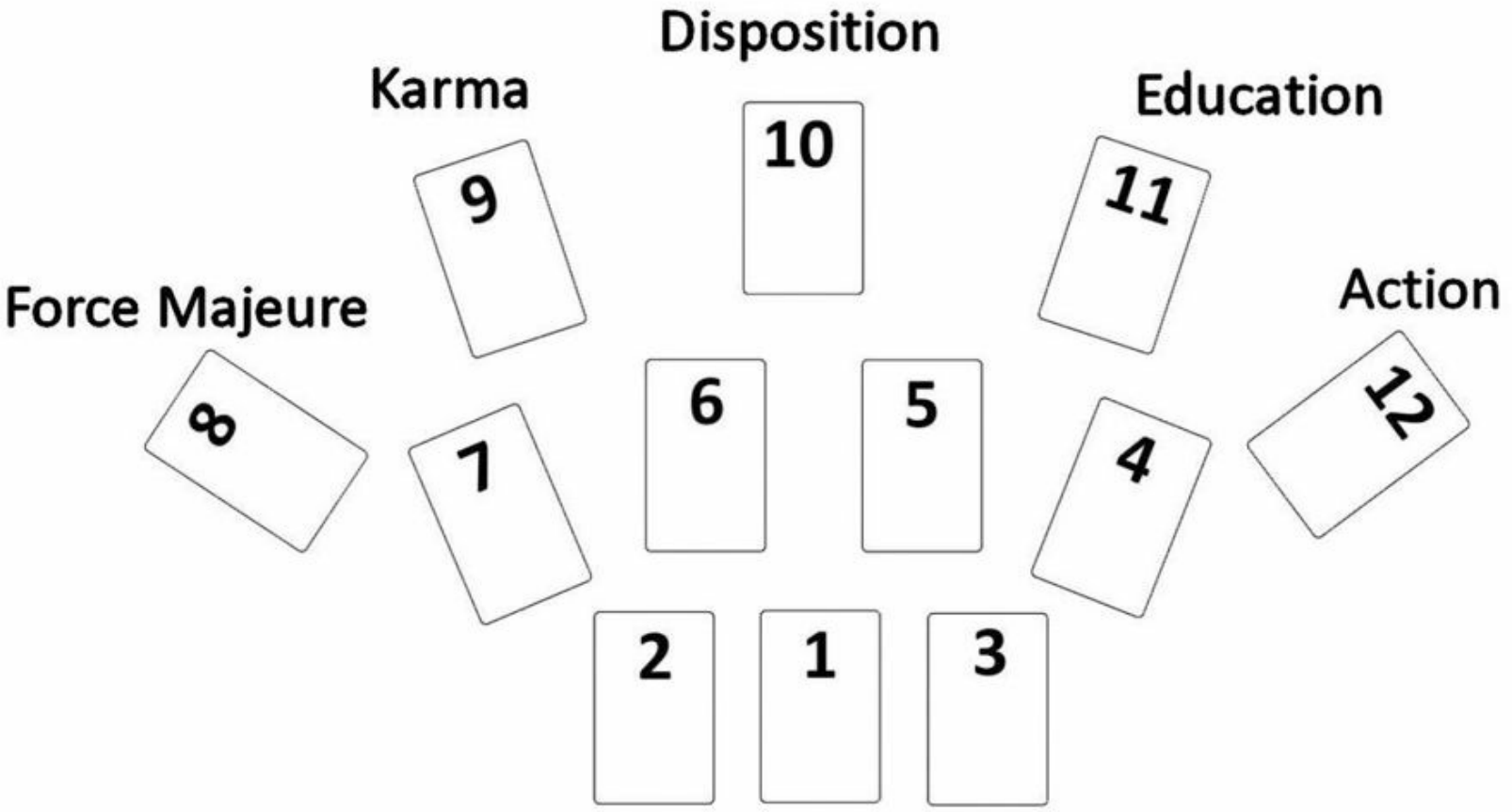
The tarot here isn't really doing any fortune-telling; it's logic-telling Laney what her mother has probably been nagging her about all along. While the tarot has an uncanny ability to pick up on the exact details relevant in a Seeker's life, the trajectory of the reading isn't predictive in a prophesy kind of way. It's only predictive in a common sense kind of way. Yet Laney might be more receptive to the counsel coming from a tarot reading, than she would be if it came from her mother. Laney does have a great deal of fire in her, as she is, after all, the Page of Wands. She will refuse to let the Ace of Swords in reverse be her future. Thus, she has no choice but to confront the future consequences of her present actions and make drastic changes to her habits.

Try to use the five components as your framework in analyzing a spread. I use a mnemonic to remember the five components: F-M-K-D-E-A, For My King Doth Enter Avalon. The King here, of course, being King Arthur, and Avalon being the place his sword, the Excalibur, was forged.

Returning to Laney, here is what should be going through the practitioner's mind when interpreting her reading through the framework of the five components:

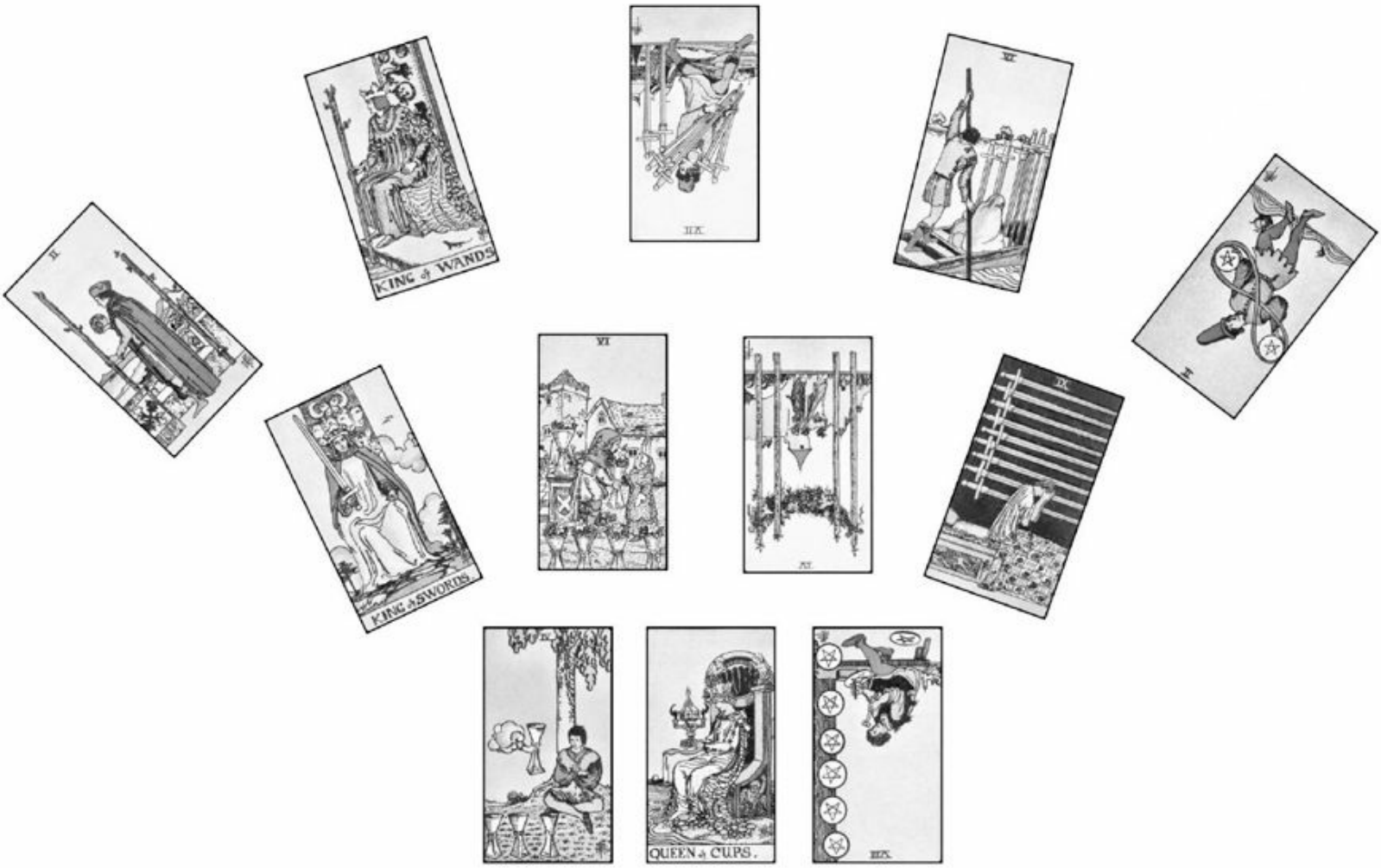
Using the Five Components to Analyze Laney's Reading

F-M-K-D-E-A **Force Majeure**	Two of Wands	Laney was born into a good family and has had the resources to reach where she is today. But the force majeure isn't enough to ensure career success. She must be proactive in disposition, education, and action.
F-M-**K**-D-E-A **Karma**	The Tower Wheel of Fortune	The Tower offers insight to the cause, which is rooted at least in part in hubris. The Wheel of Fortune in reverse reveals the effect: past errors in navigation judgment has now put Laney in a position where she must swim upstream to prevail.
F-M-K-**D**-E-A **Disposition**	Two of Wands The Tower	The Two of Wands in Laney's reading can also indicate disposition. She is restless and ambitious. The Tower card is a warning that adjustments to her personality need to be made.
F-M-K-D-**E**-A **Education**	The Hierophant	Here The Hierophant most likely indicates a traditional academic background. However, note how the Three of Cups is blocking the Hierophant.
F-M-K-D-E-**A** **Action**	Two of Cups, Rev. Eight of Swords Three of Cups, Rev.	The Two of Cups, reversed and Eight of Swords are read together to reveal Laney's decisive ending of a pretty good relationship. The Three of Cups in reverse shows the negative action that may hinder Laney's career aspirations. Here, the Three of Cups represents her sorority engagements.
Reconciling the Five Components for Laney	Ace of Swords, Rev.	Laney wants to know her future career path, and the Ace of Swords suggests communications, law, or a specialized professional field. However, it appears in reverse, which suggests unfulfilled potential. Laney wants to be a lawyer. But if she continues her current path, that ambition won't pan out. She must make significant changes to her current lifestyle.



Chapter 14 included the Seashell spread, which integrates the five components directly into the card positions. To focus on how a Seeker can improve his or her future through insights gained on where the Seeker stands in the five components, use the Seashell spread.

Case Study: Zara Revisited



Recall the Seashell spread case study on Zara, in Chapter 14. This section will now continue with the analysis for Cards 8 through 12, for the five components.

CARD 8 **F-M**-K-D-E-A **Force Majeure** Two of Wands	The Two of Wands calls to mind Alexander the Great. Recall that the King of Swords here was interpreted as possibly indicating a leading path in politics. Strong external circumstances seem to be pushing Zara in that direction, even though she said her passions are in music and the arts. It seems environmental forces will nudge Zara to unanticipated greatness, *not* in music or arts. If that sounds fine with her, the force majeure are strong in that favor. If her heart is with the arts, she will have to think about the decisions she makes and scrutinize what path these decisions are gearing her toward. In the real life case, Zara responded that she had become more active in her university's student government and had really thrived in that setting. Her leadership positions there had actually prompted her to think about maybe running for office in the future. The tarot is uncanny at organizing for us the thoughts and speculations in our minds that would otherwise remain unorganized. By organizing these thoughts and speculations for us, we are given the empowering opportunity to take control of our lives and make more informed decisions toward reaching our goals.
CARD 9 F-M-**K**-D-E-A **Karma** King of Wands	First, note that overall, the 3 court cards appearing together in Zara's spread is significant. It suggests socialization and extensive interaction with other people, which is in direct contrast to the Four of Cups in her past, which suggested a more introverted character. Note also how the vertical lineup of the Queen of Cups and Seven of Swords reversed indicates a dramatic change in Zara's personality. Here, the King of Wands
CARD 10 F-M-K-**D**-E-A **Disposition** Seven of Swords, Reversed	The meaning of the Seven of Swords reversed in Zara's spread was discussed previously. Note that it suggests a turning away from what is in her heart, from a more Cups- or Water-oriented temperament to one that is more Swords- or Air-oriented, further pushed by the King of Swords. The practitioner should note here how there is no indication in the cards of judgment in the negative or positive of Zara's path, so the practitioner, too, should be careful not to impose any personal opinions. There are pros and cons, gains and sacrifices to either path. It is for Zara and Zara alone to decide which to walk.
CARD 11 F-M-K-D-**E**-A **Education** Six of	The Six of Swords suggests a journey or travel. As applied to the Education component, Zara may go through a phase during her university years where she tries to run away from the geographical source of certain regrets. However, while she may have gone about it for the wrong reasons (one should never try to run away from sorrow), the final outcome will turn out in her favor. The journey will have been well worth it, as it will yield calmer times for her in the future and, ultimately, provide her

Swords	the education she needs to fulfill her future path.
CARD 12 F-M-K-D-E-**<u>A</u> Action** Two of Pentacles, Reversed	The Two of Pentacles reversed here suggests that while Zara's potential for accomplishment is great and the chances of her becoming a person of social prominence and importance is great, she is *not* as great at juggling multiple tasks at once. She needs to learn to focus. She cannot take on more than one project at any given time. For Zara, focused action will be the most productive. Thus, when acting, Zara must finish the task or project at hand before moving on to another. She should refrain from juggling more than one, as doing so plays more to her weakness than her strengths. Focusing will play more to her strengths.

Chapter 19

Assuaging Seekers When a Reading Seems Negative

I KNEW A WOMAN who was downright vile to people. She blurted out insults, judgments, and even predictions of misfortune, believe it or not, without any filters. "Don't bother asking him out," she has said to a girlfriend. "He's going to say no. He'd never love you. You're too ugly for him." When she is displeased at a restaurant, she never fails to tell the waiter that the food is below par. She points out at least three negative traits about every person she meets. If you're wondering whether you look fat in that dress, you can count on her to give it to you straight.

When confronted about her negativity, the woman would defend herself by saying, "I'm just telling the truth. No matter how much you dislike it, I'm not going to change my honesty." She compared kindness and diplomacy to "being fake."

Good thing she never became a tarot practitioner.

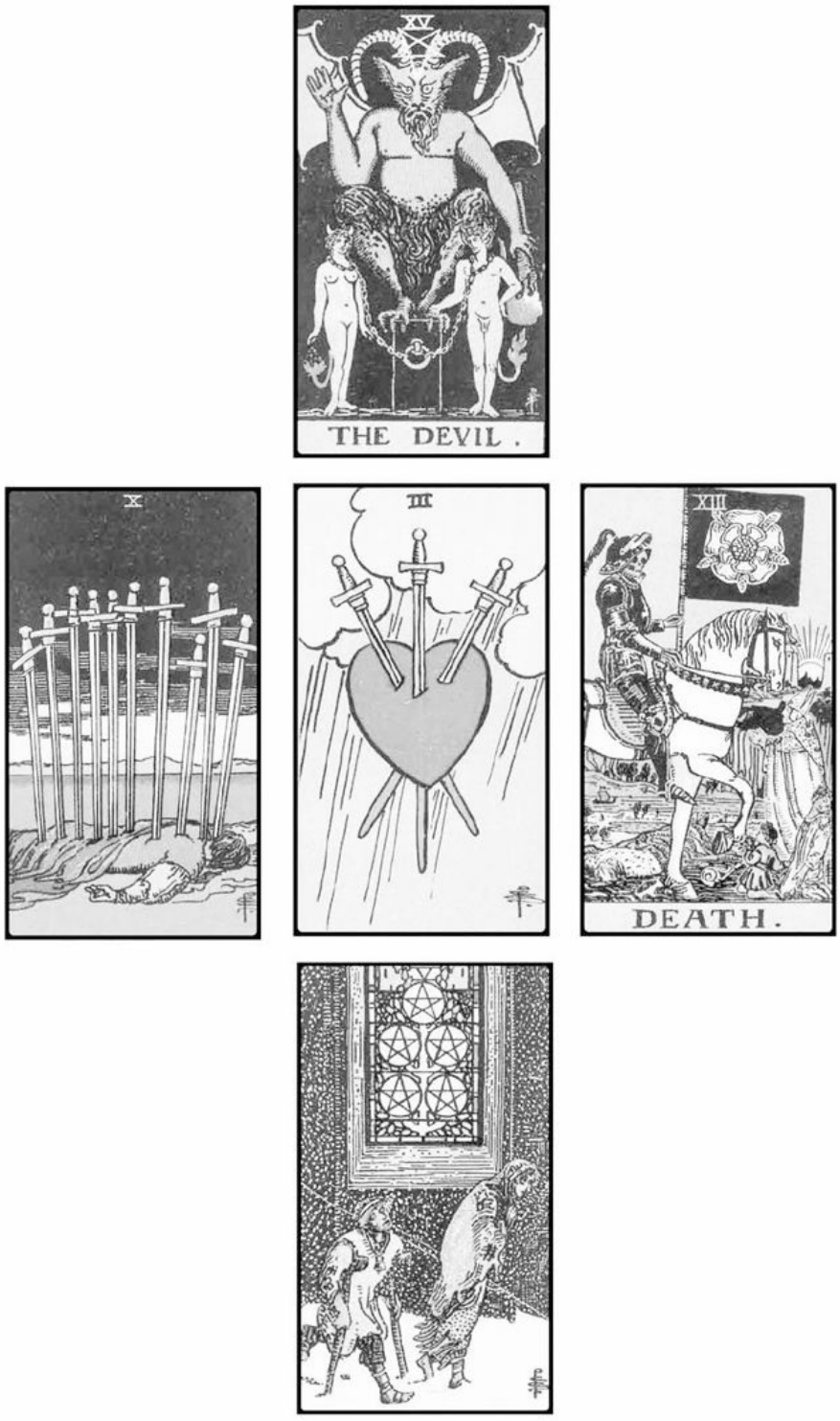
Do not sugarcoat your tarot readings for Seekers, and certainly do not withhold information or conveniently skip over the negative cards in a spread. However, be conscious of how you phrase the reading. For example, never say, "You're going to be poor," because first of all, that is patently false. You don't know that, just like the woman I mentioned has no actual idea whether the boy would say yes or no to the girl. Her comments about the boy not loving the girl and the girl being too ugly for the boy are opinions only, which a person is entitled to, but a tarot reading is no place for your personal judgment. Instead, say, "Money looks tight and you should continue to keep an eye out on your finances. Be cautious and conservative. Making risky investments with your assets wouldn't be a good idea at the moment."

And remember that none of the cards are one-dimensionally good or bad. The Nine of Pentacles is often interpreted as a woman who has it all, a life of refinement and accomplishment. Yet there is a profound loneliness about the imagery, one so subtle that the woman pictured is not willing to show it on her face. Study the card intently and a sense of sadness will finally emerge. The card suggests loneliness and solitude in the garden of success. Even the woman's estate beyond seems to echo with emptiness, which you don't see from the foreground because your eyes are so attracted to the pentacles. The land stretching behind her past the garden seems barren and hollow.

Thus, it is overly simplistic to categorize the cards as "positive" or "negative." Each card represents a facet of the human condition and the greater universal forces that affect the condition. Each card is three-dimensional, with an upside and a downside. Thus, the "negative" cards do not indicate pure tragedy.

Case Study: Cora

Now let's try a hypothetical. The following is not based on an actual reading (good thing). Few of us have the cards (literally) stacked against us quite like this next spread:



1 *Current State:* Three of Swords
2 *Roots/Foundation:* Five of Pentacles
3 *Past Influences:* Ten of Swords, reversed
4 *Aspirations/Speculations*: Key 15: The Devil
5 *Probable Outcome:* Key 13: Death

Cora requests a tarot reading from you and the foregoing cards are drawn. You see her eyes immediately widen and she looks terrified. What do you say to her?

For the purpose of the present hypothetical, there is no need to delve into the full reading. The objective here is to practice what you will say when such negative cards are drawn.

The optimal response is to give her a few keywords for each card right away, so she

doesn't sit there dreading and wondering what tragedy each of these cards has in store for her. Breeze through all the keywords right away, at least superficially, so that she can relax and not wonder what the Death card means while you're still explaining the Three of Swords. Also, if you can, quickly hit on a few of the positive aspects of the cards.

Since the Devil and Death cards seem to intimidate just about everyone who is not familiar with tarot, start there.

So you might say, "The Devil signifies materialism, bondage, allowing our inner demons to control us. It could be a reminder for you to return to your faith, for example, and devote more of your time to spirituality. The Death card symbolizes transformation and metamorphosis. See how the horizon on the future side of the card is a rising sun? All will turn out well for you, as it should. The Ten of Swords suggests that someone may have retaliated against you, that there may have been a betrayal, but you have prevailed and triumphed over that situation. Again, note the yellow horizon that overall in the spread is aligned with the rising sun in Key 13. This is good news for you. Plus, the Ten of Swords is part of your past and it appears in reverse. Now let me get into the heart of the reading, literally and figuratively. The Three of Swords is about grief and loss, a storm in the heart, but it is also about a catharsis …"

You can cover the keywords of all the cards within the first sixty seconds, to ground the Seeker; once Cora seems to understand that it is not all doom and gloom, you can begin the in-depth reading.

Be sure to note how bold and bright the red heart is in the Three of Swords, and the rare chance to experience that burst of intense love and pure passion, even though the dark side of that is anger and pain. The Five of Pentacles might suggest the winter of one's financial situation, but the reading has also indicated the cause for money troubles: it's by Cora's own doing, not any force majeure or extenuating tragic circumstances. Cora must take greater control over her own impulses for the material. Unlike others, who might not have as much control over their present difficulties, Cora does. Cora needs to drastically curb the expenditures expressed by The Devil card.

Key 13, Death

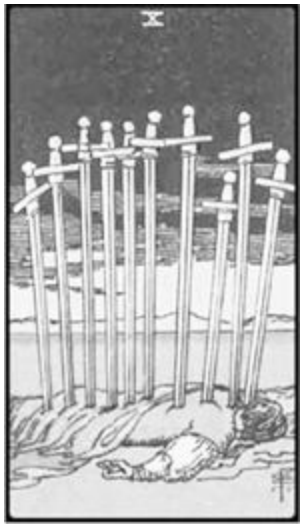
Change is coming, temporarily painful, but the change will bring you closer to your greater goals. The playing field will be leveled.

Key 15, The Devil

The solution to your obstacle is clear: stop letting temptation, addiction, and materialistic bonds encumber you. Take control of your life.

Key 16, The Tower

It is your own greatness that brings your downfall, because greatness must be paired with humility. Rebuild again, this time on the side of God



Ten of Swords

Your greatness incites the jealousy of others, but it is not over. You will rise again and prevail; you will become the hero in the legend

Most important of all, *you*, the practitioner, cannot dread the Death card, The Tower, The Devil, Ten of Swords, or any card in the tarot deck.

Everyone is intuitive. The Seeker will pick up on your feelings immediately, and that will only intensify his or her own sense of dread. *Do not perform readings for others until you are in full control of the deck and no single card intimidates you*. If any card intimidates you when drawn, then you are not ready to read tarot for others.

However, do not brazenly announce that you do not fear Death either. Change is frightening for all of us. The first step is to admit that and embrace the fear. Why is change scary to us? Because we don't know what will happen next, we don't know whether we will adapt to the change successfully, and we don't know whether we can stay in control. We hate not being in control. Not being in control

terrifies us. Admitting fear overcomes intimidation. Once you understand your fear, you are no longer disabled by it. When change comes, you are informed and prepared.

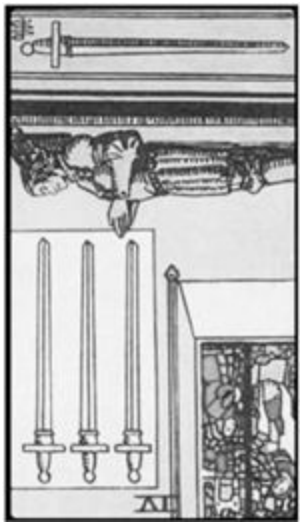
The Devil is also difficult to look at because who wants to confront the darker side of themselves? Looking at The Devil is looking at that part of you that you know is deeply flawed. Same with The Tower. You would prefer to engage in avoidance coping mechanisms. The only way to overcome our obstacles and eradicate our flaws is to face these cards head-on, accept them into our lives, and commit to them as a part of who we are.

Five of Cups

***Regret, loss, and disappointment, but a shift in perspective will reveal the way. Shift your focus from what you have not to what you* do *have*.**

Four of Swords

***Temporary illness, but if you take time to recuperate, you will be restored to your loved ones soon. You have to pay more attention to your health*.**



Four of Swords, Rev.

Extreme exhaustion and yet circumstances bar recuperation. Seeker must fight with the one remaining sword and hold the faith.

Eight of Swords

Feeling bound by circumstances, but creative thinking will reveal an easy, obvious solution.

Nine of Swords

Insomnia, haunting, and regret, but it was not your fault. Nothing you could have done would have prevented what happened

Five of Pentacles

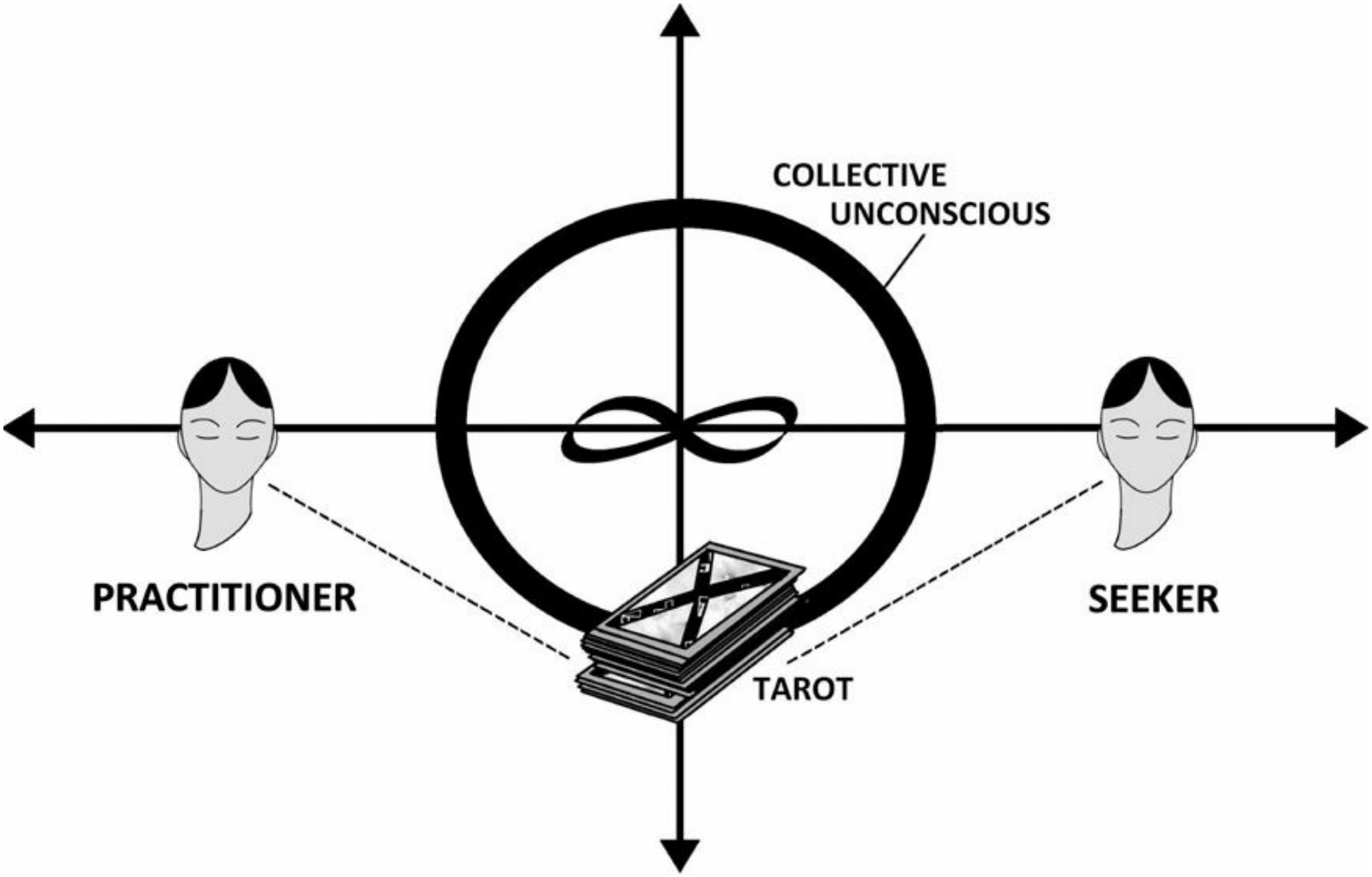
Financial difficulties, feeling homeless, but divine intervention comes to the faithful and hopeful.

The cards reviewed in this chapter tend to be the cards that most intimidate Seekers, so the practitioner must be sure to know how to explain them well. Chapter 28 on Resilience readings sets forth positive affirmations of every tarot card that can be integrated into readings to empower Seekers.

Chapter 20

Reading Tarot for Yourself

A DEBATED TOPIC AMONG tarot practitioners is whether you can read the tarot for yourself. My answer to that question is yes, with a caveat. Yes, of course you can read the tarot for yourself. This book assumes that you will read tarot for yourself and use it to help you achieve your goals. The tarot is like any other object, any other tool. If you understand how the tool or object is to be used and you have the skill for it, then there is no need to pull in another body. Note, however, that it may be harder to read *effectively* for yourself.



The trinitarian principle of practitioner, tarot deck, and Seeker must still be present. Without the trinity, the energies needed to activate the tarot are insufficient. Perhaps that is why some practitioners are convinced that you cannot read for yourself: because physically speaking, there are only two entities, not three. However, that is not correct. The trinity is not in three separate physical bodies. It is in three separate states that become one. You can be both practitioner and Seeker if you are able to maintain the three separate entities.

At the risk of using a nonspiritual analogy to explain a deeply spiritual matter, the shared yet distinct entity is similar to a single individual operating as a registered corporation. A corporation

can be just one person—as the shareholder, director, and officer of the business—and that person is 100 percent of the corporation; yet the person and the corporation are independent of each other and separate. One is not equal to the other, although one is the other. Separate bank accounts must be maintained, separate books, separate everything. When a business owner fails to do that and commingles the personal with the business, he or she will quickly stumble into legal and tax trouble.

Similarly, when reading tarot for yourself, you the practitioner do not equal you the Seeker, although you are you. You can read the tarot for yourself if you can wear both the hat of the practitioner and the hat of the Seeker as two independent and separate entities in two different states simultaneously. If that can be accomplished, then you can read tarot for yourself. For me, that means when I shuffle the cards for a reading, I think and manifest the intentions of a Seeker. Then when I lay the cards out into the spread and study them, I think and manifest the intentions of a practitioner.

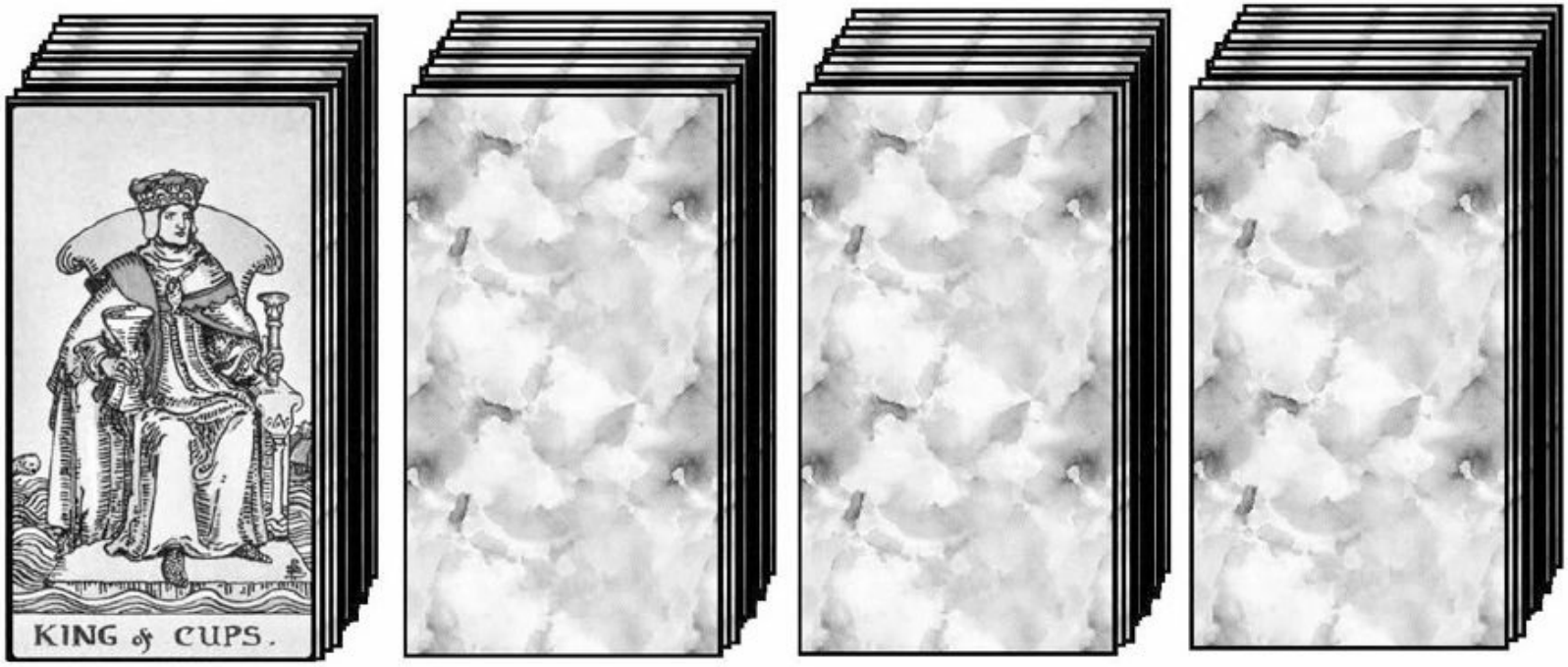
A rudimentary start at attempting objective interpretation for yourself is to go back to the textbook meanings of the cards. Consider those meanings. Then explore the imagery of each card and note the features that stand out to you, that seem to demand and hold your attention. Consider the significance of those features. In that way, you are a beginner tarot practitioner for yourself. Through practice and experience, you will learn to distinguish personal bias from intuition and evolve into an intermediate and then advanced tarot practitioner for yourself. When the textbook meaning of a card or a specific sign or symbol in the card feels either like a mirror of a preexisting idea or emotion in you or feels incongruent (which is why you would think that it does not resonate), then you are still applying your personal bias. When a meaning feels like it comes from beyond you, becomes implanted in you, and without trigger somehow takes root and germinates, then you can confirm that you have let intuitive-creativity in.

The genesis of great ideas is intuitive-creativity.[1] Renowned scientists throughout history have attributed their groundbreaking discoveries to reliance on intuition.[2] Writers, artists, philosophers, and musicians source their creativity from their intuition. I have personally observed inordinately successful business executives relying not on logic or numbers or basic financial principles to make their investment decisions, but rather on their intuition, that gut instinct. That is intuitive-creativity. While tapping into that intuitive-creativity is not generally thought of as an event that can occur on cue (i.e., usually, it happens when it happens; insights come when they want to come, and not at our beck and call), it can be facilitated through what is referred to as a transcendent experience.[3] That is what a tarot reading can provide, that transcendent experience needed to tap into your intuitive-creativity, the birthplace of genius and ingenuity.

Thus, you are encouraged to teach yourself tarot and read for yourself, to tap into that intuitive-creativity. Tarot analytics is not an occult or mystical endeavor. It is a practical application of signs and symbols on cards, grounded in psychological theories and human sciences that can be used to help people make better decisions in their everyday lives.

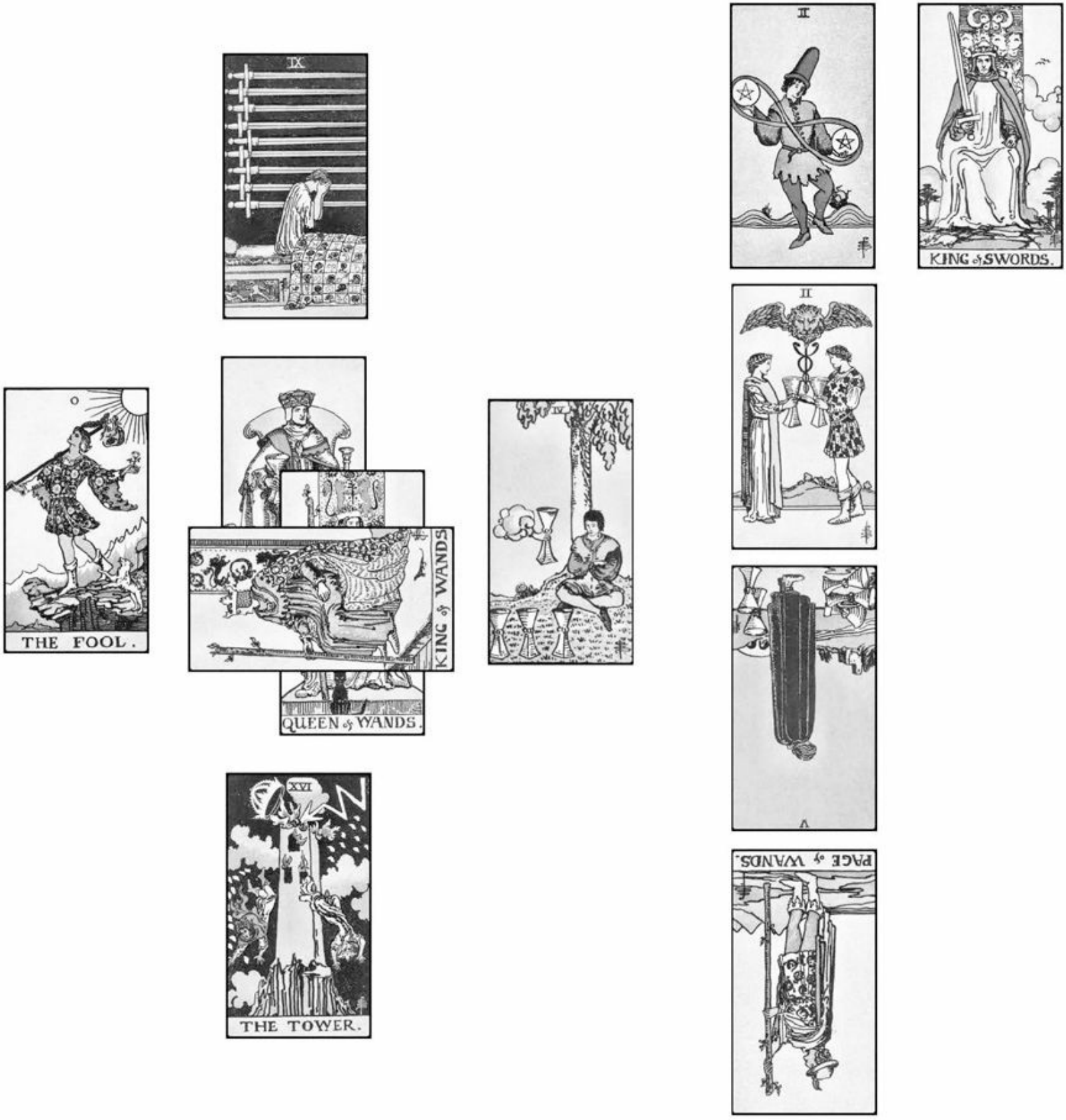
Case Study: Carter

Carter is in his late fifties, a poet, a Water sign, and is learning tarot for himself. His last published collection of poems met with lukewarm reviews and he personally agreed with those reviews. He feels he hasn't been producing the same quality of work he used to. Carter is now working on a new collection of poems, but has hit a bit of writer's block, made worse by his newfound insecurities. He decides to read tarot for himself to see if it might help trigger intuitive-creativity.



He uses the King of Cups as his signifier, as he is a Water sign. Carter commences with the First Operation and finds his signifier in the pile corresponding with the material plane, finances, money matters, and foundations. Right away he is confused. He expected the signifier to appear in the first pile, for his career and professional path, or maybe the pile corresponding with a specific creative project. He doesn't feel any strain on his personal economics and doesn't understand why the First Operation would indicate to focus on his money situation. He begins to think that the First Operation is random and not very accurate. Nonetheless, he proceeds with a full reading spread just to see what will come up.

It is not uncommon for a tarot spread to seem nonsensical or inapplicable when reading for yourself. Perhaps the court cards don't make sense. There aren't that many people involved in your situation, so why so many courts? You don't know whether to construe them literally or figuratively, and either way they don't seem to resonate with your situation. You don't like the appearance of The Tower card or the Nine of Swords or Four of Cups and think that perhaps you messed up your technique, and so you better try again. Let's say you redo the reading three more times until you get The Sun, the Ten of Pentacles, and The World. What you will inevitably discover is none of the traditional meanings for those happy cards come to pass and you are left questioning whether you can really read tarot for yourself. As Carter stares at his tarot spread, he is wondering the same thing.



Carter opted for the Celtic Cross, but as he set down the cards, the cards don't seem to pertain to his question. He pulled an additional card after the Celtic Cross to serve as a shadow card, hoping that an additional shadow card might offer clarity to the confusing Celtic Cross.

Initially Carter objects to the relevance of the many court cards. He has been a hermit and divorced for the last few years and has no interest in engaging in a new romantic relationship (looking at the Two of Cups), and he feels that applying the figurative meaning

for the courts, (i.e., nurturing his career aspirations for the Queen of Wands, or receipt of bad news for the Page of Wands in reverse) would be too broad to be insightful.

Where did Carter go wrong? Should he redo the tarot reading?

It's not that Carter has only "one shot" to get his tarot reading right. Rather, the point is if he feels he has to do multiple readings for the same question, then that act itself might demonstrate that he is not in the right mindset, that he has not established the trinity. Therefore, no, redoing the tarot reading wouldn't be beneficial to Carter.

During the shuffling and card-cutting process, Carter should be concentrating on the question at hand. In the present case study, assume he did. As he sets out the cards into the Celtic Cross spread, he should do so as the practitioner, which merely means he must let the cards fall as they will, not switch cards in and out. After drawing a few cards that do not seem to make sense, do not then decide to hastily reshuffle the remaining deck in hand again. There is no need. An objective practitioner would not do so for an actual third-party Seeker, and neither should Carter.

Once the spread is complete, Carter should document the reading results for later review. At the moment, he might still be too close to the matter at hand, but after letting it sit for a few hours or even a few days, he could be in a better frame of mind to interpret the spread. The transcendence experience will trigger as he meditates on and ponders the resulting spread. Oftentimes thinking about a problem directly causes emotion and biases to inhibit intuitive-creativity. By thinking about the problem through an abstract lens, such as a tarot spread, those emotions and biases can get filtered out. Thus, instead of thinking directly about what he should do for his poetry collection, he should explore every angle he can about the Queen of Wands, the Four of Cups, the Two of Pentacles, or the King of Swords.

The Queen of Wands may be a woman, but it also may simply convey yin energy, the receptive, the yielding, the dark instead of the light, the curve instead of the straight edge. The Queen here could symbolize the yin component of Fire energy, and the yin aspects of the creative. With these few words—dark, curve, potential energy as opposed to kinetic, the heat of Fire rather than the blaze, focusing on the shadows flickering on the wall rather than the flame—Carter begins to form verses to a poem, a poem about an aging poet, that will later get published by a top-tier literary journal. Without using the textbook Cyclopedia interpretation of the Queen of Wands, and yet not straying too far from her essence, Carter is able to use the card to tap into his intuitive-creativity.

The King of Wands in reverse and blocking his signifier (and the Queen) could not be more relevant to his situation. He was approaching creativity with too much dogmatism and, manifesting the negative attributes of the King of Wands, proverbially shoving a square peg into a round hole. The suit of Wands, of course, relates directly to the question at hand, that of his creativity and his writing career. The cross formed by the Queen and King, with the King blocking both the Queen and Carter's signifier, quite clearly pinpointed the source of his stagnation. The way to reconnect with his creativity wasn't through force or yang will, but through receptivity. As soon as Carter realized that, he was able to receive literal imagery for a new poem from the Queen of Wands and alleviate the creative blockage that the King had formed.

The Tower below him, enforcing the spread with more Fire energy like the two Wands, suggested that the way to get through his current creative block was not to attempt to build on what he had done in the past, which was the way he had been going about his writing. Instead, he should let go of everything he had learned or built before, start from a risky place of humility, surrounded by rubble, and build anew. The Tower card dared him to do something different with this forthcoming poetry collection. The Fool relates to the shadow card he drew, the King of Swords, as both command powerful Air energy. The Fool hinted at the new beginning needed, with a cause-effect correlation to The Tower. As Carter meditated on the King of Swords at length, his gaze fixed on the single blackbird behind the king, symbolizing higher thought and metamorphosis. The bird was about profound change at the intellectual level.

As for the Two of Cups, it wasn't about starting a new romance in his life. It was about the harmony, cooperation, and reconciliation of duality, a theme that immediately repeats itself in the next card, the Two of Pentacles. Balance the emotional plane first, and then balance will manifest in the material plane and bring financial rewards. The Two of Pentacles represents the choice he faced between the emotional plane (the Two of Cups) and the thought plane (the King of Swords), with a cue that the optimal path would be through the King of Swords. The other cards—the Four of Cups, Five of Cups in reverse, and Nine of Swords—echo and affirm that message. Thus, rather than focus on emotion, which Carter the poet tended to do, he decides to focus on ideas and the communication of those ideas through poetry.

Upon further thought, the Page of Wands in reverse made perfect sense. It wasn't about a young girl who might be having an adverse effect on Carter or the receipt of negative news. In that position in the Celtic Cross, the card represented how he viewed himself and his own perception of his situation. The Page of Wands in reverse appeared in an effort to compel Carter to face his own fear of exploring the unknown. It reflected his insecurity, the blockages to creativity and lack of progress that occupied the entirety of his consciousness, which is why he had no room in his mind for progressive growth.

His signifier had appeared in the last pile during the First Operation because he needed to go back to his foundations. To progress, he first needed to reaccount for his resources, and from there build again. The source of stagnation was at the very root, and material deconstruction, even destruction, had to take place for him to clear the creative blockage.

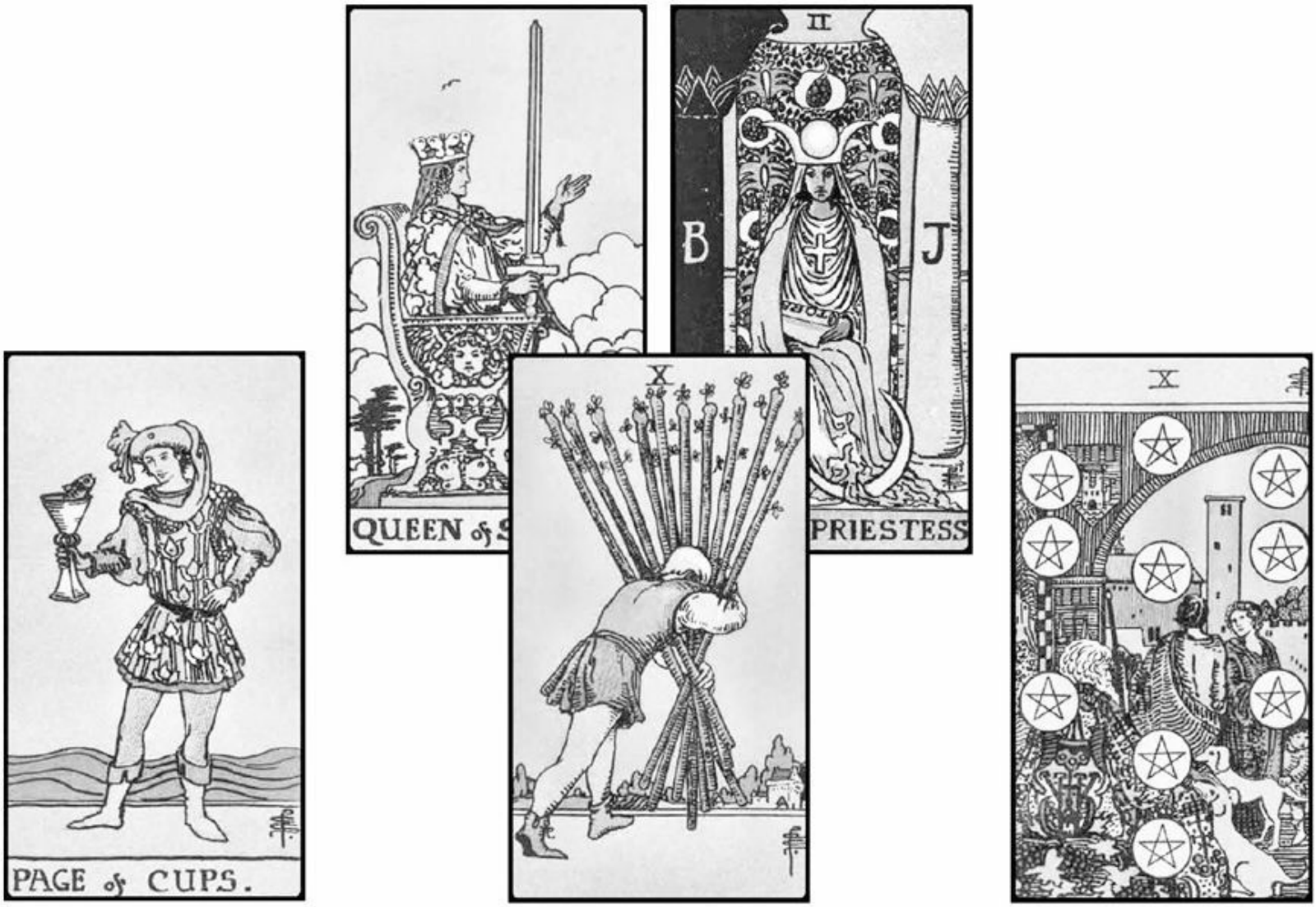
Focusing on the signs and symbols yielded in a tarot reading *was* the transcendent experience that Carter needed to tap into his intuitive-creativity. It is the tarot cards that help an individual like Carter to separate the practitioner side from the Seeker side. Basically, reading for yourself works so long as you defer patiently to the tarot. Let the significance of the cards come to you in its own time. Do not manipulate it with additional shuffles after a few "bad" cards are drawn, or try to do multiple readings for the same question. Do not pull a card, make a hasty judgment that the card doesn't apply, and try to draw another card in its place. These actions cause distraction, and such distraction will disrupt the space needed for a tarot reading to come together in your mind.

To read tarot, whether it is for others or for yourself, give your best effort and your

greatest amount of concentration to every step, without exception. That way you will never feel the need to second-guess the results.

Case Study: Thea and Carlee

Thea and Carlee's case study helps to illustrate the distinction between personal bias and intuitive-creativity. The two are thinking of buying a house together. They have found a property listing that they both love and want to put in an offer. Carlee is a tarot enthusiast and Thea asks Carlee to do a tarot reading for them about the purchase of the house.



Two signifiers are used to represent Thea and Carlee. Thea is a middle-age woman with an olive complexion and striking features, who is highly educated, intelligent, and, if we are all being honest, can be a bit brash and argumentative—and so the Queen of Swords is used as her signifier. Carlee has always gravitated toward the High Priestess as her personal signifier. Carlee uses a three-card reading for the inquiry. It is the same three-card reading approach from Chapter 14, but with two signifiers rather than one, since the home purchase will be a shared endeavor.

The card in the present position, the Ten of Wands, resonates with the couple because they were already aware that the house might be over their budget. Buying it could put them in a position of being financially overburdened, the two acknowledge. However, recall that there may be some personal bias involved, if a card meaning seems to mirror a preexisting idea or emotion. Thus, Thea and Carlee would be encouraged to think further about what else the Ten of Wands might mean.

How can Thea and Carlee read the Ten of Wands in a way that transcends personal bias? Look to the elemental dignity of the card. Fire energy. Creation. The beginning of creating something. Passion. Also look to any imagery in the Ten of Wands that stands out. For Thea and Carlee, they were pulled toward the house in the background of the card and the boy walking toward the house, not seeing it due to his face being buried in the wands.

At that moment, it struck them both that the Ten of Wands here wasn't about being financially overburdened by the purchase, but that the burdens themselves were obstructing their view of their goal, of what would truly make them happy: having a home to call their own. They were letting the notion of burdens prevent them from seeing what it was they really wanted. That meaning for the Ten of Wands here, both concurred, felt like a seed that fell into them, took root, and was now germinating into a bright light clearing away those ten figurative wands in their way. That was when they knew they were reading the Ten of Wands intuitively.

The Ten of Pentacles in the projected future position affirmed to them their intuitive reading of the Ten of Wands. Purchasing that home was the first step toward establishing the stability and security of the family life they planned to have together. The synchronicity of the two Ten cards created a transcendent experience and triggered Thea and Carlee's intuitive-creativity. The Page of Cups in the past position served as validation of their shared dreams of emotional bliss and fulfillment.

Chapter 21

The Setting of a Tarot Reading and Energetic Supplements

The Setting of a Tarot Reading

A PERSON'S CONCENTRATION CAN be enhanced or hindered by the environment. Few will debate that. For most of us, it's easier to study somewhere quiet, with no distracting sounds, sights, or smells (and also nothing to distract the sense of touch). When we wish to communicate with the supreme deities of our religious faiths, it seems to come more naturally someplace where images and objects of our faith surround us. Ambiance and sentimental objects help us reach certain desired states of mind. For effective tarot reading, the practitioner and the Seeker need to feel at peace, powerful, and open. Those are the elements needed to open the gateway into the unconscious. One of your first objectives in developing your tarot practice will be to identify for yourself what setting requirements you need to feel at peace, powerful, and open.

What scents help you? Consider incense or essential oils. For those who are sensitive, essential oils tend to be gentler than incense. (I, being terribly sensitive, prefer essential oils.) Try scented candles. What colors, scents, objects, or conditions comfort you? What do you need to feel: (1) at peace, (2) powerful, and (3) open?

The seasoned practitioner may not need much. He or she has learned to reach that needed state of mind without reliance on setting. Unexpected environmental factors won't have an impact because the seasoned practitioner can reach inside to achieve that state. However, the novice practitioner will need to experiment with different settings, different colors, scents, and objects to figure out what works for him or her. After learning how to reach that state of peace, power, and openness, the novice will no longer need particular setting requirements.

The way to reach that state of peace, power, and openness will be different for each person. Some need dim lighting, candles, perfumes, or crystals. Objects that hold religious or spiritual significance to the practitioner are immensely helpful. Others need objects of nature nearby, to feel more grounded and attuned to cosmic qi. Many practitioners use incense. The use of incense has a long history in almost every religion of the world—Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Wicca, etc.—with the rationale that particular scents help to focus the mind and calm the body. That same concept can be transferred to the tarot. Lavender, jasmine, cinnamon, frankincense, lemongrass, anise, and sandalwood each have their special properties, but all aid in reaching that state of peace, power, and openness.

A Quick Overview of Basic Gemstones and Their Uses

Gemstones			
Use	***Gemstone(s)***	***Use***	***Gemstone(s)***
Power	Crystal Quartz Obsidian Camelian	Protection / Defense Warding off Negative energies	Sunstone Snowflake Obsidian Amethyst Angelite
Love/Romance	Rose Quartz Mangano Calcite Hematite (for Attraction)	Intuition Spirituality	Moonstone Amethyst Blue Calcite
Prosperity Good Luck	Jade Aventurine Tiger's Eye	Alleviate Grief/Sorrow Coping with Pain	Black Onyx Brown Jasper
Health/Wellness Healing	Jade Amber Camelian Bloodstone	Endurance Grounding Energies Focus; Concentration	Crystal Quartz Brown Jasper Agate (any variety, though its color may influence mood)

A Quick Overview of Basic Colors and Their Correspondences

Gemstones			
Color	***Associations***	***Color***	***Associations***
Red	Power. Strength. Vitality. Ambition. Fearlessness. Vigor.	Blue	Confidence. Work or Career Goals. Truth Seeking. Knowledge.
Pink	Love/Romance. Sensuality. Women's Health. Flirtation.	Purple	Spirituality. Wisdom. Intuition. Calmness.
Orange	Power. Creativity. A Much Wanted Change	Black	Power. Defense against evil or negativity. Protection.
Yellow	Joy/Happiness. Friendships. Active energy.	White	Spirituality. Purification. Transformation. Purity.
Green	Wealth/Prosperity. Fertility. Health/Wellness. Work/Career.	Gray	Alleviate Grief/Sorrow. Deep thought. Coping with Pain.

A Quick Overview of Basic Essential Oils and Their Uses

Essential Oils			
Essential Oil	***Use(s)***	***Essential Oil***	***Use(s)***
Bergamot	Confidence. Inspiration. Work/career. Prosperity.	Chamomile	Purifying. Calming. Induces peace and openness.
Cinnamon	Healing physical and emotional pain. Induces peace.	Frankincense	Relief stress, tension. Induces peace.
Ginger	Energy. Motivation. Fortune. Induces power and openness.	Jasmine	Spiritually-fulfilling love. Induces peace and openness.
Lavender	Self-improvement. Beautification. Induces peace.	Lemon Grass	Relieves stress and tension. Induces peace and power.
Sandalwood	Enhances power. Purges negativity. Purifying.	Ylang Ylang	Love. Romance. Sensuality.

The aids mentioned herein are not being used in any form of worship, nor are they being assigned extraordinary metaphysical significance. They are objects. My approach to tarot does not integrate magic, magick, or religion. The reasoning for using the aids is simple. Certain colors, certain scents, seeing certain objects make us happy. And happy is good.

When a Seeker has a question about love, I like to have rose quartz nearby. For questions related to wealth and prosperity, I like to have jade. If jade is outside a practitioner's budget, try aventurine. Jaspers are great grounding stones. They aid with stability. Crystal quartz, as many already know, is a powerful gemstone. It's versatile and helps to amplify present energies. If a Seeker feels cursed or profoundly down on his or her luck, I'll whip out the sunstone or snowflake obsidian. These stones protect and defend. They ward off negative vibrations that have been intentionally channeled your way to harm you, which is why they're nice to have around if someone feels they've been cursed. Moonstone helps when a question demands that my intuitive abilities be at maximum capacity.

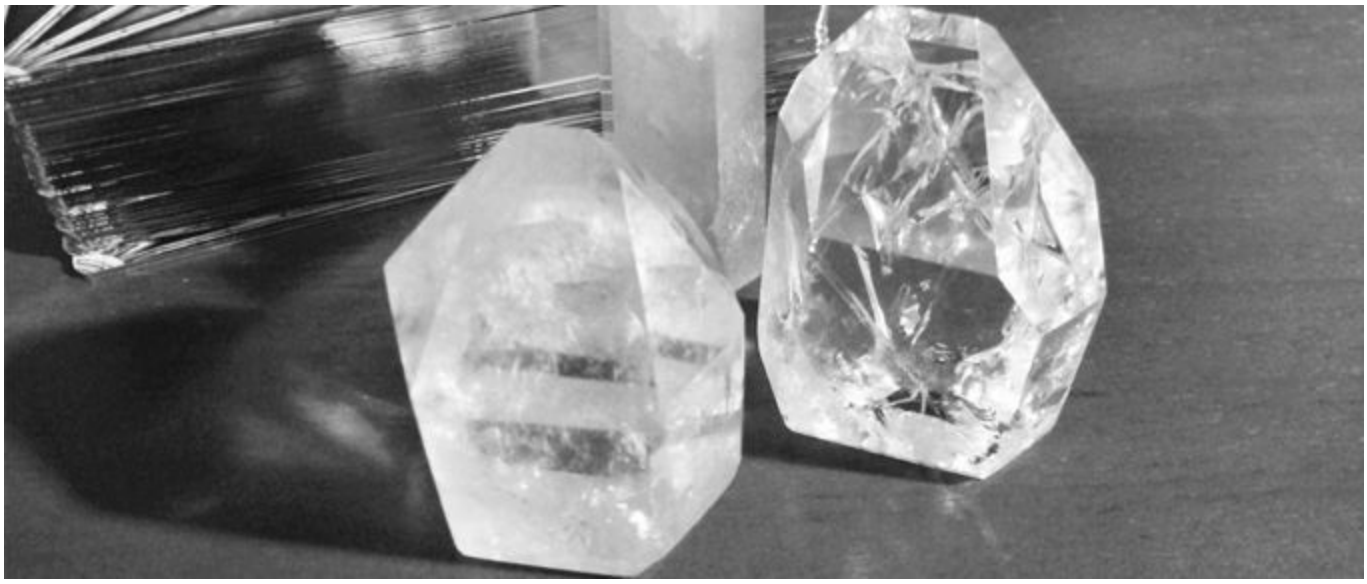
Energetic Supplements

In tarot readings, oftentimes it will become evident that a particular element is missing from the Seeker's life, causing the imbalance that he or she feels. For instance, when a reading shows a pattern of Wands in reverse, indicating inactivity or passivity, or there is an undeniable omission of the suit of Wands from a spread, or the answer to the Seeker's question is a Wands card, then the element of Fire is relevant. That suggests to the Seeker that he or she should harness greater Fire energies. The indication there is to engage in personal actions of creativity, innovation, passion, determination, or leadership.

If, for example, in response to a question, "What energies do I need to get over my current crisis?" a card from the suit of Pentacles is drawn, or even one of the Major Arcana cards associated with Earth, such as The Hierophant, then the cards suggest to the Seeker to focus on energies relating to the

element of Earth, such as taking actions to maintain stability, to be more conservative at the moment, to be generous, resourceful, etc.

It cannot be stressed enough that it is only through personal action that a Seeker can change his or her life, and not through trinkets of superstition, amulets, or talismans. However, certain gemstones, colors, or even scents can help serve as close personal reminders to the Seeker to take action. Throughout history, ancient and modern, in all cultures and civilizations around the world, special power and significance has been attributed to gemstones and certain symbols that are worn as talismans or amulets.[1] The power of these trinkets is real, because they help us bridge our conscious and our unconscious, and through the knowledge we can bring from the unconscious into the conscious, we can will our desired futures to come true.[2]



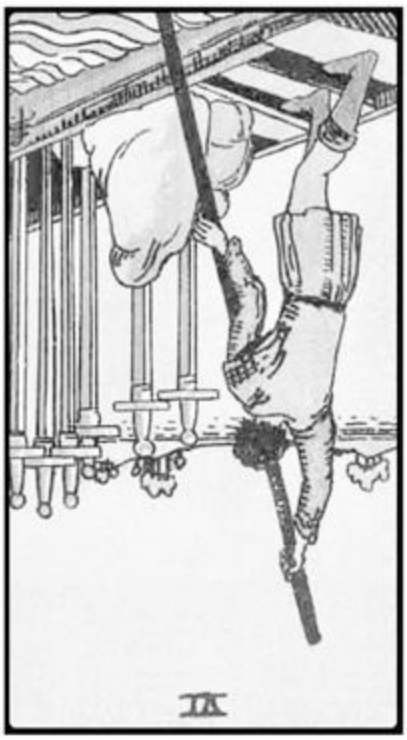
Quartz crystals may help amplify a practitioner's state of peace, power, and openness.[3]

Elemental Energy Correspondences

Element of FIRE	Element of WATER	Element of AIR	Element of EARTH
Gemstones:	*Gemstones:*	*Gemstones:*	*Gemstones:*
Camelian, Amber Fire Agate, Ruby Red Jasper, Pyrite Sunstone	Moonstone, Coral Blue Calcite, Pearl Blue Lace Agate Rose Quartz Lapis Lazuli	Amethyst, Opal Chrysoprase Chrysocolla Yellow Jasper Kyanite	Moss Agate, Smoky Quartz, Aventurine Lodestone, Brown Jasper, Green Jasper Black Tourmaline
Colors:	*Colors:*	*Colors:*	*Colors:*
Red, Orange Yellow	Med. or Dk. Blue Pink, Indigo	Light Blue, Gray Black, White	Green, Gold Brown
Scents; Oils:	*Scents; Oils:*	*Scents; Oils:*	*Scents; Oils:*
Bergamot, Ginger Citrus, Basil Angelica Root	Chamomile Jasmine, Lavender Rose, Ylang Ylang	Frankincense Lemongrass Mint, Myrrh	Cedarwood Cypress, Vetivert Patchouli
Animals:	*Animals:*	*Animals:*	*Animals:*
Lion, Salamander	Fish, Dolphin	Eagle, Owl	Bull, Snake, Dog

Case Study: Nicole

Nicole recently separated from a longtime boyfriend and is now seeking a tarot consultation about her future romantic prospects. To date it has felt like the right guy just hasn't come along for her and she wants to know why.



I drew a single card, which was the Six of Swords, reversed. I interpreted the meaning of the card for her, i.e., someone feeling afflicted, trapped, and yearning for escape, having an escape route in mind, but simply unable to execute for one reason or another. Then I focused on the suit: the suit of Swords, which corresponds with the element of Air. I further interpreted the card reversal to indicate a weakened state or dormancy of the corresponding energies in Nicole's life. Communication could be an area she needs to work on. She could also be approaching the matter too emotionally. She needs to observe greater rationality in analyzing her romantic situation. The Swords card suggested that strife and tension were governing her life right now, and to progress in her relationships she had to move beyond the past hurt, which is going back to the direct meaning of the Six of Swords.

Envisioning herself as an eagle or owl and embodying those characteristics in her personal meditations could help her begin to execute those characteristics in her actual life. Incense or essential oils such as lemongrass or mints could also help put her in the right state of mind. The romantic stagnation she was experiencing was due in no small part to the pains she endured from her previous relationship. She now felt too vulnerable, too exposed, and her defense mechanisms were on overdrive to prevent such pain from happening again, because she felt unguarded. Wearing gemstones such as obsidian, black onyx, or snowflake obsidian could restore some feelings of protection in her and thus allow her to let down those defense mechanisms and allow love to enter. Blue topaz could help clear her mind and put her in a calming, peaceful state.

Since her reading was about love and relationships, rose quartz and hematite could be helpful stones to her as well, to help attract romance. The water imagery of the Six of

Swords might further confirm the element of Water as integral to her issue. For dates, she should consider fragrances such as jasmine, lavender, rose, or ylang ylang, to put both her and her date in a romantic state of mind. Incorporating gemstone, color, scent, and symbolic prescriptions for the Seeker and reviewing them with him or her after a reading can provide some tangible next steps for the Seeker to take. By surrounding him- or herself with these material elements, the Seeker might then be inspired to take further proactive measures that will be the direct catalyst to positive change.

Case Study: Bhasvan

After graduating with honors from a prestigious university, Bhasvan hit a significant roadblock in his life, and despite diligent efforts has been unable to secure a job. He is growing despondent and consults the tarot for a reading about what it would take to change his luck. The Six of Pentacles is drawn, which at first might not seem directly applicable to his inquiry, but as this case study will show, it was exactly the answer Bhasvan needed to hear.

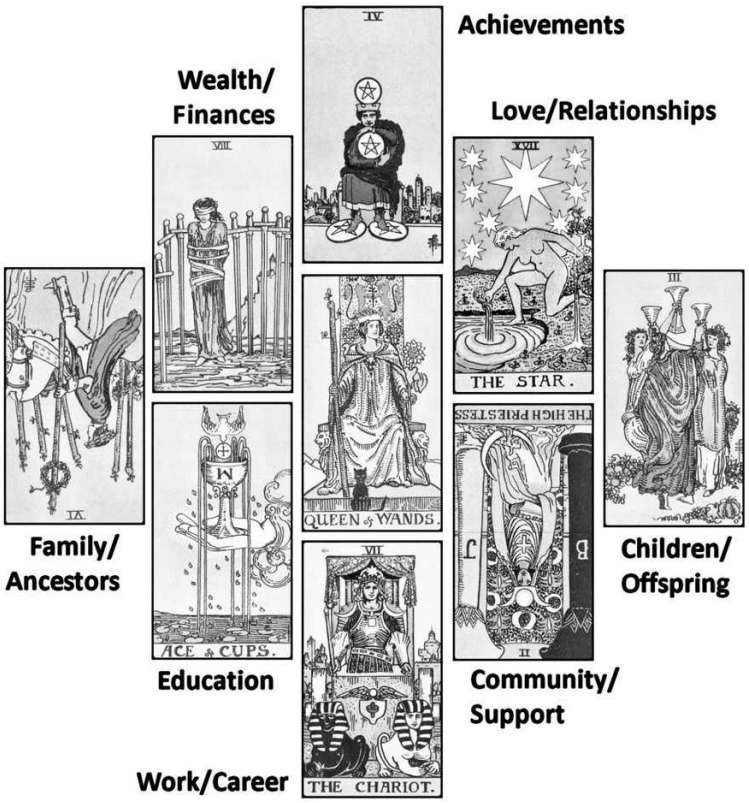
The Six of Pentacles generally suggests charity, benevolence, and philanthropy. As applied to Bhasvan's question, it could suggest pro bono work or volunteering his skills in the professional field he wants to enter, in a way that helps the less fortunate. Doing so could position him closer to a paid career opportunity down the road.

In the meantime, however, the financial instability would likely cause him to feel ungrounded, and thus that instability could interfere with his ability to seize career opportunities when they come. I first made it clear to Bhasvan that mere lucky objects we keep in our pockets do not help us land jobs, but we might be able to attune to such objects and amplify our personal energies in a way that makes us feel empowered and in turn makes us act in a more empowered manner, thus increasing our chances of success. "Fake it until you make it," so to speak.

To keep him feeling grounded at home, brown jasper, granites, and agates might be helpful. In many cultures, jade—or its more economical counterpart, aventurine—invite prosperity into our lives, especially in the area of money. Red gemstones might also help invigorate him and keep him energized. It turned out Bhasvan even bought a pair of bull cufflinks to wear to job interviews. The bull, as the reader of this book has likely learned by now, corresponds to Earth and the suit of Pentacles. A few months later Bhasvan did write back telling me he had gotten a job offer from an investment firm.

Case Study: Kia

Kia is a female, Fire sign, and in her thirties. A general reading was performed for her, using the Ba Gua spread. Her reading was as follows:



The primary purpose of this case study is to demonstrate how gemstones, colors, and feng shui might be used in conjunction with a tarot reading,[4] so any in-depth explanation of the reading itself will be omitted.

After the reading, Kia expressed an interest in redecorating her home in a way that might provide better balance in her life. The practitioner could note which areas in the Ba Gua spread are lacking. Here, there seems to be distance between her and family members, detachment from her community, a lack of support from the outside world, and stonewalls when it comes to her finances and achievements. Note that the bottom of the reading, Work/Career with Key 7: The Chariot corresponds to North, and the top of the reading, Achievements with the Four of Pentacles, corresponds to South. Family/Ancestors is East and Children/Offspring is West. The diagram on the subsequent page corresponds with Kia's tarot reading. It utilizes elemental dignities to identify how Kia might add gemstones, color schemes, or other decorative items that are associated with the element at issue.

KIA'S TAROT AND FENG SHUI SYNTHESIZED DIAGNOSTICS

SOUTH

WEALTH/ FINANCES **Eight of Swords** *Constraints* *Confinement* --AIR-- **ADD FIRE TO STRENGTHEN**	ACHIEVEMENTS **Four of Pentacles** *Miser* *Frugality* --EARTH-- **JADE AND TIGER'S EYE**	LOVE/ RELATIONSHIPS **The Star** *Hope, Inspiration* *Optimism* --AIR--
FAMILY/ ANCESTORS **Six of Wands, Rev.** *Postponement* *Delayed* *Achievement* --FIRE— **ROSE QUARTZ OR AMETHYST**		CHILDREN/ OFFSPRING **Three of Cups** *Celebration* *Jubilee* --WATER--
EDUCATION **Ace of Cups** *Affirmation,* *Abundance* --WATER--	WORK/CAREER **The Chariot** *Victory, Control* --WATER-- **ADD EARTH TO STRENGTHEN**	COMMUNITY/ SUPPORT **High Priestess, Rev.** *Duplicity, Secrets* --WATER— **ADD EARTH TO STRENGTHEN**

EAST *WEST*

NORTH

A Note on Invocations

In the last several centuries, tarot practice rested heavily in the Western occult culture, with particular emphasis on the Golden Dawn. Thus, many practitioners integrate Golden Dawn esoteric doctrine with tarot. In that tradition, a reading begins with an invocation, which is a form of prayer or calling forth of spirit influences to affect the reading, with the belief that the cards derive their power from these spirit influences. A setting for a tarot reading would not be complete without an invocation. The most well-known Golden Dawn invocation is as follows:

> I invoke Thee, IAO, that thou wilt send HRU, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly on these consecrated cards of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.[5]

IAO refers to the first Vital Triad in Golden Dawn theology, or the Three Gods: (1) The Holy Ghost, (2) The Messenger, and (3) The Secret Seed.[6] HRU is the name of an Enochian angel often invoked in the Enochian or ceremonial magic tradition. The magic tradition itself predates the Golden Dawn, but the Golden Dawn revived it and integrated Enochian magic into its theology. HRU is one of the angels minor.[7]

For my own practice, the foregoing invocation does not resonate with me. Having grown up under the Judeo-Christian theology, the following personally crafted invocation is one I gravitate more toward than the Golden Dawn method:

> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.[8] The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped.[9] For God gives me a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.[10]

It grounds the subsequent reading in my philosophical view of tarot, which is one of self-empowerment and affirmation rather than divine intervention. While I may procure my inner strength and conviction from a transcendent divinity (as opposed to a divination), I am the only one, by my own power, love, and self-control, with the faculty to compel my future. There is no purported angelic or otherworldly hand in the matter, but there is still the humble acknowledgement of something out there that I am much smaller than, yet a part of, and connected devotedly to.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu. The preceding is a mantra in Sanskrit from the Jivamukti Yoga School tradition.[11] In its essence it is translated to "may all beings be content and free from suffering; may my thoughts, words, and actions contribute to their contentment and freedom from suffering." The mantra expresses perfectly what every practitioner should strive to achieve through tarot and would be an ideal opening mantra or prayer for grounding a practitioner before a reading. Recitations of the mantra during meditation could also help a practitioner find peace, power, and openness. Meditation and how it helps tarot reading is discussed in Chapter 23. Passages from the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Buddhist sutras, or invocations from the Koran are words that have been consecrated over the centuries by the passion and faith of their devotees. Liturgical languages such as Ecclesiastical Latin, Classical Hebrew, Classical Arabic, or Sanskrit all resonate powerfully with spiritual transcendent energy, which can be incorporated into a customized invocation that the practitioner devises.

In moments of deep duress, I will start a tarot reading with an invocation, usually one that incorporates the recitation of sutras in Sanskrit, Bible passages, or a simple heartfelt prayer. Generally, though, I skip the invocation step altogether. It is not necessary by any stretch of faith or imagination for a tarot reading to be effective and empowering. I raise the concept here simply because it is part of the tarot's history of use and should therefore, at the very least, be acknowledged by the reader.

Reading from the Conscious vs. Reading from the Unconscious

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works on tarot insist that preceding tarot divinations should be ritual. A tarot practitioner must call upon spirits or energies greater than and beyond the practitioner. The practitioner must be a in a deep state of concentration. In contrast, later twentieth-century works on tarot attempt to unveil the practice of its former mystery and insist that no ritual is necessary. Thus, the tarot can be read in any state, any condition or environment, anywhere, and anytime. It is entirely up to the practitioner and Seeker.

Both schools of thought are correct, though I see the distinction as the difference between reading from the conscious and reading from the unconscious. The tarot can be read in any state, any condition or environment, anywhere, and anytime. A question can be presented and a few cards pulled out of the deck without any concern for signifiers, shuffling technique, or spreads. Such a reading can still be highly effective with helping the conscious mind organize its thoughts in a more cohesive way. Randomized symbols can spark creativity and then the Seeker's creativity can do the rest. It is the same as observing an incident from nature or humanity that in turn spontaneously triggers inspiration for a poem or a painting. In such a method, that spontaneous tap into the unconscious to trigger inspiration is not consciously controlled. That tap can be better controlled when the practitioner and Seeker make the effort to enter the unconscious. Thus, while a full invocation and ritual may not be necessary, a concentrated effort to focus and open the mind is.

Tarot reading is at its most effective when practitioner and Seeker tap synchronously into the unconscious parts of their minds to retrieve insight. There exists a greater collective unconscious—the single unifying God concept, the Akashic records, a heightened level of awareness that many Eastern religions strive for. If what is in the unconscious can be retrieved and brought to the conscious, the nature of questions that the tarot can answer becomes limitless. What the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works on tarot strove to do was tap into that collective unconscious for divination in a more controlled manner. That was the purpose of ritual.

Many religions characterize the collective unconscious as the spirit realm, and thus believe these spirits are what bring forth the readings. The collective unconscious, though, is still part of and within the Seeker, not an external spirit realm, because every sentient being is connected to that collective unconscious. Not all know how to tap into that unconscious, however, and that is where ritual, meditation, and methods of concentration play a role. These techniques help us elevate our states of mind to one that facilitates access to the unconscious.

Physiologically, some will find it easier to divine with tarot for accurate answers. These individuals are often referred to as psychics. They may have genetically inherited traits that allow them to use their mental faculties in ways most of us cannot. Such psychic abilities can also be trained, if one is open and receptive to the idea. Tapping into the collective unconscious is a different

matter, however. Any one of us can tap into the unconscious. Most will find the foregoing suggestions in this chapter helpful. Altering triggers of sight, sound, scent, and touch beyond the mundane can alter the mental state and push it beyond ordinary consciousness. Those of deep faith will find prayer or invocations to be effective. Meditation, too, discussed in Chapter 23, improves one's ability to access the unconscious.

There are no required elements to the setting of a tarot reading. Tarot can be read in any state, any condition or environment, anywhere, and anytime, and quite effectively. That is a testament to how incredible even the conscious human mind can be. However, if tarot is to be used to tap into the unconscious, especially the collective unconscious, then setting is crucial. Setting is what will help the mind retrieve information from levels within itself that are not ordinarily accessed.

Chapter 22

Intermediate Ruminations and Practicum

THIS BOOK'S APPROACH TO intermediate learning of the tarot can be divided into two parts: ruminations and practicum. After memorizing the cards to know them, it is time to understand them.

Rumination is the intensive study of each card, to absorb its archetypal precepts, symbolism, metaphors, and revelatory messages. Serious ruminations on the tarot is a deeply spiritual exercise, one that will help bridge the gap between your unconscious and your conscious. The natural intuitive skills you have latent in your unconscious can then surface to your conscious. That intuitive skill will enable you to use the tarot as a tool with greater accuracy.

To start, subdivide your critical independent study of the tarot into Major Arcana and Minor Arcana. The Major Arcana should take you a bare minimum of twenty-two days, if not longer—no more than one card a day—to complete the ruminations. The Minor Arcana deserve a day per card of study as well, but if time is of the essence, then study them in groups. The groupings can be by suit, i.e., all Wands together, all Cups, etc., or by numbers, i.e., study all four aces together, the twos, the threes, the four pages, four knights, etc. Record the ruminations in your tarot journal.

The ruminations will consist of your notes, meditative free writes, and general observations of the cards. There is a strong interrelationship between the intuitive and the creative, so creative writings around the tarot ruminations are highly encouraged.

Use the following suggestions as starting points:

- Note the main story that the card tells. Note any secondary stories.
- What is happening in the foreground of each card? The background? Any details in the skies, the seas, or the mountains? What could those details signify?
- Note any archetypal figures featured in the card. What do you know about these archetypes? What can we learn from them?
- Note the significance of numbers.
- Note the significance of colors.
- Note any references to historical, religious, or mythical events and figures. What do you know about these figures? What can we learn from them?
- Note astrological and astronomical references.
- Note the general symbolism contained in each card.
- Note the prevailing schools of thought on how these symbols should be interpreted. Find this information through reading and research. Compare the prevailing school of thought to your own interpretations.
- Note what impressions you have of the same card in reverse, how reversal affects the symbols.
- Note how the totality of these symbols helps you to arrive at your keywords.

A multidisciplinary study will further enrich the practitioner's perception of the numbers, symbols, letters, and historic and philosophical references in the tarot. Platonic philosophy, also known as Neo-Platonism, is particularly helpful. The term Neo-Platonism is a modern conception, but the doctrines date back to 529 BC, to the Platonic Academy.[1] Neo-Platonism, to be distinguished from Platonism, or the works of Plato, is considered the mystical and metaphysical component attributed to Plotinus. These Western doctrines parallel Eastern thought, from Buddhism and Taoism to Indian and Chinese mysticism. The similarities are striking.

Astrology is, without a doubt, tied with tarot symbolism. The writings of Eden Gray, a renowned and oft-cited tarot author, offer invaluable insights on the intersection of tarot studies and astrology.[2] It would be difficult to acquire a well-rounded understanding of tarot symbolism without an understanding of basic astrological concepts. Also, the timing correspondences and elemental dignities seem to be more accurate in readings for practitioners who have a strong understanding of Western astrology. This understanding helps the tarot practitioner strengthen the connection between disparate events and reconcile them in a meaningful way for the Seeker. You cannot begin to understand a synchronicity if you cannot even observe it. Yes, of course you can read tarot proficiently without a background in astrology, but I would venture to say that you cannot read to your fullest potential without it.

Kabbalah, an esoteric discipline originating from Jewish mysticism, is another study that the tarot practitioner might like to have in his or her arsenal of knowledge.[3] Preeminent tarot scholars such as Robert Wang espouse the interconnection between tarot and the Kabbalah.[4] The Tree of Life imagery appears throughout the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck. Interpreting tarot through the framework of the Kabbalah is essentially a twentieth-century phenomenon, but the scholarly works that note the synchronicities between the two are compelling.[5] It's fair to say that some traditionalists still hold the view that tarot traces its heritage to medieval Italy, while others, in particular the scholars of the twenty-first century, trace it far back past Italy to ancient Greece, integrating it with the Kabbalah and even Sufism, the esoteric branch of Islam.[6]

While every practitioner will be drawn to an individualized set of books to start his or her learning, there is a general consensus that the serious tarot student will have read *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* by Paul Foster Case, first published in 1947. Case was a distinguished twentieth-century American occultist who has contributed a number of groundbreaking literary works and lectures to tarot studies. Case, like A. E. Waite, was believed to be a member of the secret English society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910) by A. E. Waite is another seminal work that the serious tarot student will have studied. The practitioner who studies under any of the Golden Dawn systems, such as the Rider-Waite-Smith or to some extent the Thoth, will want to read *Book T—The Tarot*, which is credited to MacGregor Mathers and Harriet Felkin. The book dates back to 1888.

The second component to intermediate learning is the practicum, which requires actual tarot readings. Complete thirty readings for others and log them in your tarot journal. Keep copious records of the readings in your journal for later review, which will help you chart your progress as a practitioner.

To document the readings for practicum purposes, have the thirty Seekers sign in on a sheet with their first names or initials only (to leave them with a sense of privacy), the date and time of the reading, location, the signifier card selected for the Seeker, and note the type of spread used. At this

stage of your learning and for educational purposes, use a mix of different spreads for the Seekers. Also note whether it was a general reading or one for a specific question the Seeker asked. If a specific question was asked, note it in your log.

After the reading, take out a notebook and record your thoughts. Critically assess yourself. Remark on any interesting appearances in the spread. How did the Seeker respond to the reading? Devote a few minutes to writing down these thoughts.

Above all, the intermediate practitioner should no longer be holed up at home reading esoteric books. The intermediate practitioner should be *doing*, from active writing about the tarot to the practicum component.

Recommended Exercises: Ruminations

- Assign your own keyword to each card.
- For two consecutive weeks, every morning draw a single card from a randomized, well-shuffled deck and meditate on the meaning of the card. At the end of the day, revisit the card's imagery and think back on that day to see how that card manifested itself throughout the day. Notes and records should be taken down in your journal.
- Write a short rumination in any format for each card in the Major Arcana. (Sample ruminations are provided for reference in Appendix C of this book.) Concentrate on each card one by one and, while in a completely relaxed disposition, free-write your impressions of the card. It can be a poem, a passage written in stream of consciousness, flashes of keywords, or you can narrate a story. Follow your intuition and your creativity.
- Separate out the fourteen cards of any of the four suits and lay them in front of you. Write generally about the suit and note your impressions. Try to understand the suit. Note important references and symbols. Do this exercise for all four suits.

  What aspect of the human condition does the suit talk about?
  How do you personally relate to this aspect of the human condition?
  Which cards in the suit best represent your own personal past? Why?
  Which cards best represent your present?
  Which cards do you hope represent your future?
- Creative writing is a great way to connect with the deck. Consider the following prompts for Card Reflections entries in your tarot journal:

  A Card after My Own Heart. Perhaps by now one card from the deck of seventy-eight stands out to you more than the others. Do you seem to have an inexplicable affinity with one particular card? Does one of them represent you better than the others? Is there a card you use for yourself as a signifier card? Perhaps you associate closely with your Essence Card. Whichever the card may be, write a reflective piece about that card, what it means to you, and why you are attuned so closely with it. Reflect on both the card's traditional, more standardized meaning and also its personal meaning to you through your own interpretation.

  Who I Am: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow . Reflect on your own life and use the tarot cards to tell the story.

  Using only the suit of Wands and the three-card spread, lay out a profile of your personal development, your career path, or issues of health and wellness. The cards should represent

your past, present, and what you hope for your own future. Write a personal essay about why these three cards represent you. Devote the most concentration to the third card, what you hope for your future.

Likewise, using only the suit of Cups and the three-card spread, lay out a profile of your love life.

Using only the suit of Swords and the three-card spread, lay out a profile of your ambitions in the world, your ideas, your intellectual and philosophical approach to life.

Using only the suit of Pentacles and the three-card spread, lay out a profile of your material and industrial conditions. What do you hope for in terms of your finances? Your stability? Your job?

Recommended Exercises: Practicum

- Complete thirty readings for others and log them in your tarot journal. If possible, tape-record the readings, or write out a written reading report for the Seeker and keep your own copies of these reports.
- Devise your own tarot spread for general questions. Apply one philosophical, religious, spiritual, or mystical principle to the formulation of your spread. For example, incorporate feng shui or astrology, color symbolism, or use your favorite form or polygon as inspiration.
- Devise your own tarot spread for specific questions. As with the spread for the general question, apply one philosophical, religious, spiritual, or mystical principle to the formulation.
- Draft your personal code of ethics to apply to your tarot practice. See subsequent Chapter 25 on Ethical Considerations.

Chapter 23

The Value of Meditation to Tarot Practice

THE ABILITY OF THE tarot practitioner to focus intensely on a question at hand during a session is critical to success. Our minds have a natural tendency to flutter from thought to thought. That flutter disturbs the concentrated energy flow during the shuffling and cutting process of a tarot reading. Focus is crucial. The intermediate tarot practitioner must be able to focus on one inquiry without the mind fluttering, if he or she will be reading for others. The ability to focus entirely on a Seeker is part of the responsibility and diligence of the responsible tarot practitioner.

One way to enhance concentration is to adopt meditative techniques. The most basic technique is breathing meditation. Sit cross-legged, arms in a relaxed position, back straight, chin up, and focus on your breath. Count to six as you breathe in, concentrating only on the inhalation of breath and the counting. Hold your breath after six for another count of three. After the third count, immediately inhale one final breath, filling the last of your lungs, and then slowly breathe out to the count of twelve. Again, concentrate only on the inhalation of breath and the counting. Keep your mind clear of everyday thoughts. Close your eyes. You should only think about the breathing and the counting. Start the breathing meditation at durations of five minutes, and then work your way up to ten-minute sessions, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, etc.

Prayer meditation is also helpful. Meditation can be applied to any religious faith. You could perform prayer meditation with the "Our Father" prayer, Hail Mary, or any prayer verse of your choosing. Mahayana or Chan Buddhists may repeat the prayer incantation "Namo Amituofo" or "Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa."[1] You can also repeat a positive affirmation. Affirmation is a powerful tool you can use to program your mind to be confident and positive. Devise your own affirmation for the meditation technique, but be sure to keep it short and easy to recite. Incorporating any of the tarot affirmations of Chapter 28 would also work. Repeat the prayer, incantation, or positive affirmation, initially for a duration of five minutes, and then as meditation becomes a routine habit, work your way up to ten-minute sessions, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, etc., up to an hour.

Practitioners who read consecutively for multiple Seekers in a short period of time will often feel exhausted or agitated from an accumulation of negative residual stress left behind from those readings. Grounding meditation is a protective healing method for helping practitioners drain that stress away. Grounding is about anchoring your personal energy down into the aegis of the earth. It offers a sense of stability and invigoration. Starting from the crown of the head and moving downward to the feet, imagine knots loosening and negativity draining, down the body into the ground below your feet, to be absorbed and neutralized by the earth. Holding palm stones made of granite, jasper, agate, or lodestone can also be helpful in strengthening the grounding, healing energy. Conclude with an affirmation recited on the exhale of a breath. For me, grounding meditation is most effective when done outdoors, bare feet on soft, supple soil. A final meditation form that is helpful to tarot practitioners is third eye meditation. Close your eyes and assume the meditation position. In the dark, opaque space between your eyes, on your forehead, about the midpoint between your eyebrows, imagine a bright white glowing ball of energy, light, or even an illuminating third eye. It should be

warm, positive, comforting, and give you a feeling of blessing. Focus your energy entirely on that bright spot, your mind empty and clear of any thought. Keep that focus for up to five minutes, and as with the other meditation techniques, increase the duration of each session as you go.

The white light technique is also used for personal centering, which helps to balance a practitioner's internal energies and raise the practitioner to an empowered state. Continue from the focus of the white light at the third eye area and imagine the white light traveling down toward the heart, illuminating all parts of the body in the beam's path. The whole head, shoulders, and chest will be lit by the warm white light. Where the light travels through the body, the body will become relaxed, tensions alleviated, and rejuvenated with bliss and calm. The beam continues in this way to the stomach, then down toward the feet so the full body becomes illuminated, calm, and relaxed. Personal centering is a form of energetic empowerment.

You can also use the meditation technique to gain new insight on any particular tarot card. If the meaning of a particular card just seems to elude you, concentrate on it and meditate with your eyes open. Keep your pen and notebook nearby. Focus on the imagery and what is illustrated on the card. When you gain new insights to the symbolism of the card, jot them down. Be sure to incorporate these notes into your tarot journal later.

As these meditation techniques become second nature to you, you will find your concentration during tarot sessions to be more focused, more intense, and more intuitive. Your mind will not wander when you shuffle the cards or deal them into a spread. You will learn to channel all of your empathic energies for each Seeker during the readings. It is therefore imperative that the intermediate tarot practitioner master his or her concentration.

Chapter 24

Inappropriate Questions

DUE TO OUR FLAWED nature, there are inquiries that the practitioner must avoid reading for. This does not mean that the tarot cannot answer such questions. Whether the tarot can or cannot answer certain questions is not the issue to focus on. The issue is how disclosure of certain information will affect the Seeker. The purpose of the tarot is to empower the Seeker, never to harm. Presentation of information at the wrong time or the wrong place can lead to great harm. The practitioner must be wise, observant, and thoughtful when reading for others.

That is not to say that you should edit out information that the Seeker might not want to hear. In fact, you should never do that, as that would be disingenuous. The tarot often reveals criticism that compels us to confront who we are or what we've done. Such information tends to be difficult for us to accept. However, knowing the criticism empowers us. That is exactly the kind of information that should be told to a Seeker so that the Seeker may exercise his or her will to improve the outcome.

So what information should you never tell the Seeker? Information that is more likely to harm or cripple the Seeker's actions and thought than to help. The tarot is what it is and will reveal what it reveals, but when practitioners give readings, they must communicate the messages in a way that will empower, never hurt. Inquiries that should never be answered by a tarot practitioner are as follows:

Never talk about death. Period. Talk about life.

Never predict tragedy. Do not say that the Seeker will get into a serious accident, go bankrupt, that a spouse will file for divorce, or say anything in that vein. *Instead*, warn the Seeker to be careful, take precautions, do not take risks at this time, be more attuned to the feelings and thoughts of loved ones, show more affection toward your wife, honor her, buy her roses; or tell the Seeker a transitional period is coming, which may be painful, but in the long run is for the best, etc.

Never give legal advice with the tarot. For starters, it's against the law. If you are not a licensed attorney, then doing so is literally the unauthorized practice of law, a violation that can get you prosecuted.

Never give medical advice with the tarot. This, too, is against the law. If you are not a licensed medical doctor, then doing so is the unauthorized practice of medicine, which, again, is a crime.

The tarot is great at providing insight into personal issues, but there are cases when other professionals would be *better* at providing the insight than the tarot practitioner. For example, a lawyer will answer legal questions better than the tarot and a doctor will answer medical questions better than the tarot. So to consult a tarot reader rather than the lawyer or doctor makes no sense. The practitioner who would enable a Seeker to do such a thing is irresponsible.

If a Seeker asks, "What should I do about my [legal problem]?" the practitioner must immediately rephrase the question. First, tell the Seeker that the tarot cannot be consulted in lieu of an attorney. Then suggest to the Seeker that they ask a different question, such as "What kind of impact will my legal situation have on my life/my finances/my marriage/my family?"

If a Seeker asks, "Will my cancer go into remission?" or is effectively asking the tarot to diagnose the Seeker's medical condition, the practitioner must immediately rephrase the question. First, tell the

Seeker that the tarot cannot be consulted in lieu of a medical professional. Then suggest to the Seeker that they ask a different question, such as "What should I focus on with regard to my health concern?" or "What kind of impact will my health issues have on the rest of my life?" or even "What is the most likely outcome of my current health situation?" Note that a suggested best practice in the tarot community is to simply refuse to answer health-related questions altogether, because a negative reading could end up working as a self-fulfilling prophecy to the Seeker if the will to get better isn't strong enough independently. In general, when there is ill health the tarot should not be consulted; the Seeker needs to focus entirely on getting and feeling better. The responsible practitioner would not enable the ill Seeker to rely on tarot diagnostics for answers to health questions.

Ethical tarot practitioners will often rephrase Seekers' questions that ask for a fixed prediction of the future or a yes-no response. These types of questions are often rephrased as follows:

What energies are relevant to …?
What do I need to know about …?
How do I obtain/achieve/overcome …?

The above methods of rephrasing have become common practice among professional tarot practitioners. Other rephrasing techniques are as follows:[1]

Where am I most blind?
What am I not seeing or refusing to see?
What do I need to understand to progress positively from my present situation?

Moreover, when it becomes evident to the practitioner that a Seeker is in an abusive, unsafe, or life-threatening situation, then forget the tarot. Get that Seeker professional help. Do not proceed with a tarot reading. Offer referrals to hotlines, therapists, shelters, social workers, or others who are in a better position to restore the Seeker to a physically and mentally healthy state. Never attempt to resolve the matter with the tarot.

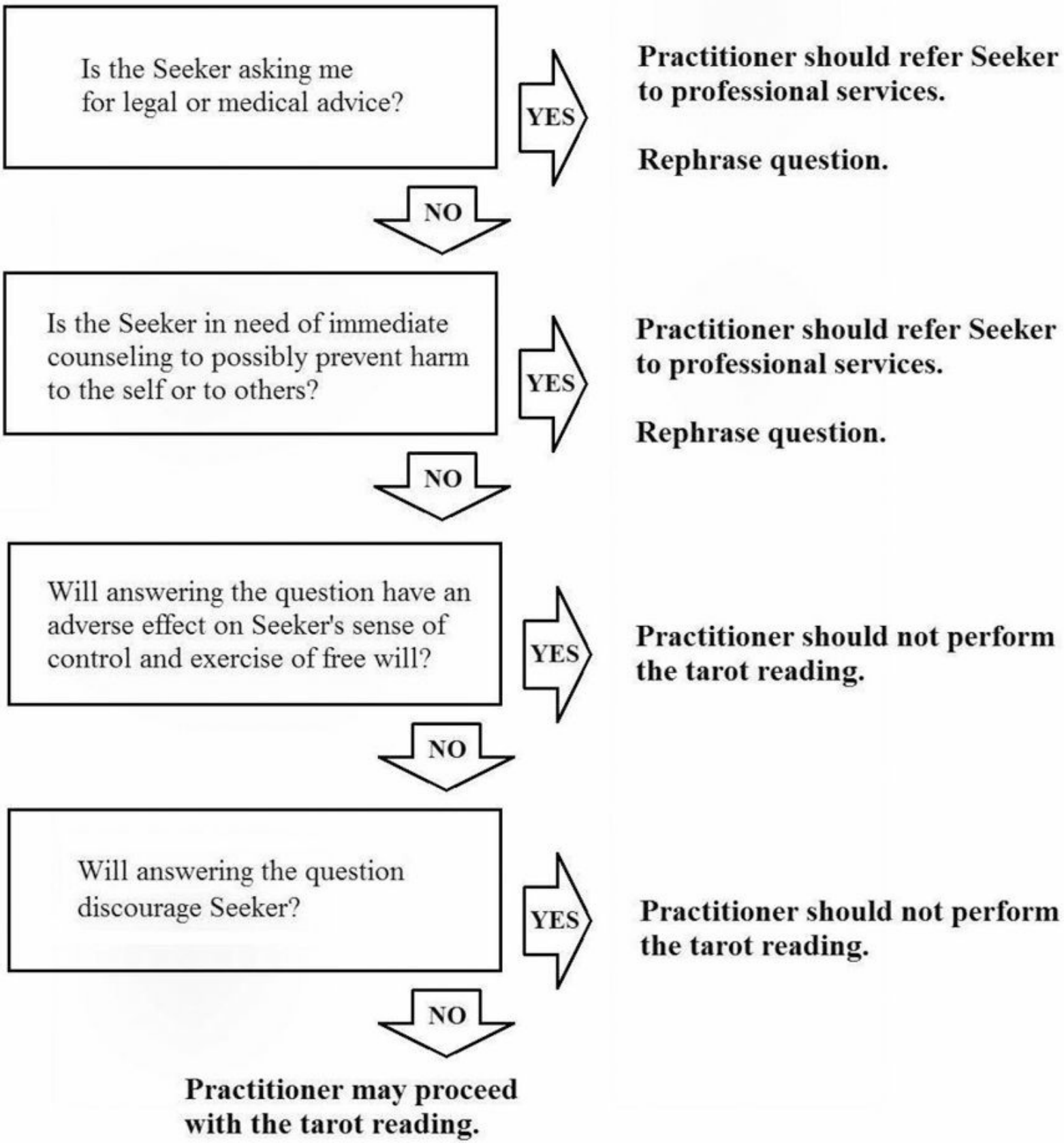
What the tarot *can* do when a Seeker is experiencing legal trouble, health concerns, or unfortunate predicaments, after immediate concerns are addressed, is provide emotional and spiritual guidance. Consult the tarot to help the Seeker reposition his or her feelings or perspective, or strengthen coping mechanisms. The tarot is a spiritual tool, not a solution. In the foregoing described instances, the tarot may only offer *spiritual* guidance.

Also consider the importance of *who* information comes from. You know that you digest certain truths better when they are told to you by certain people or even at certain times. That same truth could be told to you by another individual or at a different time and you may react very differently to it. In a tarot reading, the Seeker's reaction to what is told could have a critical impact on the actual outcome of events. Thus, be thoughtful as a practitioner before you regurgitate to a Seeker the messages transmitted by the tarot. *How can you phrase the truth in a way that will empower rather than harm?* This is an essential skill that every tarot practitioner must develop. In fact, the subject matter requires its own full-length book.

Irrespective of what the tarot has the potential to do objectively, the ethical tarot practitioner should never enable a Seeker to interfere or intrude on another person's affairs without that person's

knowledge and consent. By way of example, it's easy to come into possession of electronic technology that can listen in on other people's confidential conversations, but that does not mean it is permissible or even lawful for you to wiretap their telephones. If a Seeker asks the practitioner to use the tarot to obtain information that should be kept private, the practitioner must decline. It is considered unethical practice if you are striving to become a professional, and even if you're not, at its simplest, it is using the tarot to gossip about others, which is *not* the tarot's intended purpose. Act with integrity and wisdom when you use the tarot. Always be careful to phrase a reading in a way that is both truthful and motivational. If the practitioner is unable to do so effectively, then the practitioner should not read for others. The purpose of the tarot is to guide and inspire people to better their own situations. If that cannot be accomplished, then the tarot has no use to either practitioner or Seeker.

FLOWCHART FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATENESS OF QUESTION



A responsible tarot practitioner will know when a Seeker's initial question needs to be rephrased. The following examples should offer some insight as to the nature of questions that need to be rephrased and how a professional tarot practitioner might go about responding to such questions.

Seeker's Initial Question:

I've been diagnosed with cancer. Should I proceed with chemotherapy or try a natural, holistic approach?

Practitioner's Response:

"The tarot cannot be used in place of sound medical advice. You should listen carefully to the options your physician has offered to you, as he or she is the best person to help you through this time. I do know a few holistic healers I can refer you to. You should call them and get their expert opinions. Ultimately, you need to use your own intuition to decide what will be best for your body. I don't want you to rely on a tarot reading. I want you to rely only on your determination. If you still want to proceed with a tarot reading today, we can either ask a different question or we can work together on rephrasing the question."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

How do I cope with my health concerns?

Rationale for Answer:

The Seeker's previous question called for medical advice. Between medical professionals (physicians and those who practice holistic healing) and the tarot, the medical professionals have the better skill set for assisting the Seeker. Thus, the question should be left to the medical professionals to answer. Here, the tarot should only be used to offer spiritual guidance. The professional tarot practitioner should have a list of referrals that he or she can consult when a Seeker is in need of care that the tarot cannot provide. Also, making a point of giving the Seeker a referral and reiterating that you are not licensed in that applicable field of study will help relieve any suspicion that you might be engaging in unauthorized practices. The professional tarot practitioner should have a referral list on hand that includes legal, medical, and financial services, holistic healing professionals, emotional crisis counseling, psychiatric care, therapy, and other social services.

Seeker's Initial Question:

I just found out I'm pregnant, and I'm only fifteen. Should I keep the baby?

Practitioner's Response:

"I understand why you're looking for help. The answer to that question, no matter what it is, will not be easy. But what the tarot says should not influence the decision you make. I'm sorry, but this is a decision you have to make on your own. I cannot in good conscience do a tarot reading for you. Now, we can certainly talk about the pros and the cons of each option, but the tarot is not the best resource for that. I know a professional who is better suited to help you. I'll give you the contact number. Everything you say to that professional is confidential, so please give them a call. They'll guide you through this tough time and arm you with the tools you need to make the best decision for yourself."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

In this case, the practitioner is encouraged to decline a reading altogether.

Rationale for Answer:

A good rule for practice is to never read for an individual under the age of eighteen, unless you are also under eighteen and the Seeker is a peer or friend. Otherwise, the adult practitioner must have the express, informed consent of that individual's parent or guardian. Full agreement must be arranged prior to the commencement of the reading. Either the parent consents to a confidential reading for the child, in which case a duty of confidentiality is created between the practitioner and child, excluding the parent, or the parent will be present during the reading and there will be no duty of confidence between the practitioner and the child. For this hypothetical, we will assume the express, informed consent of the parent was obtained to permit a confidential reading between practitioner and child.

Here is why the practitioner is encouraged to decline a reading: Fact and faith are not always compatible. If the tarot reveals the negative consequences and adverse effects the baby will have on the Seeker's own future, but the Seeker's faith or religion commands her to respond to the situation in a certain way, the reading could cause the Seeker to waver in her faith. On the other hand, if the tarot reveals the potential of this baby, the reading could cause the Seeker to waver in making a decision that realistically would be better for her own future.

The tarot should serve as a counselor. Any competent counselor in this situation would not influence the Seeker toward any one direction. Instead, the counselor should remain objective, nonjudgmental, encouraging, and urge the Seeker to arrive at a decision independently.

In such instances, one option the practitioner may consider is the Lo Shu spread discussed earlier in the book. The Lo Shu spread prepares a Nature Chart and a Nurture Chart for the Seeker. Prepare the Nature Chart based on the Seeker's date of birth and make clear that the Nature Chart is looking into the Seeker's potential, not her baby's. Reveal to her what her birthright is. Then prepare the Nurture Chart with the tarot and show her where she is headed at this moment in time. The hope is that hearing the information will help the Seeker make the decision that she needs to make. Thus, the practitioner isn't reading about the baby or pregnancy, but rather, is reading about the Seeker's achievement potential and current trajectory.

Seeker's Initial Question:

I love my boyfriend and I know that deep down, he loves me back, but he can get so violent and aggressive sometimes. Should I stay with him? Will he change?

Practitioner's Response:

"A tarot reading today cannot tell us whether your boyfriend will change. That is for him to decide. We can only talk about you, your needs, what you deserve, and what's best for you. Based on what you've said, I'm very concerned for your safety. Has he hit you before? Have you watched him hit people? If you're open to talking about this more, I'd like to hear about it. I am not a therapist or psychologist, but I want to lend my ear as a friend."

(The practitioner is not advised to make judgmental comments such as "I would never put up with such a situation" or "Why don't you just leave him? What's stopping you?" Simply open yourself to

hearing the Seeker's perspective. Listen more. Talk less. If the practitioner concludes that the Seeker's life may be in harm's way, then urge the Seeker to call for help immediately.)

"There is someone I'd like you to talk to who can help you better than I can. If you're willing, I'd like to schedule a meeting. We can even meet here if that's safer for you. It can be under the pretenses of a tarot reading, so no one will be the wiser. In the meantime, we can perform a tarot reading just for fun, so if he asks you what happened during this session today, you have something to tell him."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

The practitioner is urged to decline a reading about the potentially abusive boyfriend and refer the Seeker to specialized professional assistance. In the alternative, the practitioner, per the response above, can give a fun reading to the Seeker so that she has something to say in the event she is interrogated about the session. A meeting with a domestic violence advocate is strongly urged.

Rationale for Answer:

From the initial question, the practitioner should be able to see that the Seeker is crying out for help, and this cry is better answered by a professional counselor who is specially trained to assist people in the Seeker's situation. Thus, the tarot practitioner should not take it upon him- or herself to try to help the Seeker in such a situation. Please refer the Seeker to specialized professional care.

One recommended response is to look into getting the Seeker to meet with a domestic violence advocate. You can facilitate the meeting and let the advocate know that meeting at your place is the safest location, since it can be done under the pretense of a tarot session. The practitioner is encouraged not to accept any fees for these sessions and to treat the sessions as pro bono work.

Seeker's Initial Question:

What is the first name of my future husband?

Practitioner's Response:

"The tarot cannot answer that question, because your future is never set absolutely. I can divine for you what your most probable outcome is based on your current path, but any change to the current variables will change the future. That is the genius of free will.

"For example, what if I tell you right now arbitrarily—and I am pulling a random name out of my hat here, so this is not a prediction or anything—that you are going to marry a guy named Bob? Perhaps you will meet a guy named Bob and, sure, he's a possible candidate for marriage, but what if some little variation happens along the way? Instead of going left one day, which you were scheduled to, you went right, and as a result, you meet another fellow named Joe who sweeps you off your feet? Or instead of going right, you went left, and as a result, you caught Bob in quite the compromising position? Let's say the tarot predicts that you will marry Bob because the most probable outcome based on the long, committed relationship you've been having with Bob suggests that you will. But now you've caught Bob in this compromising position. Will you still want to marry Bob when he

proposes? What if certain decisions you've made off-course, so to speak, lead you to meet Joe and Joe also proposes? Now what? Do you still marry Bob because the tarot said that was the most probable outcome? Or do you take matters into your own hands, which you should, and realize that Joe is better for you than Bob? Then what? Was the tarot wrong? Free will means we don't have to do things according to anybody's plan. That's why no one can predict the future.

"What we can do is take a look at what is going on in your life right now and assess your marriage prospects based on your current path. Would you like to proceed with that?"

Suggested Rephrased Question:

What are my marriage prospects?

Rationale for Answer:

Life is unpredictable. The future is never set. Our options and possibilities are limitless. Thus, if you tell the Seeker that she will marry Bob, then chances are she will be fixated on every man who comes into her life named Bob, which may affect the decisions she makes. This compromises her free will, which the tarot should never do. Also, when we think our future is set, when the Seeker is committed to marrying Bob, she may overlook amazing possibilities and opportunities that arise along the way, such as Joe. Perhaps at the time she is getting the tarot reading, the choices she has been making lead her on a path to Bob, and based on the present trajectory, she is never to meet anybody named Joe, but over the course of life she makes different choices and variables change. A fellow named Joe also makes different choices and his variables change. Now the Seeker and Joe meet. Maybe there was a destiny for the Seeker and Bob to marry, if one believes in destiny, but now the Seeker has met Joe, and realistically Joe is a far better husband for the Seeker than Bob. The tarot must leave the Seeker open and free to make an independent decision.

Also, assuming the tarot did in fact predict the name Bob somehow, or the slightly more probable prediction by astrological sign, a Sagittarius, what if you, the tarot reader, failed to note a subtle, nuanced message in one of the cards that warned the Seeker that this marriage to Bob (or the Sagittarius) would not be good for her, that the marriage would bring a great deal of pain? All you saw as the reader was the more obvious message, "She will marry Bob/a Sagittarius." Then you may have inadvertently done more harm than good. That is why the responsible practitioner will avoid these questions. In a balancing of risks and benefits, it is better to not answer the question about husband names and exact dates or specifications for marriage and other such landmark life events.

Note also the other variations of this question: What age will I marry? Will my husband be rich? For the latter question, it may be rephrased to: Will I meet a rich man? There is a stronger possibility that the tarot can answer whether the Seeker will *meet* a rich man, but whether that Seeker decides to marry him or not or whether he decides to propose is a matter of will.

Seeker's Initial Question:

What is the exact date that the world will end?

Practitioner's Response:

"I have no idea. I don't think the tarot knows either. If the Mayans can't get it right, I'm not so sure I can. So, can we proceed with a more reasonable question?"

Suggested Rephrased Question:

The recommended approach here is to ask an entirely different question, or to decline reading for the Seeker if he or she is not interested in taking the tarot seriously.

Rationale for Answer:

If the Seeker asks such a question disingenuously, then the tarot practitioner has no obligation to entertain the Seeker. Silly questions call for silly responses. Even if the Seeker is sincere, the practitioner should still urge the Seeker to ask a different question.

Seeker's Initial Question:

I am being evicted from my rental home. Help! What should I do?

Practitioner's Response:

"The best answer to that question will come from a lawyer, not the tarot. I cannot use the tarot to give legal advice, as that is not only unlawful, but it won't actually help you. I have a few lawyer referrals that you should contact. Some of them even offer free initial consultations. Please call them. If you still want to proceed with a tarot reading today, we can work on rephrasing your question."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

What do I need to focus on and what traits will be essential to helping me through my current material, financial, or property troubles?

Rationale for Answer:

Seeker's original question called for legal advice. An eviction is a legal proceeding. Thus, if the Seeker is facing an eviction, then he or she must consult an attorney. Plus, between a licensed attorney and the tarot, the licensed attorney has the better skill set for assisting the Seeker. The question should be left to the licensed attorney to answer. Here, the tarot should only be used to offer spiritual guidance.

Seeker's Initial Question:

My ex-boyfriend just started dating this new woman. Can you tell me what she's like?

Practitioner's Response:

"For ethical reasons, I do not use the tarot to look into the lives of others without their consent. Spying is not the best way for you to find out the answer to your question. Also, there is the matter of

whether knowing such information will really be of benefit to you. I am a strong believer in using the tarot to benefit us in some way.

"If you still want to proceed with a tarot reading today, we can either ask a different question or we can work together on rephrasing the question."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

What will my next boyfriend be like? *or*
What caused my previous relationship to end?

Rationale for Answer:

As a spiritual counselor, the tarot practitioner should urge Seekers to focus on themselves and what is the best way to improve their own situations, not to snoop into other people's lives and use their level of happiness or contentment to determine their own level of happiness or contentment. Also, there is the matter of using the tarot to help the Seeker. What benefit is there to the Seeker to knowing what her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend is like? Would knowing that information really help her move forward or be a better person or find new love?

Note, though, that there is no universal set ethical paradigm applied to tarot practice. The practitioner is urged to reflect on what he or she is comfortable with as a practitioner and to follow that. Some practitioners may not hesitate to answer this Seeker's original question. Every practitioner will adopt a slightly different approach to ethics. That said, if licensure or certification is an objective, then note the codified ethics of the corresponding license or certification body, as the practitioner will be obligated to adhere to that.

Seeker's Initial Question:

Is my husband cheating on me?

Practitioner's Response:

"Before we proceed, I would like you to understand that the divinatory messages we get from the tarot are often dense, cryptic to me, and I may misinterpret what they tell me. There are times I misread the cards. Inaccuracies are bound to happen. I cannot say with certainty that I am able to answer your question. I don't want you to rely on what I say. I want you to trust your gut instincts and your own intuition only. Are we in agreement?

"What we can do today is ask a different question or rephrase your current question. We can ask why you and your husband's relationship has been strained lately. Or we can inquire as to what the source of the distance is."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

Why has my marriage been strained lately? *or*
Why is my husband so distant from me? *or*
What is going on with my marriage?

Rationale for Answer:

If the practitioner uses the tarot to answer the question "Is my husband cheating on me?" the risk of harm here outweighs the chance of benefit. Remember: Do no harm with the tarot. If it cannot help the Seeker in some way, then do not use the tarot at all. Here, if the husband is indeed cheating on the Seeker, then tarot readings are not the way for her to resolve the problem. To truly help the Seeker, you need to urge her to confront the husband, or work on the issues in the marriage that may have compelled him to stray in the first place. No tarot diagnosis is needed to provide that response. What you can do here is go forward with a tarot reading that will encourage the Seeker to take control of the situation and actively make changes to improve the marriage or uncover the truth on her own, from her husband. Relying on the tarot in this case is not healthy spiritually.

Seeker's Initial Question:

What are this week's winning lottery numbers?

Practitioner's Response:

"If I could use the tarot to answer that question, I would be a billionaire already." (Smile here and convey to the Seeker that you're kidding.) "The tarot is a spiritual tool, and thus I do not use it for games of chance. Let's ask a different question. But before you think of the question, ask yourself why you're really here for a consultation. Are you here to mock the tarot? To mock me? Whether or not you take the tarot seriously, I do. So if you're here to mock it, you're essentially mocking what I believe in. And that would be a very disrespectful attitude."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

(The approach espoused here is to either decline reading for this Seeker altogether or proceed with a general reading, if the practitioner agrees to do a reading for such a Seeker at all.)

Rationale for Answer:

The intent behind the question is at best naive or ignorant, and at worst, disrespectful. If the Seeker finds no spiritual benefit from the tarot, then that is the Seeker's prerogative. But entering the realm of the tarot practitioner to mock the cards is ignorant and the practitioner has no reason to entertain that ignorance.

Seeker's Initial Question:

My life has been a series of misfortunes since the day I was born. Please tell me what's in store for my future: Do I have anything good at all to live for?

Practitioner's Response:

(Draw out the Five of Cups and the Eight of Swords for the Seeker to examine. While you do this

make sure the Seeker understands that you are not performing a reading right now, but rather taking out two cards you want to show him or her. Hand the cards to the Seeker one by one as you respond.)

"I want to show you two cards that help me through some of my darker times. Look at the Five of Cups. You don't need to be a professional tarot reader to understand that this is a card about loss. The cloaked man has spilled the majority of his cups and now he feels empty inside. But look at what he doesn't seem to see: the two remaining cups. We have the tendency to focus on what we have lost, or what is missing in our lives, so much that it becomes a challenge for us to see the good. We even cloak ourselves from seeing the good, turn our backs on it. Yet you have to remember that every aspect of life is a duality; there is a yang to every yin. There are still two filled cups left for every three that you see spilled. There is always something to live for.

"Now take a look at the Eight of Swords. Bound and blindfolded, entrapped by a wall of swords this woman is clearly not in a good place. I wonder if perhaps you can relate to her situation. What she can't see—but what you can, because you are an objective outside observer—is a way out. She can use the blades of the swords to cut away what binds her. She can remove her own blindfold. There is a way out. There is always an escape route. It's just not always easy to see it, because we're blinded and trapped. I'm sure if you could speak to the woman in the card right now and tell her she has a way out, she may not believe you. And I know if I tell you now that you're not as trapped as you may feel, it may also hard be for you to believe me.

"I have a friend who you should talk to. She/he is really good at helping you see your two full cups and finding your way out."

(Give the Seeker a referral to a psychologist or therapist who specializes in suicide prevention.)

Suggested Rephrased Question:

(The practitioner is urged to decline a reading and refer the Seeker to specialized professional assistance.)

Rationale for Answer:

From the initial question, the practitioner should be able to see that the Seeker is crying out for help, and this cry is better answered by a professional counselor who is specially trained to assist people in the Seeker's situation. Thus, the tarot practitioner should not take it upon him- or herself to try to help a Seeker in such a situation. Please refer the Seeker to specialized professional care.

In cases like this hypothetical, the practitioner is encouraged to decline a reading. The Seeker is in an extremely sensitive state and the impact of negative news will likely cause more harm than good. Proceeding with a tarot reading and sugarcoating all the negative news is disingenuous and any Seeker will see right through it: the Seeker will be convinced that the cards contain horrifying information, his or her imagination will run wild with the possible horrors, and again, the reading will likely cause more harm than good.

It may not be a bad idea to keep quality full-color prints or facsimiles of the two cards referred to, the Five of Cups and the Eight of Swords, for just such occasions. The practitioner is further urged to think about what other cards in the tarot deck may help one to cope with dark times. Give these print copies of the cards to the Seeker so that he or she may look upon them for later consolation. Two more points: one, the practitioner is encouraged not to charge a fee and to consider the session pro bono, and two, be sure not to infringe on anyone's copyright. Use tarot card images that are already in the public domain.

Seeker's Initial Question:

What message do the cards have for me from the angels and supernatural spirits beyond?

Practitioner's Response:

"Well. Let's see what the cards say today, shall we?"

Suggested Rephrased Question:

No need to rephrase. Proceed as a general inquiry.

Rationale for Answer:

This is a bit of a trick question. Follow the flowchart for determining the appropriateness of a question. Is the Seeker here asking for legal or medical advice? No. Is Seeker in immediate need of counseling to prevent harm to the self or to others? As far as you can tell up to this point, the answer should be no. The Seeker's outlook on the world, reality or beyond, is not for you to judge. Believing that angels and supernatural spirits speak and counsel us through cards is certainly one distinct view of the universe, and whether you agree with that belief or not, the belief in itself does not make a person crazy or in need of counseling, unless some other tangible or intuitive indication you get from the Seeker suggests to you that he is in immediate danger of harming others or himself. Finally, will answering the question cause more harm than good? No. For all intents and purposes, you would proceed with the reading the same way you would any other.

Seeker's Initial Question:

What month will I finally find a job?

Practitioner's Response:

"As a tarot practitioner, my mission with the cards is to provide readings that will empower you. To do that, how we phrase questions is very important. I want you to get the most out of our session, so I want the cards to provide you with the tools and information you need to best make things happen for yourself. Let's work together on rephrasing the question."

Suggested Rephrased Question:

What are my career prospects this coming year? *or*
What will make me a better candidate for hire? *or*
What do I really need to focus on the most to get hired? *or*
Why am I unable to find a job right now? *or*
What do I need to do to get the career I want? *or*
How do I get over my current career plateau?

Rationale for Answer:

The issue here, in rephrasing the question, isn't whether or not the tarot or you as an intuitive can answer the Seeker's initial question. The issue is whether the answer will be of any substantial benefit to the Seeker. Questions should be phrased to best access detailed solutions and information from the cards. Receiving answers that are too specific or overbroad will not empower the Seeker with better decision-making capabilities or an action plan for improving his or her situation.

Knowing that the Seeker will find a job three weeks from this Thursday does not help the Seeker become a better job candidate or even guarantee that the Seeker will stay the right course and be in the position to have that job opportunity on that Thursday. (Remember: the future is never set in stone. Every decision we make is another step on the same course or takes us off course on a new path. There are infinite forks in the road.) However, what will empower the Seeker is knowing that an older woman, the CEO of her own company, will call the Seeker for an interview and offer him an opportunity that he should not turn down; and that the way to impress that CEO is to make sure he mentions his previous experience in the arts and graphic design, even though the job description is for an office manager, because that added skill will impress the CEO and be the determining factor for her offering the Seeker the job. (Which may or may not happen on a Thursday in three weeks, but at that point, does the exact day even matter to Seeker?)

Chapter 25

Ethical Considerations of the Tarot

*PRIMUM NON NOCERE*FIRST, do no harm. That is a foundational principle in medical ethics and should also be observed by tarot practitioners. This chapter on ethics is this book's most important chapter. Also be sure to review the earlier chapter "Inappropriate Questions," as it overlaps with the tarot practitioner's ethical considerations.

I find the following anecdote (a true story) to be informative: One time my husband was driving in an unfamiliar area and got lost. I was at my office when he called for help, asking me to find a map of the city and navigate him to his destination. Now, I am not good at reading maps. What's worse, at the time I was distracted by my own work projects and did not focus on him. I looked at the map in haste, misread it, and incorrectly told him to go left. He should have gone right.

I should not have been so hasty, but truth be told, even if I had exercised greater diligence, the fact of the matter is I am not good at reading maps. (And the technological advent of electronic navigation equipment has rendered that map reading skill even worse.) So I may have misread the map and incorrectly told him to go left anyway. But as a result of my misdirection, he showed up late to an important meeting. That story is a great, albeit simplified metaphor for what can happen when a practitioner misuses the tarot or does not abide strictly to a code of ethics.

First, do no harm. It is better to refuse to do a reading for a Seeker and do nothing to help that Seeker than to intervene, perform an irresponsible reading, and cause more harm than good. When there is a risk of greater injury and the chance of benefit to the Seeker is slim, do not perform a reading.

The foregoing personal account illustrates another important point: my map was not wrong. I was. Likewise, with the tarot, inaccuracies lay with the practitioner, not the cards. Even the most seasoned tarot practitioner will misread the cards at times. It is critical that Seekers understand this, and it is the responsibility of the practitioner to make sure Seekers understand it.

Tarot is a practice and even a profession. Observance to a strict code of ethics is necessary. Doctors, lawyers, accountants, and many professional studies require students to commit to uniform rules. While there are no uniform rules of ethical conduct in tarot, every practitioner should develop them for him- or herself, and those rules should be somewhat similar to the guidelines that I propose herein.

Tarot practitioners owe Seekers a duty of competence and diligence. The practitioner must vow to truthfully represent his or her qualifications. Do not ever self-proclaim yourself a psychic unless you are in fact a psychic. It is okay to attempt reading for others when you are just a beginner, so long as you explicitly disclose that you are just a beginner and make clear that the reading is for entertainment only and, what's more, you still do not fully understand the depths and nuances of the tarot. If you are a novice practitioner, then let Seekers know that the chances of inaccuracies will be high. Even advanced and expert tarot practitioners should refrain from overstating their qualifications. Humility is still a well-regarded virtue.

Never proceed under a pretense of accuracy. Every tarot practitioner has his or her limitations. Let

clients understand that the practitioner is human and therefore flawed. The practitioner, no matter how skilled, can misinterpret or overlook significant details. Do not lead the Seeker to believe that the future outcome predicted by the cards is absolute. It is not. The tarot cards attune to a Seeker's present energies and state of mind. They can only predict a probable path according to the present outlook. Yet all future outcomes can be altered by the Seeker. The Seeker possesses free will and should exercise it to the fullest. Changes in attitude and decisions can alter the future.

Conduct every reading fairly and objectively. Exercise the highest efforts of impartiality. If there are conflicts of interest or prior familiarity with the Seeker, let the Seeker know that such conflicts or familiarity may inadvertently affect your reading of the cards. What is a conflict of interest? If the outcome of the reading for the Seeker could potentially affect the tarot practitioner in some way, then there is a conflict of interest. Warn the Seeker of potential bias.

Readings must never be rushed or done in haste. Once a reading has begun, the practitioner must devote full, undivided attention to the cards. Also consider confidentiality issues. A Seeker's reading should remain strictly confidential. A Seeker's identity should also remain confidential, unless express permission is granted by the Seeker for the practitioner to reveal such information. Just as there are doctor-patient, attorney-client, and priest-penitent privileges, there is a privilege and duty of confidentiality between the tarot practitioner and the Seeker as well. Even if one might not be recognized by the laws of the land, the true tarot practitioner should uphold the standard for him- or herself, out of a respect for the practice and the profession.

Tarot practitioners may be consulted by Seekers in tandem with professional counseling, though tarot should never be used as a replacement for a licensed psychologist or therapist. The responsible tarot practitioner will go to great lengths to convey to the Seeker that the tarot cannot replace sound legal advice, medical advice, or financial advice. Although the tarot cannot offer legal advice, medical advice, or financial advice, it can offer invaluable insight into a situation that might otherwise seem hopeless. It can provide perspective on a Seeker's past, and a clearer understanding of the obstacles facing the Seeker. It may even reveal aspects of the Seeker's character that could be helpful. The tarot can be used for guidance and can help a Seeker make more informed decisions. However, the ethical tarot practitioner will emphasize repeatedly to the Seeker that nothing in the tarot can replace professional legal, medical, financial, or psychological counseling.

Some believe that the tarot may be used for fortune-telling, but I do not. I cannot stress enough: the tarot cannot predict the future with absolute certainty. Nothing can. The future is always malleable by free will. However, there should be little doubt that, when the tarot is used ethically and responsibly, the tool can offer great guidance. That is another reason why ethics is important: to maintain the credibility of tarot practice so it may continue to be offered as a spiritual or diagnostics tool.

Remember what was mentioned earlier: never use the tarot to read into someone's life without that person's express consent and full awareness that you are doing such a reading. It is a reprehensible act of spying, a reckless invasion of another's privacy. Never use the tarot to impose your will on others. For those who practice spells or other similar forms of manipulation of vital energies, using the tarot to attempt to affect another's circumstance without that person's consent is misuse and abuse of the tarot. Please appreciate the gravity of the violation. The depth and breadth of the harms you could cause are infinite.

Generally, as a good rule of thumb, tarot practitioners should never agree to do readings for Seekers who are asking specific questions about illness, financial troubles, legal troubles, or abuse of

any kind (substance abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, etc.). Whether the tarot can answer such questions is not the issue at all. The issue is human health and safety. When Seekers think to ask such questions of the tarot, it is clear that they are using the tarot to replace serious professional care. That is unacceptable. The ethical tarot practitioner will not facilitate such situations because, for starters, it will do more harm than good. The tarot should only be used to *complement* current professional care.

If a tarot practitioner is offering his or her readings to the public, then continuing education is critical. The ethical practitioner will never stop his or her tarot studies. Tarot practitioners owe a duty to the Seeker and to the professional tarot community to be the best, most informed, most knowledgeable practitioner that his or her capabilities allow.

Finally, there is the issue of fees. The ethical tarot practitioner will clearly state the cost of any reading to the Seeker, and the practitioner will not commence a reading until the Seeker has explicitly accepted the cost. Practitioners must also be self-aware. If you realize that you have not been yourself during a reading, or some aspect of your mental state or environment could have prevented an accurate reading, it is incumbent that you return the fees to the Seeker. In fact, you should not be conducting readings when you know that your mental state or environment is not what it should be. There will also be times when charging does not feel right, so don't. The tarot is a spiritual tool, and if you are given the opportunity to help someone who is in need, please do so.

The practitioner must devote as much time to ethical considerations as he or she does to the other aspects of tarot study. Strict adherence to a high code of ethics is what separates the credible tarot practitioner from the charlatan. Remember that many Seekers are people in a vulnerable state, trying to cope with grief, loss, or confusion. Pairing such a person with a quack or irresponsible tarot practitioner will bring about a great deal of harm to that Seeker, harm that could be just as severe if not more so than a quack doctor who is practicing medicine without a license, a scum-sucking lawyer, or an accountant who has a propensity to skim a little off the top. If a tarot practitioner has no intention of adhering strictly to a code of ethical conduct, then that practitioner should not read tarot for others at all.

Chapter 26

Tarot and Love

PROFESSIONAL TAROT READERS WILattest that at least half of all reading requests they receive pertain to love. And why not? Love is the most potent of human emotions.

The Tarot Suits and Love		
Suit	***Significance***	***Personality Influences***
WANDS	Development stage of relationship. *A love with stamina*.	Fire personalities: passionate, dynamic, impulsive. Relationship tends to be symbolized by the Lion.
CUPS	Relationship is emotionally charged. *A sentimental love*.	Water personalities: sensitive, caring, attentive, intuitive. Relationship tends to be symbolized by the Water Bearer or Dolphin.
SWORDS	Ideological or intellectual based attraction. *Good communication. Love of the mind*.	Air personalities: analytical, intellectual, perceptive. Relationship tends to be symbolized by the Eagle.
PENTACLES	Materially beneficial relationship. *Social class or wealth plays a role*.	Earth personalities: reliable, loyal, committed, and receptive. Relationship tends to be symbolized by the Bull.

This chapter will provide a rudimentary guideline for applying the tarot to questions about love. After intensive card study, the practitioner will be able to fluently apply the card meanings to any specific question. For the beginner, this chapter is a fair starting point.

Generally, Wands indicate a lot of energy, creativity, or a developmental stage of romance. Cups are all *about* love and relationships, and the Seeker's connection with others. A dominance of Cups or Water energy in a reading serves as a positive affirmation to the Seeker. Swords suggest a Seeker's efforts to rationalize love. They could also suggest an ideological or intellectually based attraction. Pentacles do not necessarily mean that the love is materialistic. It means that finances are a part of the overall equation. Perhaps the Seeker and the lover are of the same social class (or from completely different social classes) and that condition is a factor in their love. Perhaps the relationship will help the Seeker accrue greater wealth, or will drain the Seeker of his or her wealth.

Note: For card reversals, apply the WIND analysis: W, weakened energy; I, inverted meaning; N negative meaning; D, delays before the projected outcome. Review the mnemonic in Chapter 15.

Love and Relationships in the Major Arcana

Key 0: The Fool: A love adventure begins. Be open, but not naive. A sweet honeymoon period, but take care to lay a strong foundation if the Seeker is really serious about this one. Otherwise, likelihood of a tumultuous ending if the Seeker becomes too swept up in the honeymoon period.

Key 1: The Magician: A love that will amplify the Seeker's potential and abilities. Strong potential, strong attraction; like-minded.

Key 2: The High Priestess: Strong sexual attraction. There may be secrecy involved. Often indicates opposites attracting. Complementary dynamics.

Key 3: The Empress: Love will bear fruition. Marriage potential. Likelihood for long-term commitment.

Key 4: The Emperor: Father figure. Exerting authority or dominance. Likelihood for one to try to dominate over the other. Stubborn partners, but passionate.

Key 5: The Hierophant: Taking the traditional path in the relationship. Practical, strong values. Financial stability.

Key 6: The Lovers: Passion, but temptation. Do not let the ecstasy of love lead you astray. Unpredictable relationship. Strong first impressions, but can be capricious.

Key 7: The Chariot: Physically moving fast but emotionally still withholding. Emotional sensitivity. The couple is loyal, quite loving, and protective of each other.

Key 8: Strength: Strong, healthy, compassionate love. The love amplifies Seeker's own strengths. Magnanimous lovers. Optimistic. Center of attention. Warmhearted.

Key 9: The Hermit: Not a good time to seek relationships. Know thyself first before knowing others. Do not try to overanalyze the partner. Tendency to be hypercritical. Down-to-earth relationship. Pure of heart.

Key 10: Wheel of Fortune: Uncertainty abounds. History seems to be repeating itself. Be careful. Otherwise, strong chance of prosperity between the two lovers.

Key 11: Justice: A rationalized love. Balance is favorable, but love is an emotion, not an idea. One partner may try too hard to appease the other. One partner likely artistic or physically quite beautiful.

Key 12: The Hanged Man: Seeker is over-sacrificing. Giving more than one receives. Do not be too much of a dreamer. Spirituality is strong.

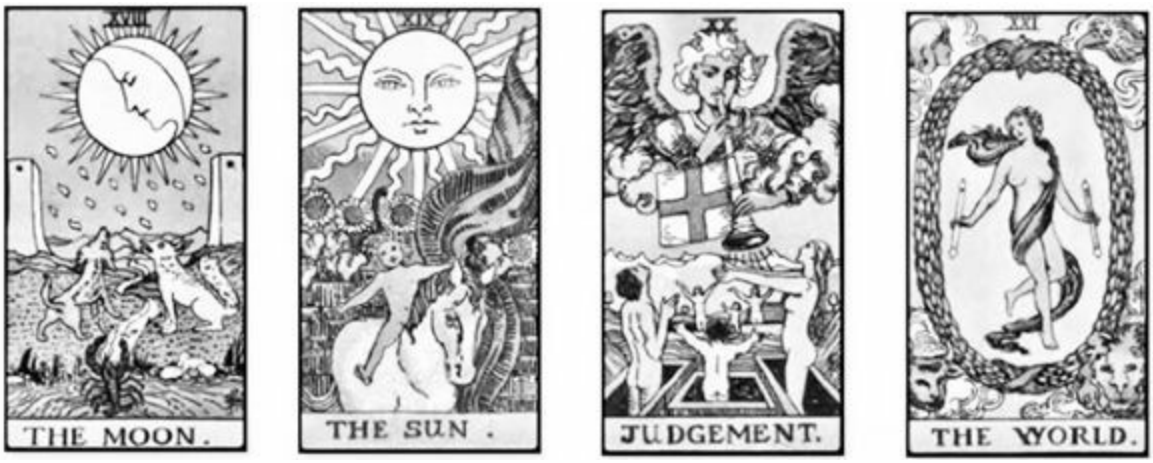
Key 13: Death: Love in a transformative stage. Relationship is ending, but the horizon is illuminated bright. Likely an intense relationship. One party may be overly sensitive while the other is overly demanding, so take care. Likelihood of drama.

Key 14: Temperance: Seeker and lover are opposites who attract, but cooperation and compromise are critical. A strong balance. An inspiring relationship, but one party may be more focused on taking care of the world rather than focusing on the domestic.

Key 15: The Devil: Materialistic love. Bondage to this love that is not healthy for Seeker. Addictions and temptations. Toxicity. There can be pessimism. Exert greater willpower, virtue, and understanding to make the relationship work.

Key 16: The Tower: Clashing egos in the relationship. Jolt or fall to come that will level the parties back to their cores. One may try to dominate the other.

Key 17: The Star: A hopeful, optimistic love. A healthy relationship. Strong attraction.



Key 18: The Moon: How love appears externally differs from how love is for the Seeker internally. Do not overly sacrifice the self for the partner. Opposites attract.

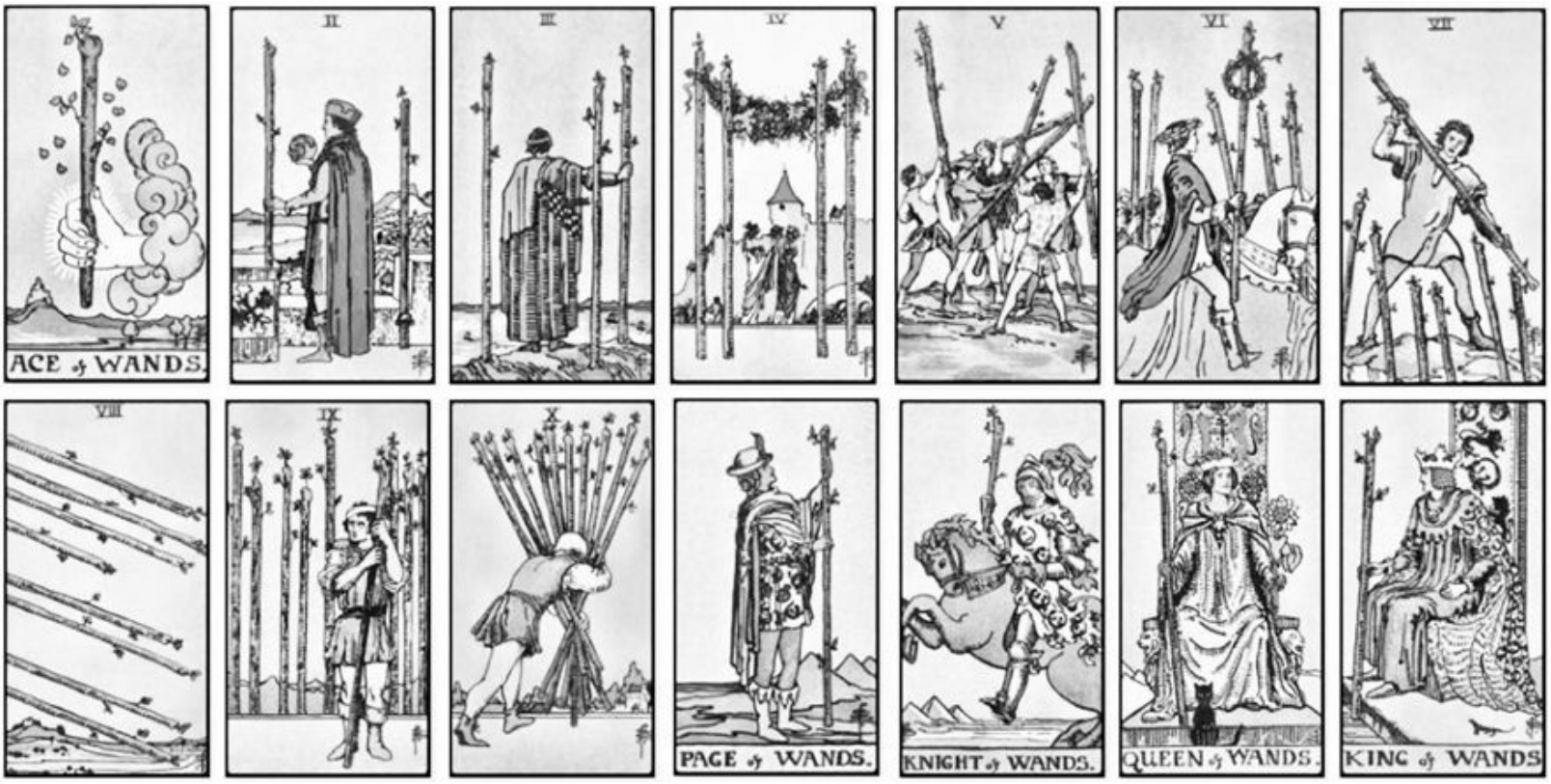
Key 19: The Sun: Dynamic, energetic love. Seeker will feel invigorated by his or her lover. Mutual success. Some tendency for egoism. Likely to be a power couple.

Key 20: Judgement: Spiritual love. Lover helps Seeker to realize Seeker's greater life priorities. Catharsis. Together, there may be trials the couple must overcome, but the relationship will be strengthened because of them.

Key 21: The World: Fulfilling love. Lover completes the Seeker. Likely to end in a happy marriage or long-term commitment.

Love and Relationships in the Minor Arcana

SUIT OF WANDS



Ace of Wands: Start of a new relationship; initial attraction to lover's fire and energy.

Two of Wands: Looking for more in the relationship. The status quo, although good, does not fulfill the Seeker.

Three of Wands: Seeker has worked hard at this relationship. Now waiting for the lover to reciprocate.

Four of Wands: Happiness. Romance will end in marriage. Great family life. Harmonious relationship.

Five of Wands: A competitive relationship. There may be third-party interference.

Six of Wands: The pursuit of love will end well. Seeker will attain what he or she desires.

Seven of Wands: Seeker is in a defensive position, fighting with lover or fighting in defense of the lover.

Eight of Wands: Seeker may be rushing in too fast. A lot of action in this relationship. Please look before you leap.

Nine of Wands: Seeker is overprotective, jealous. It is difficult for Seeker to let go of control and simply trust others.

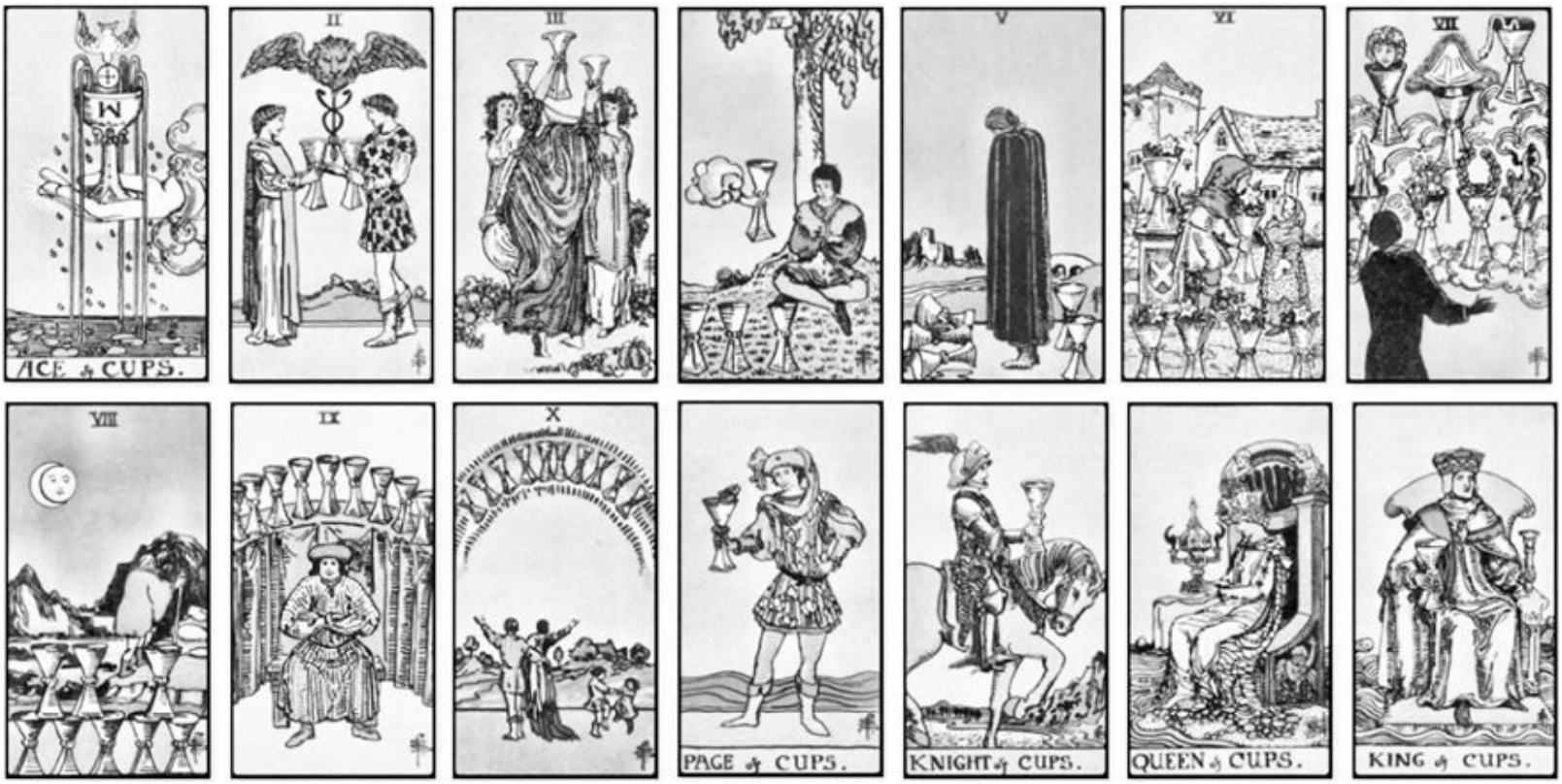
Ten of Wands: Relationship has become a burden on Seeker. Seeker is focused on the minutiae of love and cannot see his or her path clearly.

Page of Wands: A lover like the Page; or the Seeker is the Page; or someone brings work-related news about the relationship.

Knight of Wands: A lover like the Knight; or the Seeker is the Knight; or plot of the relationship is about to thicken.

Queen of Wands: A lover like the Queen; or the Seeker is the Queen; or the nurturing of creativity is key.

King of Wands: A lover like the King; or the Seeker is the King; or must be more assertive about prioritizing your career.



Suit of Cups

Ace of Cups: Start of a spiritually fulfilling relationship. The divine powers shine brightly on this love.

Two of Cups: Love with a strong friendship component. Cooperation. Strong, true love; will bring prosperity.

Three of Cups: The Seeker and his or her lover have a lot of fun together. There may be avoidance to get too serious.

Four of Cups: Not a good time for love. Need to reflect in solitude for now.

Five of Cups: Recent loss or grief over lover, but a friend or new potential love is there

for support.

Six of Cups: Seeker and lover have a past, a memorable one. Nostalgia. Sweethearts.

Seven of Cups: Many temptations in this love. Seeker must be careful. Love is superficial.

Eight of Cups: Leaving behind of a relationship that the parties have worked hard at. Seeking more out of love than what the present relationship could offer.

Nine of Cups: Wishful love. Love will be plentiful. Perhaps a mutual love of comfort and finer living.

Ten of Cups: Love is spiritually fulfilling. Marriage; good family. Happy.

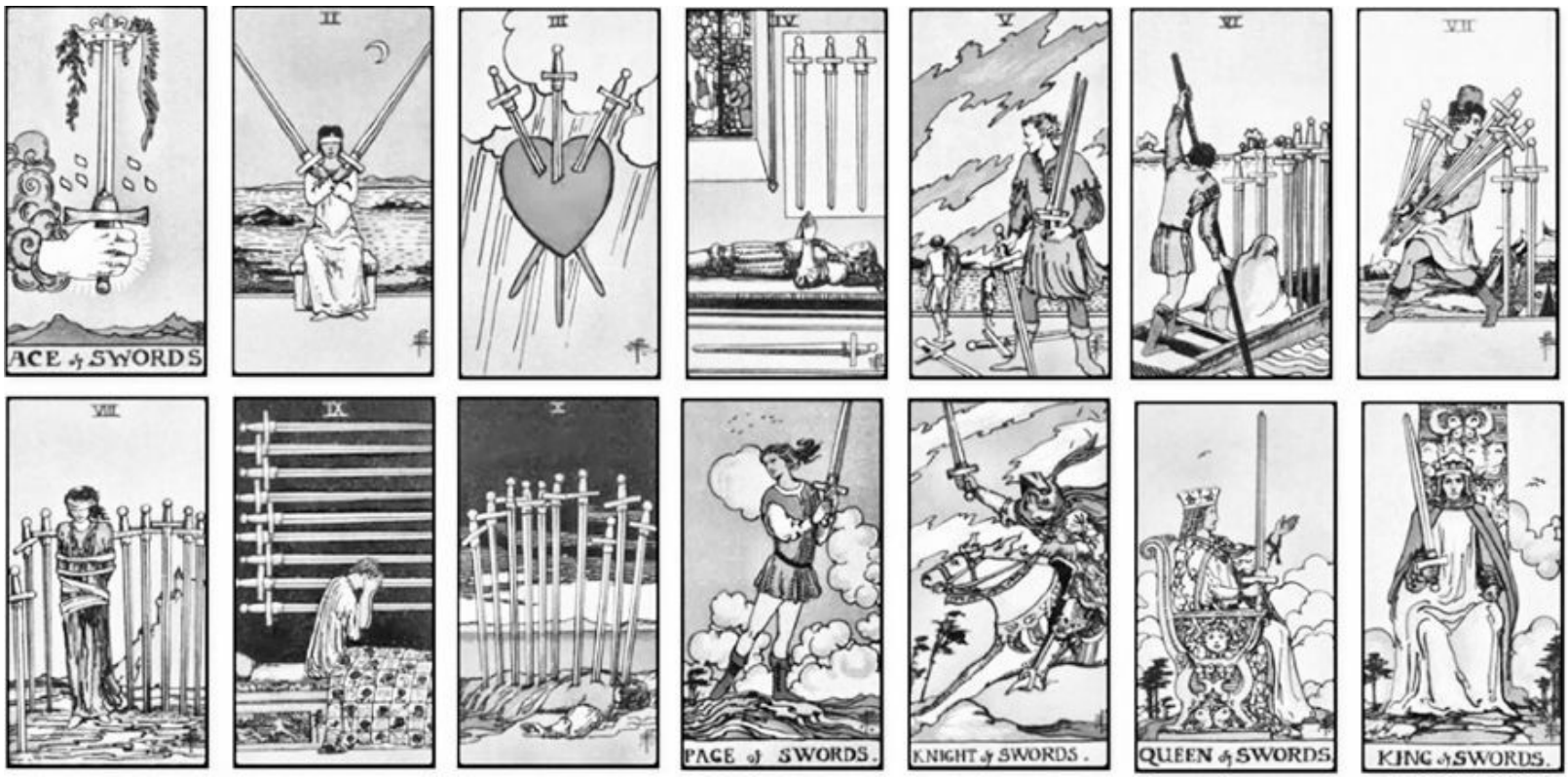
Page of Cups: A lover like the Page; or the Seeker is the Page; or someone brings emotional news about the relationship.

Knight of Cups: A lover like the Knight; or the Seeker is the Knight; or emotions are about to escalate.

Queen of Cups: A lover like the Queen; or the Seeker is the Queen; or love needs nurturing of compassion.

King of Cups: A lover like the King; or the Seeker is the King; or must be more assertive about expressing your feelings.

Suit of Swords



Ace of Swords: Start of a new relationship, one born of intellectualism.

Two of Swords: Seeker torn between two difficult choices in love.

Three of Swords: Storm of the heart. Broken heart. The love brings pain, yet the love burns bright and passionately.

Four of Swords: Recuperating from unhealthy past love. Time to be alone for repose.

Five of Swords: Seeker has unfair advantage in game of love. Cheating others.

Six of Swords: Leaving behind old love; release of old memories; journey to escape old love or emotional baggage from love.

Seven of Swords: A love that outsiders do not understand and might criticize.

Eight of Swords: Feeling imprisoned by the relationship.

Nine of Swords: Haunted by pains of love. Grieving period. Guilt.

Ten of Swords: Betrayal in love. Aggression. Resentment. Jealousy. Love ends.

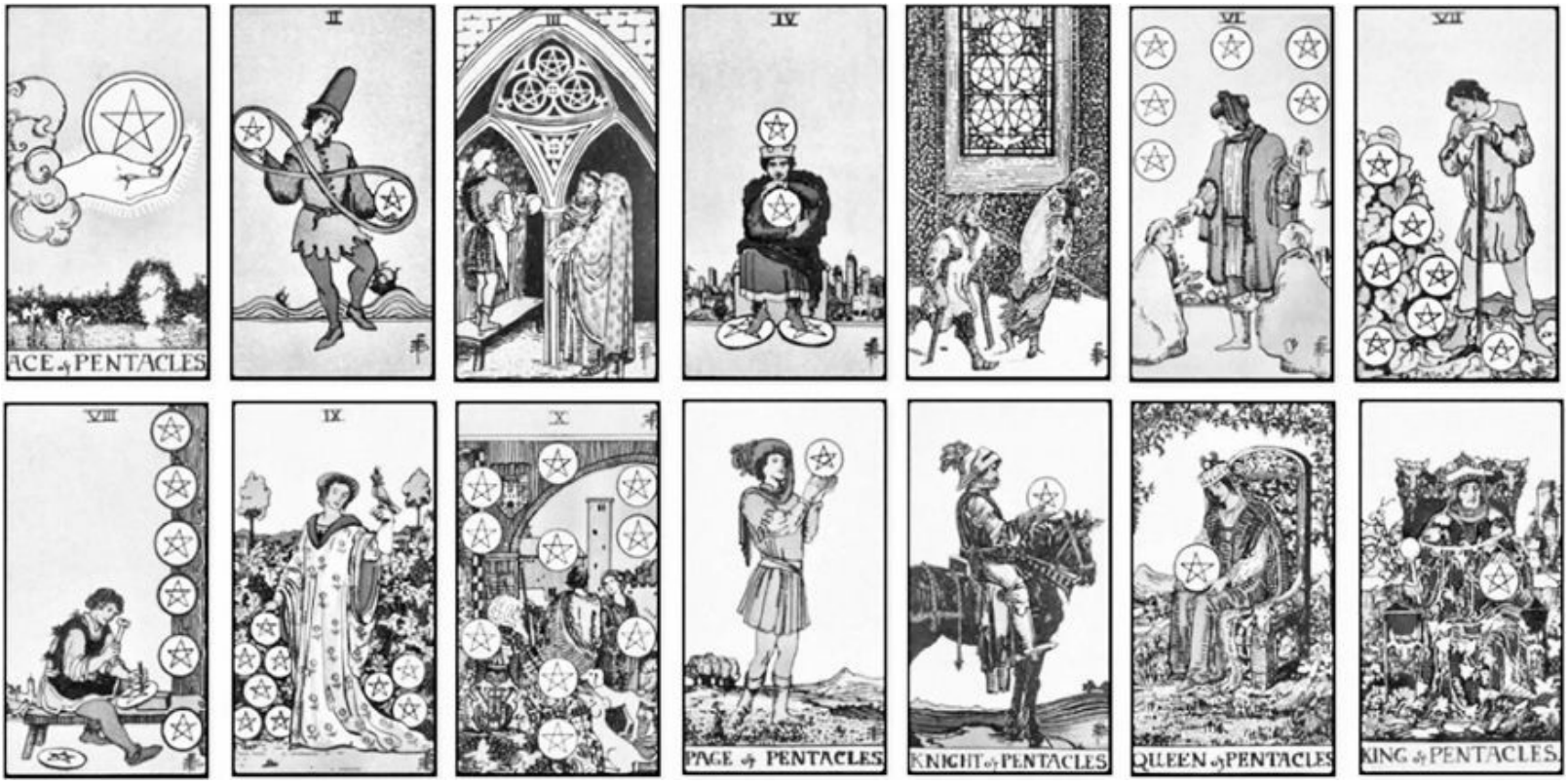
Page of Swords: A lover like the Page; or the Seeker is the Page; or someone brings cutting news about the relationship.

Knight of Swords: A lover like the Knight; or the Seeker is the Knight; or actions are about to get aggressive.

Queen of Swords: A lover like the Queen; or the Seeker is the Queen; or love requires nurturing to ease quarreling.

King of Swords: A lover like the King; or the Seeker is the King; or must be more assertive—intellectual sparring is what will attract your love interest.

Suit of Pentacles



Ace of Pentacles: Start of a new relationship, one where social class is relevant.

Two of Pentacles: Balancing love and other commitments, or there are two lovers.

Three of Pentacles: Will find lover in the Seeker's profession or same field of work.

Four of Pentacles: Small heart. Miserly with one's love. Need to be more openhearted.

Five of Pentacles: The winter of love. Feeling lost and homeless after heartbreak.

Six of Pentacles: Generosity in love. Sharing much with lover. Wearing heart on the sleeve. Compassion for humankind.

Seven of Pentacles: Love will yield fruition. Well-deserved, long-overdue love. Do not be afraid to go for it.

Eight of Pentacles: Seeker working hard to win lover. Maybe trying too hard. Diligence needed, not self-sacrifice.

Nine of Pentacles: Solitude. Independence. Enjoying one's fortune alone.

Ten of Pentacles: Good family reputation. Marriage is a good alliance.

Page of Pentacles: A lover like the Page; or the Seeker is the Page; or someone brings financial news about the relationship.

Knight of Pentacles: A lover like the Knight; or the Seeker is the Knight; or action related

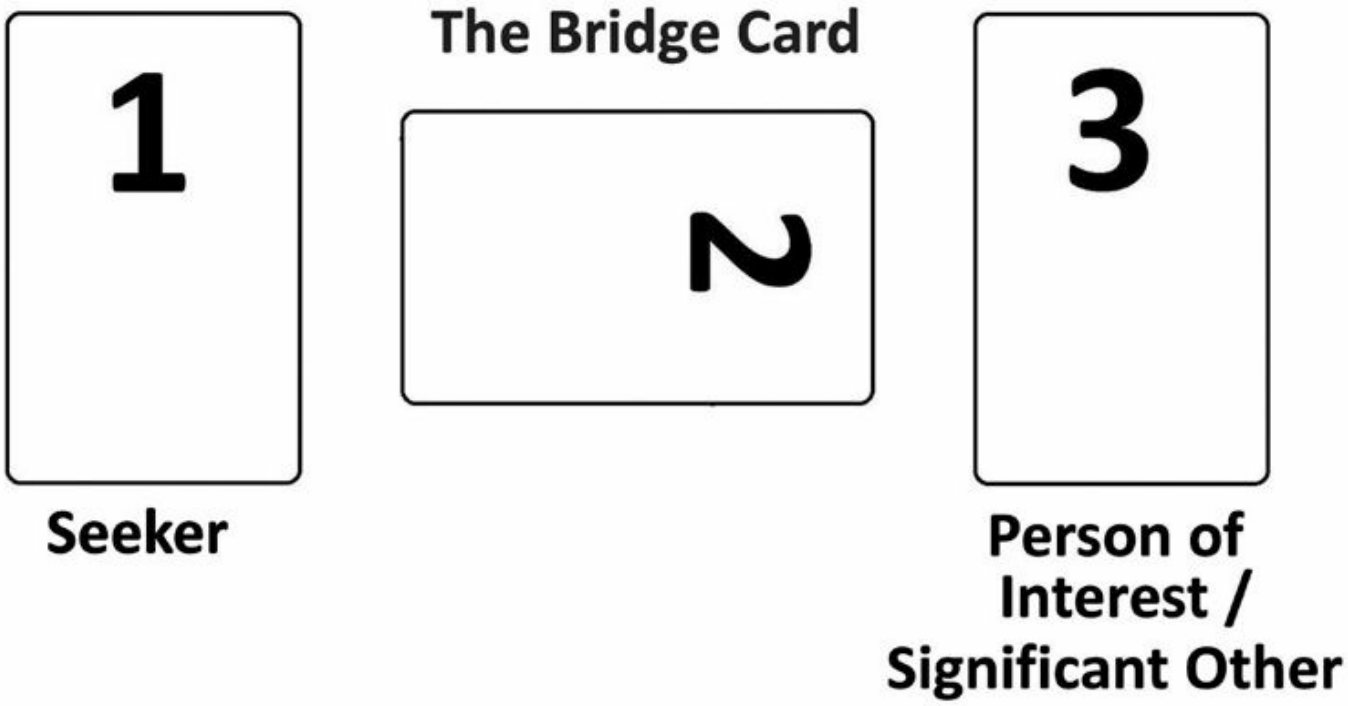
to finances to come.

Queen of Pentacles: A lover like the Queen; or the Seeker is the Queen; or love requires nurturing to improve finances.

King of Pentacles: A lover like the King; or the Seeker is the King; or must be more assertive; or lover is attracted to Seeker's leadership in his or her field.

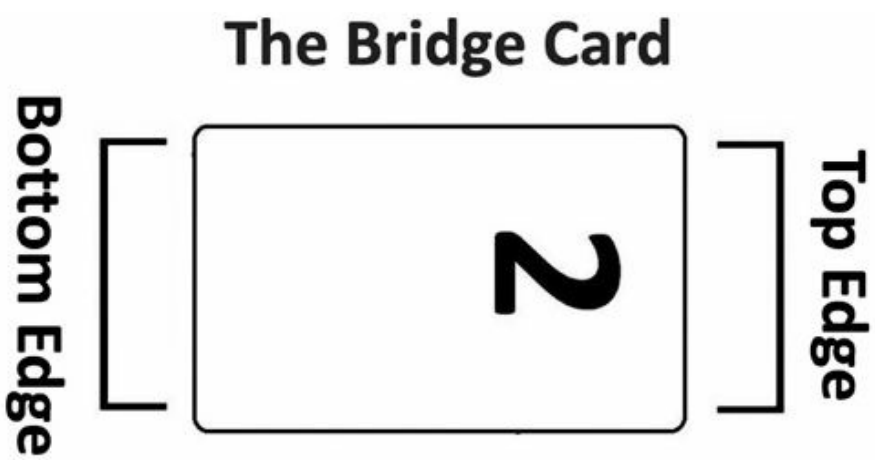
Hope's Three-Card Relationship Spread

Tarotist Hope Ballard[1] teaches an effective and practical three-card relationship spread that the practitioner may wish to commit to his or her repertoire of spreads, especially for reading inquiries about romance.



Card 1 represents the energies dominant in the Seeker and what the Seeker brings into the romantic relationship (or prospective relationship) that is of greatest relevance. Card 1 represents the Seeker.

Card 2 is referred to as the bridge card, which represents the energies that bridge the Seeker to the person of interest or significant other. The bridge card represents the forces that bind the two individuals to each other, or what the Seeker needs to know in order to be with his or her person of interest. At times in a love reading, a court card suggesting a gatekeeper might appear, which may indicate more than two parties being relevant in the inquiry. Generally, the bridge card will also help the Seeker assess the strengths (or weaknesses) of the relationship (or prospective relationship).

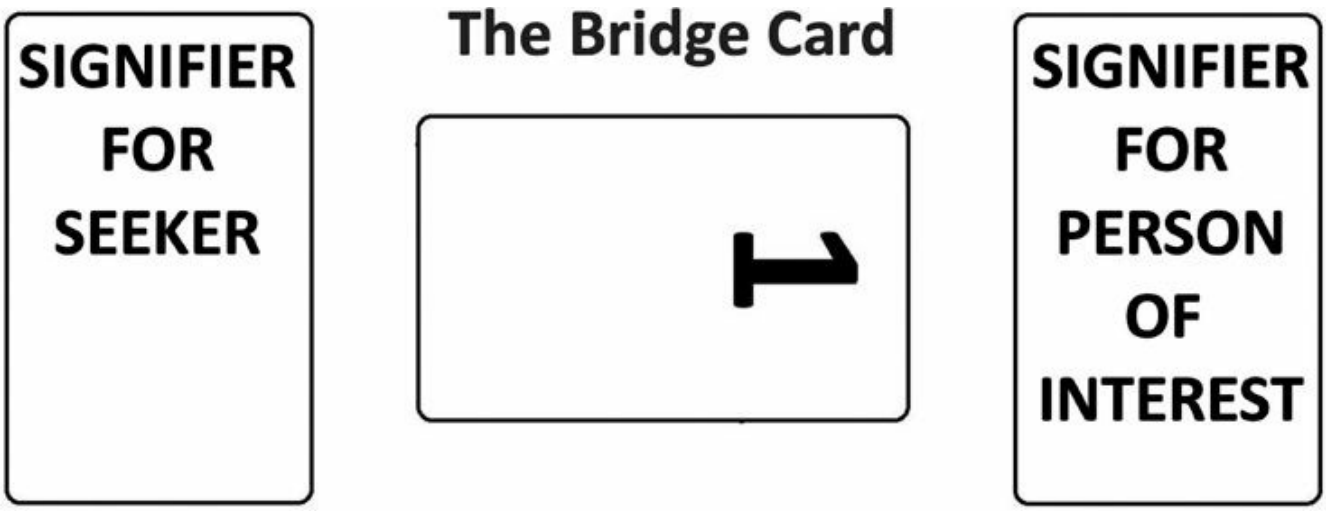


Recall from Chapter 14 that the method for interpreting horizontal cards in spreads used in this book is to treat the left side as the bottom edge and the right side as the top edge, for purposes of observing card reversals. That method can be applied here to the bridge card in Hope's spread.

Card 3 represents the energies dominant in the Seeker's person of interest or significant other. Card 3 reveals what the Seeker needs to know about the significant other to make better decisions about the relationship.

An Adaptation on Hope's Relationship Spread

The original Hope's Relationship Spread, above, will provide detailed insight into a romance, while the following adaptation is essentially a one-card reading about a relationship. The adaptation is for quick snapshot readings and focuses primarily on interpreting the bridge card. Cards 1 and 3 are not interpreted in the reading, but rather are used as anchors to channel the tarot deck's energies toward two identified individuals, the Seeker and the Seeker's person of interest.



Start by identifying the signifier card for the Seeker. Also identify the signifier card for the person of interest or significant other. Set these signifier cards down in the positions as depicted in the above illustration. These two signifier cards will anchor the tarot cards around the energies of these two individuals. Shuffle the deck and draw one card. Place that card down as the bridge card.

The single bridge card will reveal the forces that bind the two individuals to each other and indicate what the Seeker needs to know in order to be with his or her person of interest. The bridge card will help the Seeker assess the connection between the two individuals; and by understanding

what that connection is, the Seeker can make better or more informed decisions about the relationship (or prospective relationship).

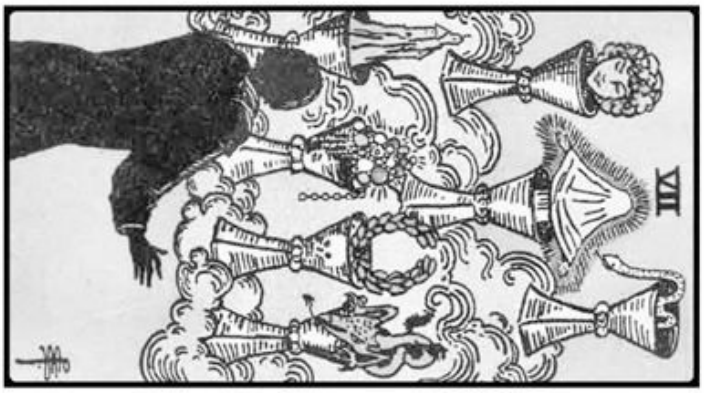
Note that the original Hope's Relationship Spread is a three-card reading that provides particularized intelligence on a romance and is used for a full reading session, while the one-card adaptation is used simply to determine the essence, the concise summary of what bonds two specified individuals to each other.

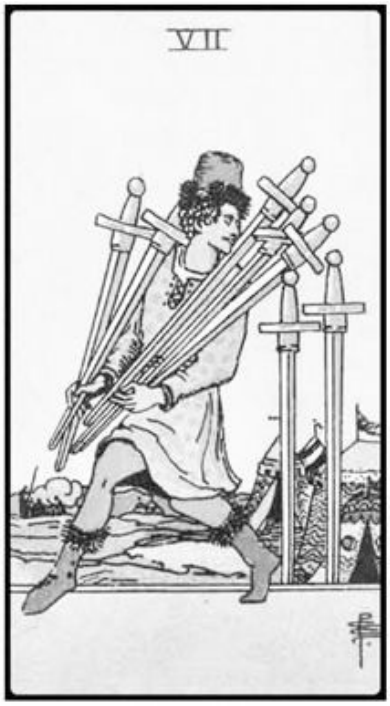
Case Study: Vickery

Vickery is a female in her early twenties and a Fire sign. While a traditional approach to selecting signifiers might indicate that Vickery is the Page of Wands, Vickery possesses an intense, magnetic presence and intuitively the Page of Wands does not seem to fit her quite right. Key 2: The High Priestess is thus used as her signifier, which Vickery affirms is a card that resonates strongly with her.

Vickery has gone on one date with a young woman, Karen, but after the date, Vickery is left unsure whether to pursue a potential romance with Karen. She hopes a tarot reading might help trigger some insights. Vickery is unsure of Karen's date of birth and no character description for Karen is provided to the practitioner.

The following presents a variation on Hope's spread. The purpose of presenting a variation is to demonstrate how standard spreads can be modified by the individual practitioner, to tailor them to the specific needs of a Seeker. Nonetheless, the case study will show how Hope's spread can be applied. Here, only one signifier card is used, the one for Vickery, and so the reading is in effect a two-card reading.





The bridge card between Vickery and Karen is the Seven of Cups, which suggests temptation and superficiality. Perhaps Vickery's attraction to Karen is in the physical plane only, or there are enticing but insubstantial aspects of Karen that attract Vickery. Also, a card from the suit of Cups as the bridge is apropos, indicating sentimentality, attraction, and persuasion as dominant linking factors between the two individuals. Much of what links the two together will feel more intuitive than rational. Yet overall, at present the connection between them is weak. That weak bond between the two individuals might suggest that what Vickery sees in Karen is more of a mirage at this point than a meaningful relationship. The next card, the one representing Karen, indicates why.

The Seven of Swords represents the energies surrounding Karen right now. The figure depicted in the Seven of Swords is looking away from the signifier (The High Priestess,

representing Vickery), and yet is running toward her. Is Karen running away from something in her past in haste, and rushing toward Vickery without looking or knowing where she is going? The Seven of Swords also suggests an impulsive, spontaneous personality, which are probably characteristics that are attracting Vickery to Karen. However, there is also a hint of deception that Vickery should look into further before committing. The suit of Swords here indicates strong intellectualism in Karen, someone ambitious though perhaps restless—an undertone often interpreted from the Seven of Swords—and these are traits that attract Vickery to Karen. Karen, though, may have the propensity to be argumentative, and that will be something Vickery will want to consider.

The synchronicity of sevens in Vickery's reading should also be noted: the Seven of Cups, the Seven of Swords, and even the seven pomegranates depicted on the veil behind the high priestess in the signifier card. Sevens tend to indicate a developmental stage, which corresponds well to what Vickery disclosed to the practitioner at the start of the reading: that she has only gone on one date with Karen. Here, the number seven suggests there will be more dates and there will be some wisdom to be gained from getting to know Karen better. The number seven also suggests that the relationship does have the potential to develop into an important romance at some later point, though before falling in, Vickery should learn a little more about Karen's past and identify what exactly Karen is trying to run away from. Vickery should also remain fully self-aware of why she is attracted to Karen and make sure she does not indulge in tempting superficialities.

The patternicity of the seven pomegranates in the signifier card and the two seven cards point to the importance of the pomegranate symbolism to Vickery's reading. Pomegranates represent prosperity and ambition, fruitfulness, and fertility, and are generally a positive sign. That further suggests a strong potential for the relationship, though again, the dominant meanings of the cards urge Vickery to do her due diligence before investing her heart.

Chapter 27

Tarot and Professional Development

When a Seeker's inquiry isn't about love, then it is probably about work and career. Only a small percentage of inquiries fall outside the categories of love and work. Tarot is a powerful tool for gauging professional development. It helps us understand where we are in the progression of our careers and how to advance on to the next phase. Typically Seekers want to know whether they will get a promotion, whether it is the right time to change jobs, or how they should deal with work-related incidences. The following table provides a broad overview of suit associations as they pertain to questions about professional development:

The Tarot Suits and Professional Development		
Suit	***Significance***	***Personality Seeker Must Adopt***
WANDS	The suit of Wands is tailored to professional and personal development.	Lion: Be more authoritative; assertive, show your strengths. Better define your goals.
CUPS	Emotions are running high in the work sphere.	Water Bearer (or Dolphin): Learn how to contain and thus control your emotions.
SWORDS	There are ideological clashes at play. Stress is high.	Eagle: Take swifter action; need to be more focused, resourceful. Understand the "why."
PENTACLES	Seeker's financial situation is an issue.	Bull: Need stability. Stand your ground. Achieve with hard work.

The subsequent pages will provide a rudimentary guideline for applying tarot to work-related issues; however, do not let these insights dictate. Apply on a case by case basis.

Also, before consulting the tarot for a specific question about work projects or career, consider performing the First Operation to see whether the signifier card will appear in the "I" pile. Appearing in the "H_2" pile may also be workable, especially if the inquiry is related to material wealth. That synchronicity will help affirm that the subsequent card reading will be accurate to the professional development question.

Note: For card reversals, apply the WIND analysis: W, weakened energy; I, inverted meaning; N negative meaning; D, delays before the projected outcome. Review the mnemonic in Chapter 15.

Professional Development in the Major Arcana

Key 0: The Fool: New beginning. Unbound potential, especially in a creative project. Take care not to be foolish.

Key 1: The Magician: Constructive use of creative power. Great omen. The Seeker's individuality will shine.

Key 2: The High Priestess: Strong feminine energy involved. Be wary of secrets. Keep

your intuition on high.

Key 3: The Empress: Seeker's project will yield fruition. There will be professional success.

Key 4: The Emperor: Seeker has his or her work under control. Leadership skills are crucial to the Seeker's success.

Key 5: The Hierophant: Looking for approval among colleagues. A tendency to play it too safe; too conservative.

Key 6: The Lovers: Be wary of temptations in the work sphere. Seeker may have to choose vice or virtue.

Key 7: The Chariot: Self-mastery. Great control over the Seeker's professional development. Glory.

Key 8: Strength: Seeker exudes remarkable strength of character as applied to professional development.

Key 9: The Hermit: Seek the counsel of a mentor. A mentor will help with Seeker's situation.

Key 10: Wheel of Fortune: Seeker will have a turn of luck. There will be a turning point in Seeker's situation.

Key 11: Justice: Seeker has a decision to make. Be sure to act fairly and objectively. Decide with logic, not emotion.

Key 12: The Hanged Man: Seeker may get blamed for something he or she did not do, but be ready to forgive others.

Key 13: Death: Painful end to a phase in Seeker's professional development; time to transform for the new career phase to come.

Key 14: Temperance: Harmonizing two contrasting elements is crucial to success in Seeker's work situation.

Key 15: The Devil: Pessimism is an issue. Negativity is holding Seeker back. Be wary of a toxic work environment.

Key 16: The Tower: Keep egos in check. Learning humility is critical for Seeker to progress in the situation.

Key 17: The Star: Optimism will advance Seeker's development. Seeker will be content.

Key 18: The Moon: How it looks on the outside will be different from how it looks on the inside. Be perceptive and alert so that Seeker can see the truth through the smoke.

Key 19: The Sun: Great energy will advance Seeker's development. Seeker will enjoy success.

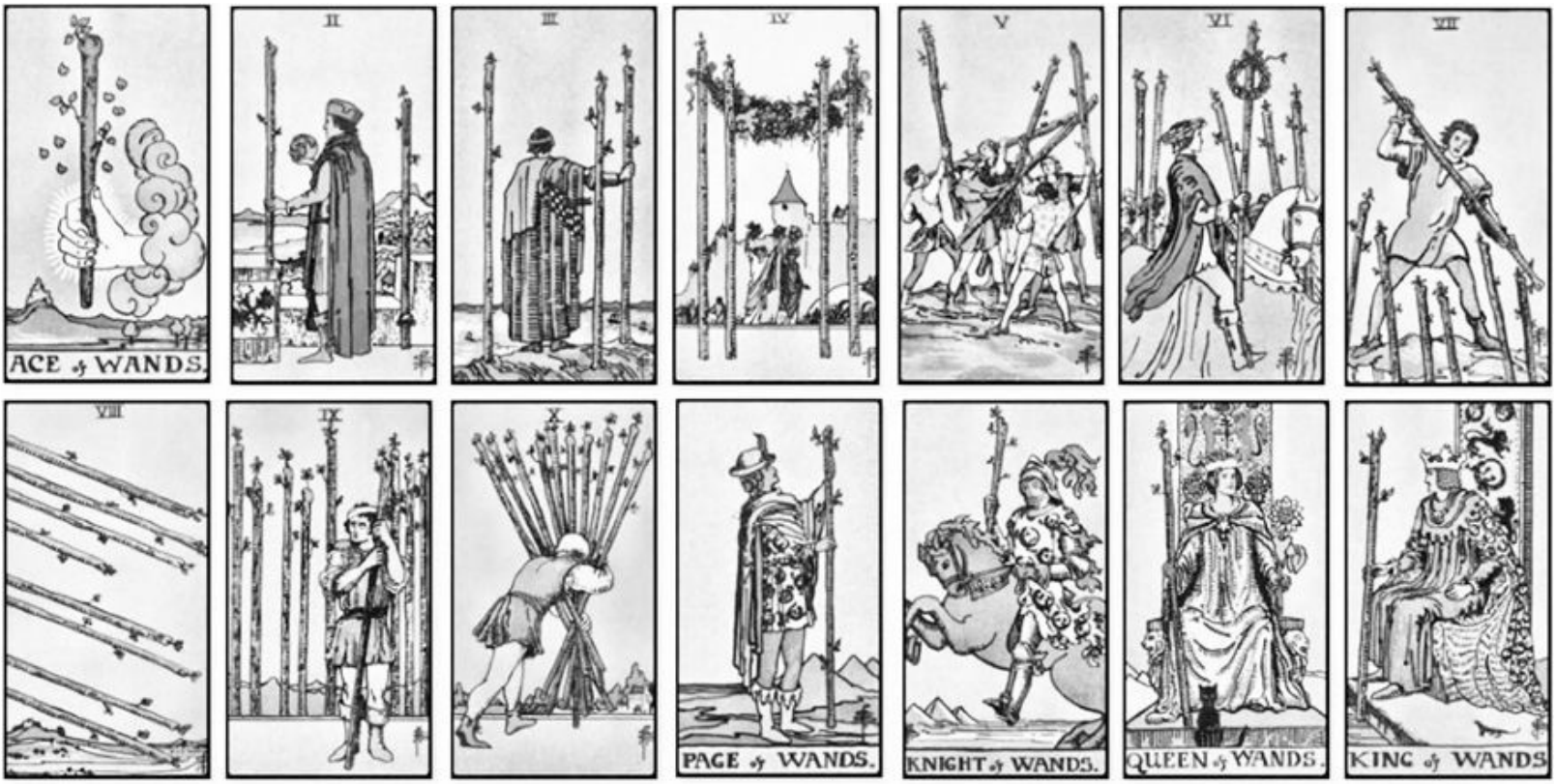
Key 20: Judgement: Important lesson will be learned. A realization will enable Seeker to

advance forward.

Key 21: The World: Triumph. Seeker will prevail in the end. Accomplishment with purpose.

Professional Development in the Minor Arcana

Suit of Wands



Ace of Wands: Positive start to an endeavor. A new project or new career move.

Two of Wands: A privileged Seeker is ambitious and wants more than the status quo.

Three of Wands: After hard work, the long-awaited results will come back positive.

Four of Wands: The team will be successful. Harmonious teamwork.

Five of Wands: Competition among colleagues. Threats from within.

Six of Wands: Advancement. Victory. Success. Project will bring Seeker glory.

Seven of Wands: Back against the wall. Stand your ground. You can take them on.

Eight of Wands: Much action, not enough thought. Do not rush the project.

Nine of Wands: Overprotective of Seeker's territory at work. Are others encroaching?

Ten of Wands: Seeker is burying head in the minutiae and losing sight of the bigger picture.

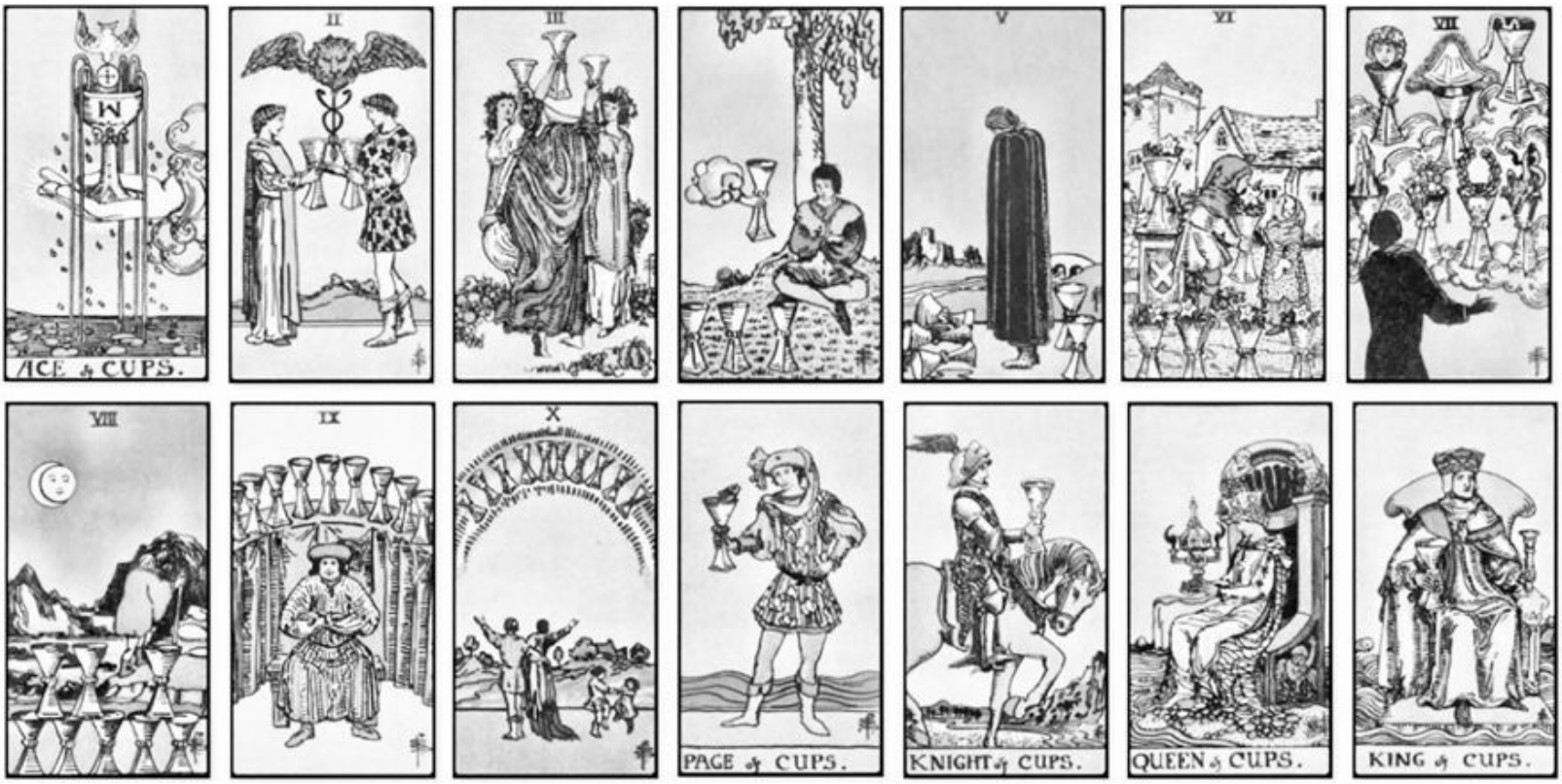
Page of Wands: Person like the Page affects Seeker; or messenger will bring news.

Knight of Wands: Person like the Knight affects Seeker; or Seeker's actions bring advancement.

Queen of Wands: Person like the Queen affects Seeker; or Seeker must exude traits of the Queen.

King of Wands: Person like the King affects Seeker; or Seeker must be more domineering.

Suit of Cups



Ace of Cups: Endeavor brings spiritual fulfillment to Seeker. What Seeker is presently engaged in is what Seeker is meant to do. Fulfilling destiny.

Two of Cups: Friendships and alliances at work prove advantageous. Emotional connection to a colleague.

Three of Cups: Celebrating success. Do not forget to stay focused.

Four of Cups: Some past loss and past disappointments. The Seeker is now reflecting on

how to advance forward.

Five of Cups: Recent losses. Major setbacks. Regrets. However, all was not in vain. The Seeker can recover what is left and rebuild.

Six of Cups: Someone from the past will return and help out. The past will become the present.

Seven of Cups: Superficial and tempting offers. Stay grounded. Do not indulge.

Eight of Cups: Abandoning past hard work and efforts for higher ground.

Nine of Cups: Work/project will be successful. The Seeker will get what he/she wants.

Ten of Cups: Work is spiritually or emotionally fulfilling. Success.

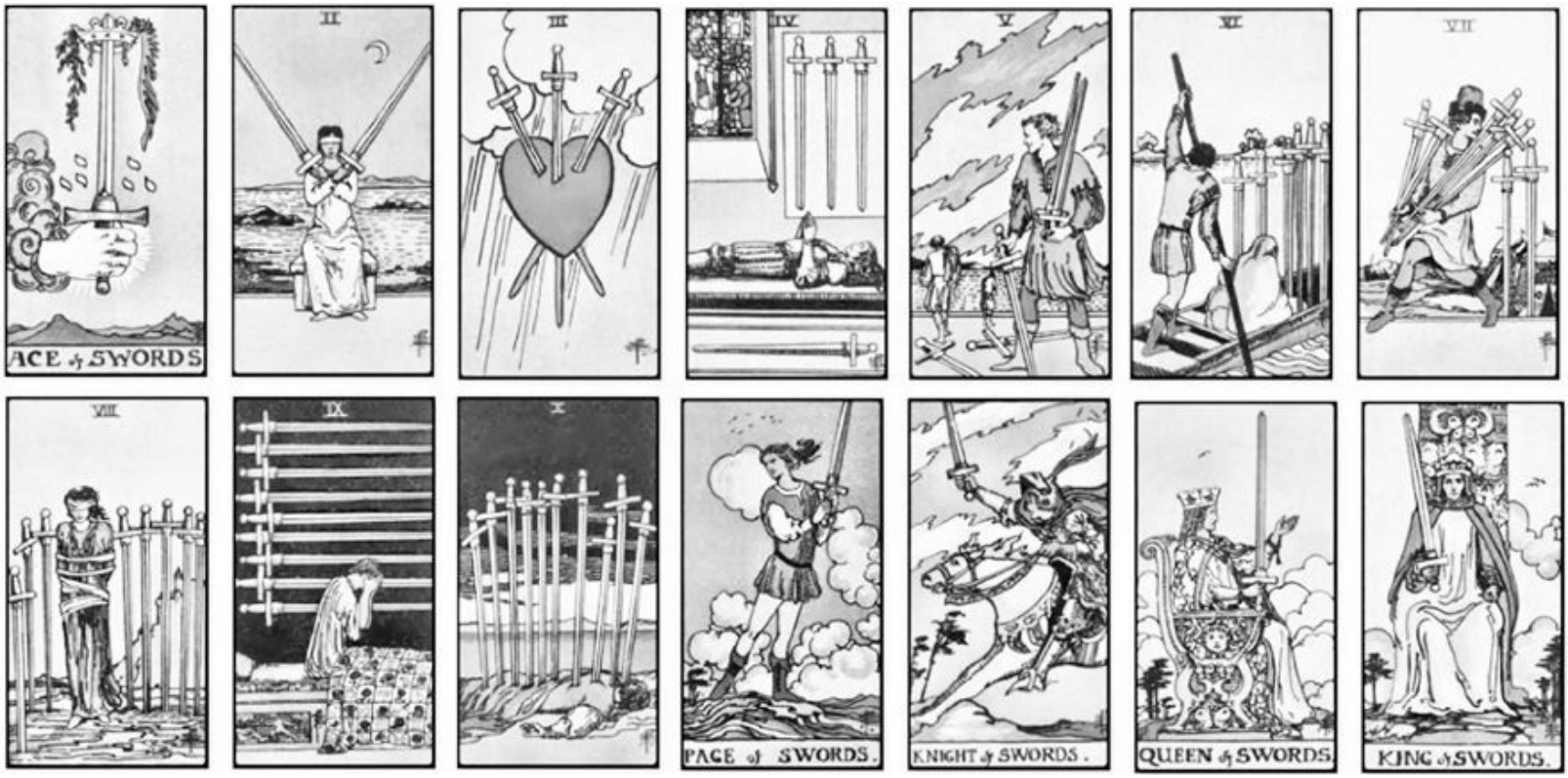
Page of Cups: Person like the Page affects Seeker; or messenger will bring news.

Knight of Cups: Person like the Knight affects Seeker; or Seeker's action brings advancement.

Queen of Cups: Person like the Queen affects Seeker; or Seeker must exude traits of the Queen.

King of Cups: Person like the King affects Seeker; or Seeker must lead with compassion.

Suit of Swords



Ace of Swords: Ambitious new pursuit. A great start. The Seeker was born to do this. Destined for greatness.

Two of Swords: Difficult choice to make. The Seeker will choose right. Gains to come.

Three of Swords: Disappointment. Quarrels with trusted colleagues. Ideological clashing.

Four of Swords: Take time to rest. Exhaustion caused by work. Do not let ambition cost you your health.

Five of Swords: Taking unfair advantage of others. Unethical business conduct. It wasn't a fair fight.

Six of Swords: Business trip. Travel abroad to find better opportunities. Seeker's career to blossom elsewhere.

Seven of Swords: Taking the path less traveled. A maverick, but are you an outcast?

Eight of Swords: Plateau. Unable to advance from status quo. Feeling limitations. Worrying causes blockage.

Nine of Swords: Regrets over past mistakes. Error in judgment is haunting Seeker.

Ten of Swords: Betrayal from others. Huge setbacks in development.

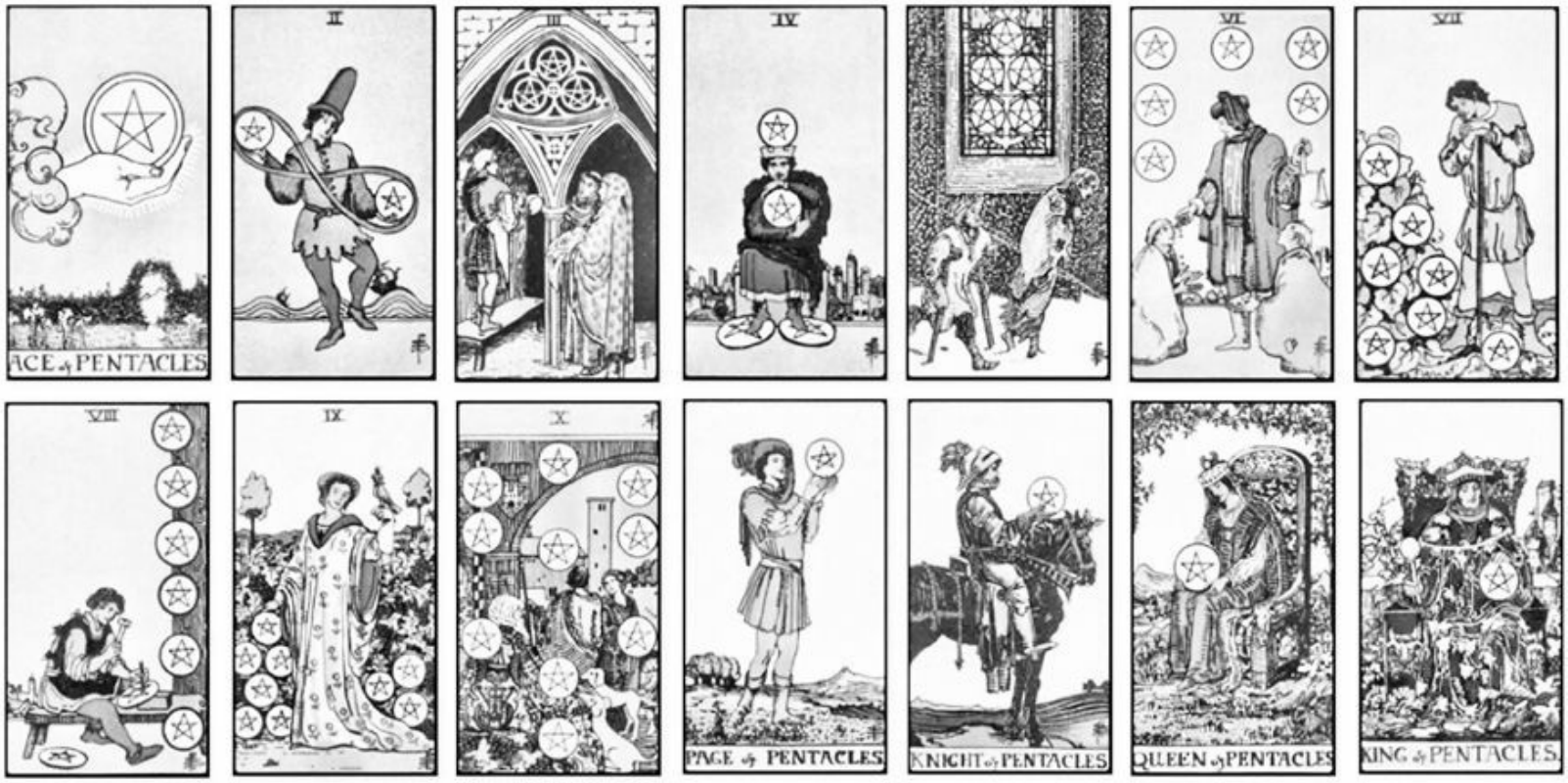
Page of Swords: Person like the Page affects Seeker; or messenger will bring news.

Knight of Swords: Person like the Knight affects Seeker; or Seeker's action brings advancement.

Queen of Swords: Person like the Queen affects Seeker; or Seeker must exude traits of the Queen.

King of Swords: Person like the King affects Seeker; or Seeker must lead with more order.

Suit of Pentacles



Ace of Pentacles: Project will be financially successful at the start. Initial profit and gain.

Two of Pentacles: Seeker is competently juggling many responsibilities at the same time.

Three of Pentacles: Seeker will gain respect from his or her professional peers.

Four of Pentacles: Seeker is not using professional talents to help others. Be more charitable.

Five of Pentacles: Financial troubles. Good time to save. Estimate conservatively. Risk-taking may prove costly.

Six of Pentacles: Use professional talents to give back to the needy. Accrue good will to further gains.

Seven of Pentacles: Will yield fruition. The Seeker possesses sound professional judgment.

Eight of Pentacles: Apprentice stage. On the right track. Strong creative potential. Attention to detail will yield results.

Nine of Pentacles: Great success, independent, but so focused on work that Seeker is now lonely.

Ten of Pentacles: Seeker's team will enjoy prestige. All will be resolved. Strong familial alliances.

Page of Pentacles: Person like the Page affects Seeker; or messenger will bring news.

Knight of Pentacles: Person like the Knight affects Seeker; or Seeker's action brings advancement.

Queen of Pentacles: Person like the Queen affects Seeker; or Seeker must exude traits of the Queen.

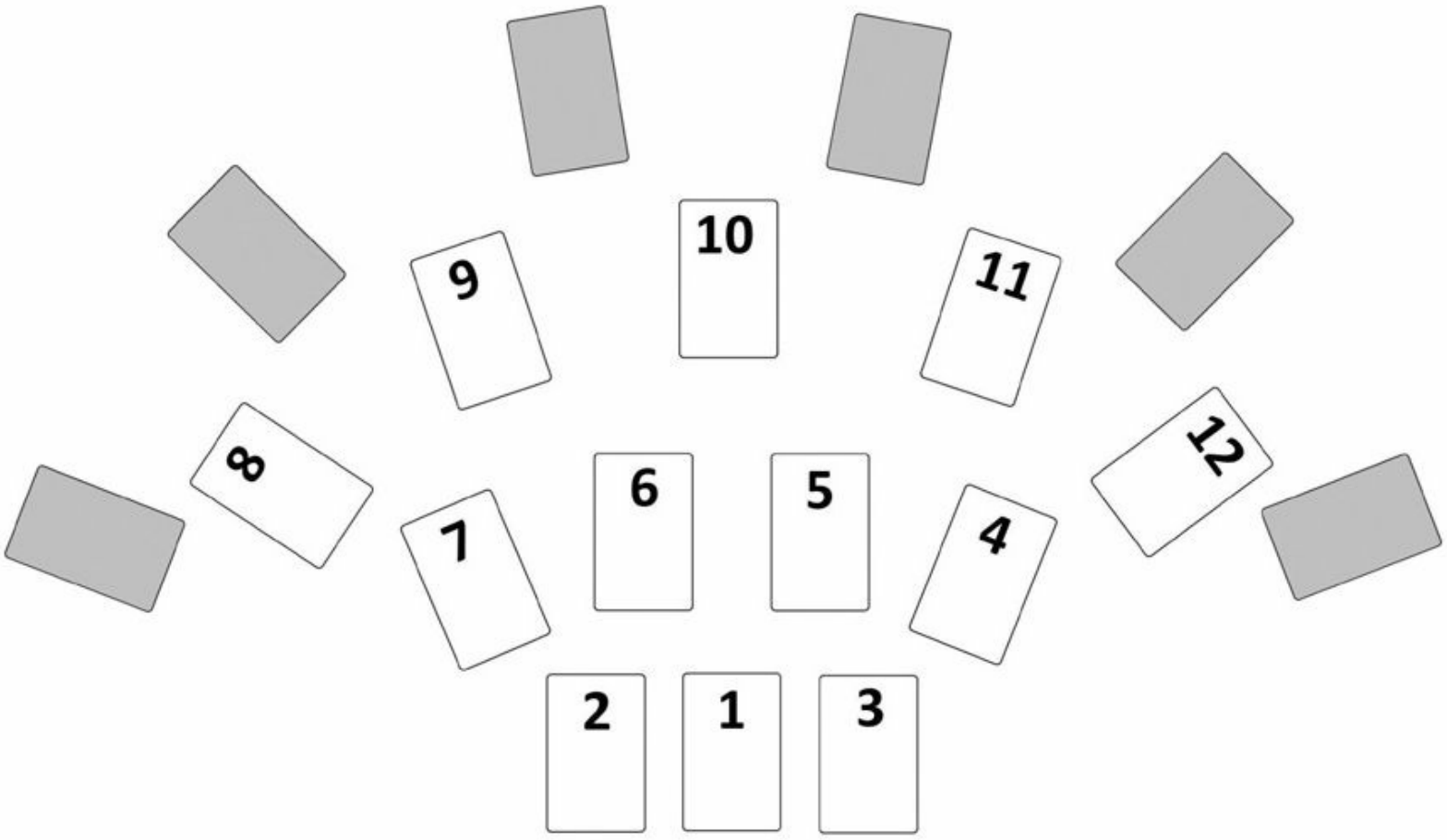
King of Pentacles: Person like the King affects Seeker; or Seeker must be more of an enterprising leader.

Inspiring High Achievement with Tarot

There are four traits shared by all high achievers, and those traits can be represented in the four suits of tarot:

Dedication to a personal vision (Fire)
Control of emotions (Water)
Intelligent perseverance (Air)
Resourceful perseverance (Earth)

When a Seeker would like to assess how the cards stack up for him or her in terms of the four traits for high achievement, the analysis discussed in this section can be added to the reading. The Seashell spread is best suited for this, but essentially any multi-card spread will work. An additional six cards are drawn. In the Seashell, these cards can be added as an outer tier to the existing seashell formation; for convenience of reference this will be called Seashell Plus. The six new cards are added with the objective of identifying which of the four aforementioned traits the Seeker must further develop to ensure high achievement in the Seeker's profession.



Tally the number of cards that correspond to the four elements:

FIRE	WATER	AIR	EARTH
Suit of Wands	*Suit of Cups*	*Suit of Swords*	*Suit of Pentacles*
The Emperor Strength Wheel of Fortune Temperance The Tower The Sun	The High Priestess The Chariot The Hanged Man Death The Moon Judgement	The Fool The Lovers Justice The Star	The Magician The Empress The Hierophant The Hermit The Devil The World

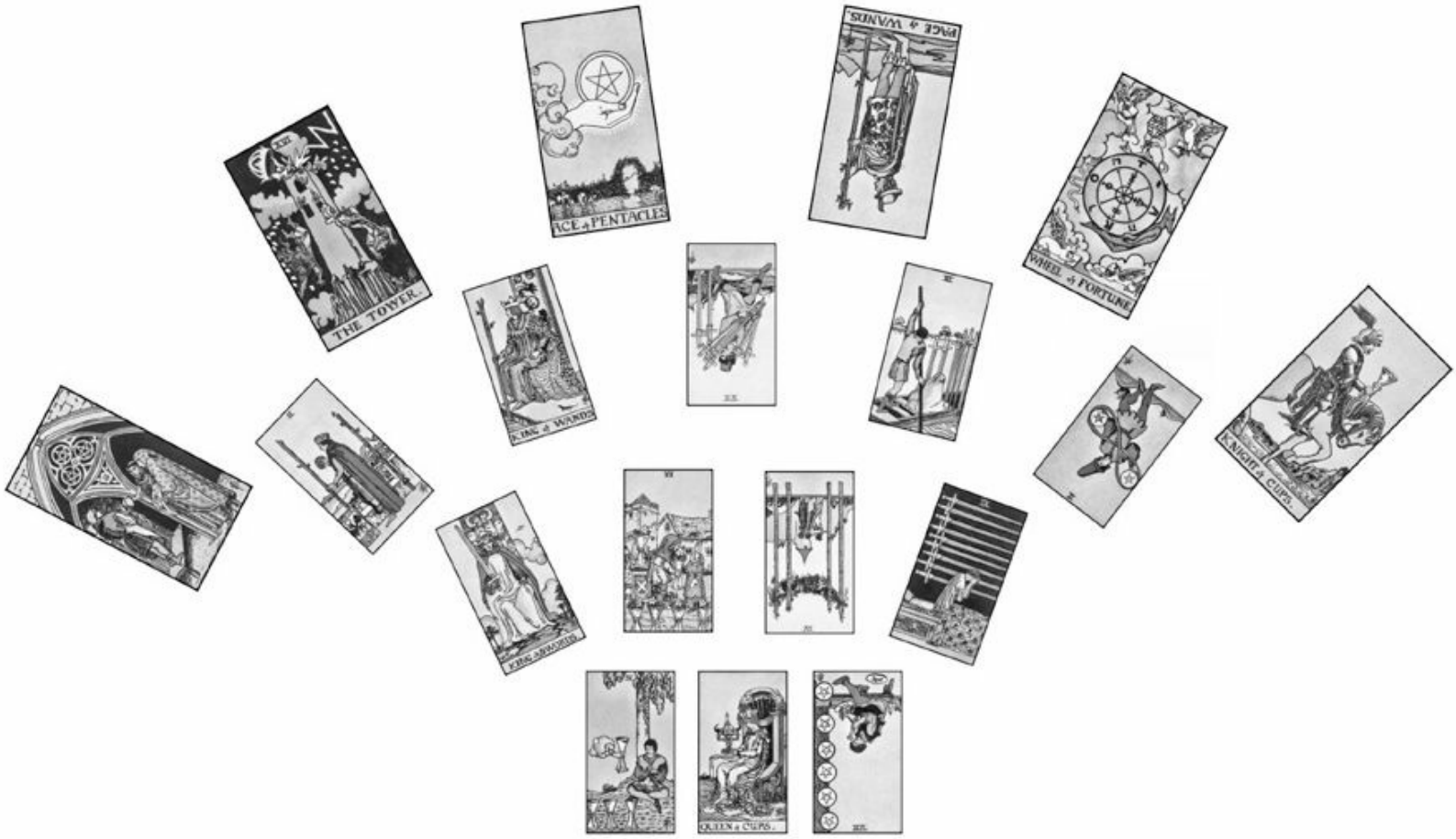
Then calculate the percentage for each element. Here is where card reversals matter. What a high or low percentage indicates will depend on whether the cards appear mostly upright or in reverse.

	High Percentage Trait	*Low Percentage Trait*
Majority Upright	Seeker is innately adept at mastering this trait and must develop it with full vigor to ensure high achievement.	This trait is less needed for Seeker to succeed. However, ongoing maintenance work is still necessary.
Majority Reversed	Seeker must develop this trait further to ensure success. Analyze the cards to determine how to further develop this trait.	Seeker is intuitively on the right track for this trait. However, Seeker cannot stop development; Seeker need only follow intuition.

The total tallies—including all cards of the spread, the original spread of cards, plus the new additional six—will indicate what traits are dominant in the Seeker and what traits will be most helpful for the Seeker's ability of high achievement. Second, the six additional cards should then be tallied and analyzed separately to assess how much more development of the corresponding traits are necessary for the Seeker going forward.

Case Study: Zara Revisited

Zara was the English major thinking about an MFA with innate artistic and musical talents. Using the Seashell spread, a reading indicated a surprising potentially lucrative career in politics. Say that Zara desired further insight into that potential. Six additional cards could be drawn for the Seashell Plus. Assume the following spread resulted:



The additional tier of cards is illustrated larger than the rest of the spread for case study purposes. Count the number of cards that correspond with each of the four elements. Also note whether upright cards or reversals dominate. Here, upright cards dominate (thirteen out of eighteen). Thus, high-percentage traits will indicate what Zara is innately adept at mastering and will need to ensure high achievement. Low-percentage traits will indicate what is less needed, and what Zara already has strong command over.

	FIRE	**WATER**	**AIR**	**EARTH**
Min. Arc.	4	4	4	4
Maj. Arc.	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	**6**	**4**	**4**	**4**
Percentage	**34%**	**22%**	**22%**	**22%**

The totals indicate the balance of achievement traits that Zara will need to attain for high

achievement. What she is innately adept at mastering but must continue to develop into maturation is the success trait that corresponds with Fire, or a strong dedication to a personal vision. Fundamentally, Zara is someone who always knows what she wants, who has a strong sense of personal vision. That particular trait will be indispensable for her to achieve at the level that will fulfill her.

While that is true for anyone who has an aspiration, Zara's success will bank on that trait more than it might for others. For some, control of emotions, or the correspondence to Water, is most relevant, or the need for intelligent, educated perseverance, the correspondence to Air. Not so for Zara. While all four are needed for success, Zara's high achievements will be grounded in Fire energy.

In the Seashell Plus spread, the purpose of the six additional cards is to look at the projections for the Seeker's future. See the following tallies within the six additional cards for Zara:

	FIRE	WATER	AIR	EARTH
Totals	3	1	0	2
Percentage	50%	17%	0%	33%
Trait to Develop	Focus & Vision	Control of Emotions	Knowledge & Education	Material Resources

Much of the Fire energies she will need to succeed will be further developed in the coming years, as they have not manifested fully in her personality at this time. Note how most of the Fire cards are within the new tier of six rather than the original Seashell spread. The focused analysis also shows that at this time Zara already possesses the needed Air qualities, which suggests that the educational path she will take intuitively is going to be the correct one, and will arm her with all the knowledge and intelligence she needs to thrive. That is most certainly not to say she can now sit on her laurels in school, just that she is on the right track already. Second to Fire, going forward, is Earth. Zara has begun to accrue the resources she will need, but there are miles to go before she may sleep, more in terms of material assets she will have to acquire to be positioned adequately for high achievement.

If a different spread from the Seashell is used, an additional six cards can be drawn into a row adjacent to the original spread. The number six corresponds with harmony and enlightenment, which resonates with the purpose of drawing the six additional cards: to gain insight into what it will take to harmonize the Seeker's traits to ensure high achievement.

Chapter 28

Using Tarot to Build Resilience

I AM GOING TOtake the liberty of going on a slight tangent here. Building personal resilience and crisis management tools is a broad topic and not one specific to tarot—but the Seekers who are most inclined to consult a tarot practitioner are typically ones who are troubled. Any little measure that you, the practitioner, can take to guide a Seeker to build resilience should be pursued, though be fully aware that you do not assume the role of a licensed counselor, especially if you are not one. Your role is to remind the Seeker of the wisdom and insights into crisis management that the archetypes of tarot can offer.

It is said that resilience is the secret to crisis management. Resilient people have seven characteristics in common:

- **Optimism.** Resilient individuals exhibit a positive attitude and optimistic outlook.
- **Confidence.** They believe in themselves and their own capabilities.
- **Humor.** They are able to smile, laugh, and find humor even in the wake of tragedy. They can laugh at themselves and at their situation.
- **Expression.** Resilient individuals have the ability to express their emotions.
- **Focus.** They focus on the baby steps toward their goals and are able to plot a road map from vision to goal.
- **Connections.** They foster strong social connections and reach out to them when in need.
- **Devotion.** No matter how busy they are, they will make time to take care of themselves, i.e., eat healthy, exercise regularly, maintain their spiritual or religious practices, etc.

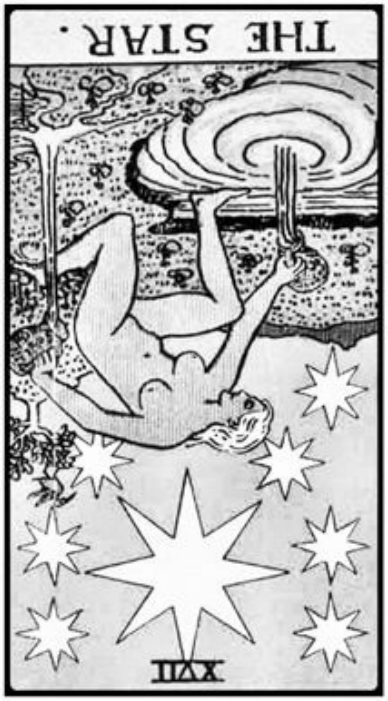
When crisis hits our lives, our pain and struggle indicates that the status quo approach is insufficient and other components must be introduced or reinforced. Oftentimes a tarot reading can help enlighten us as to which of the seven components are missing or weak. Crisis can be thought of as 20 percent materiality and 80 percent perception. Thus, managing your perception of the situation is more than half the battle.

Applying tarot analytics through the framework of the above seven characteristics can help a Seeker with the process of diagnosing a crisis and identifying what needs to be done, and even formulating contingency plans. Follow-up tarot readings can then be used to help the Seeker monitor his or her progress of actions. By scheduling follow-up tarot readings about the crisis, the Seeker is effectively assuring that he or she will maintain the momentum and focus to drive out of the crisis.

When certain cards appear in a spread, consider how those cards reflect the seven characteristics for resilience, and which are notably lacking in the Seeker. In analyzing a crisis situation through tarot analytics, often card reversals will suggest latent energies that need to be brought out into the limelight by the Seeker. The card reversals can suggest potential or inactive characteristics that the Seeker must activate in order to manage the crisis.

The Seven Characteristics of Resilience

Optimism



While the Death card may not initially seem to indicate optimism, it does. Death is about a painful transitioning period, but once the transition or transformation is made, all will be better. Thus, when the Death card appears the Seeker should be reminded to be optimistic, as resilience is built from a positive attitude and eyes on the bright sunrise ahead.

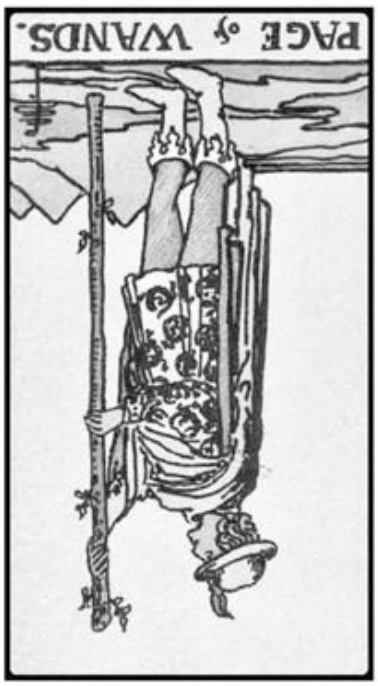
The Star card in reverse suggests pessimism in the Seeker as a root cause of the problem, so when it appears, remind the Seeker that he or she must embody the traits of The Star upright, and be more optimistic and hopeful in his or her own outlook. The Sun card in reverse can indicate a delay in success, so the Seeker is urged to remain persistent and keep positive because the endurance of that optimistic energy is needed before the Seeker can attain his or her goals.

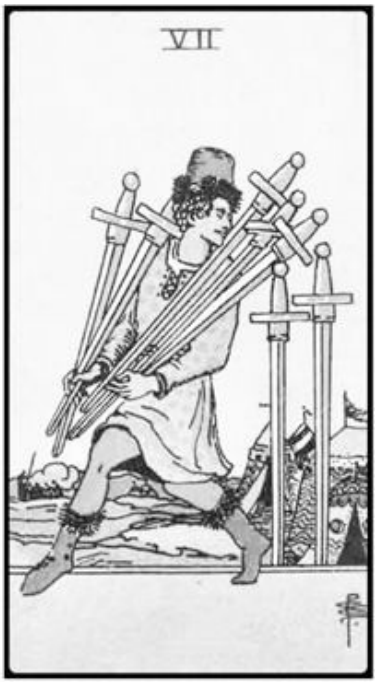
Confidence

A critical element of resilience is confidence. While optimism is a trust in the good to come to the Seeker from the cosmos, confidence is the Seeker's trust in him- or herself. Confidence is the certitude in one's own abilities. It is what allows us to envision our success and then execute fully toward that success.

When The Magician card appears in reverse, it could be an indication that the Seeker needs to build his or her confidence or needs to regain empowerment. The Emperor upright would suggest a great deal of confidence, authority, and empowerment, but in reverse, can hint at the potential characteristics of the Seeker that need to become kinetic. The Strength card is self-explanatory. The Queen of Swords, upright or reversed, also shares the theme of confidence.

Humor





Resilient individuals are able to laugh at themselves and to laugh in the face of an otherwise dire,

tragic situation. Humor is healing. Cards like The Fool or the Page of Wands bring light humor into our lives, and when they appear surrounded by more severe cards, these cards suggest the glimmer of light inside the Seeker that must now shine out. When The Fool or the Page of Wands appear in reverse, they could be a reminder to the Seeker to call back his or her childhood essence, to see the world with humor again.

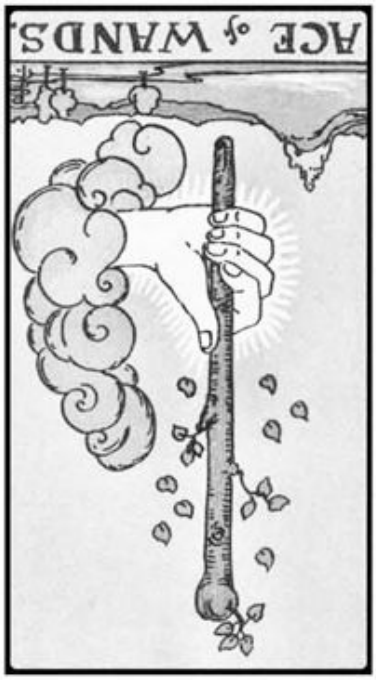
While more prominently a card about childhood and nostalgia, the Six of Cups can also indicate humor and sentimentality. When it appears, it is a reminder to the Seeker to put a smile on his or her face. To some extent, the Seven of Swords is also about humor, about a person of unconventional mannerisms. There is a jester component to the Seven of Swords that reminds us to stay light on our feet, no matter the circumstances.

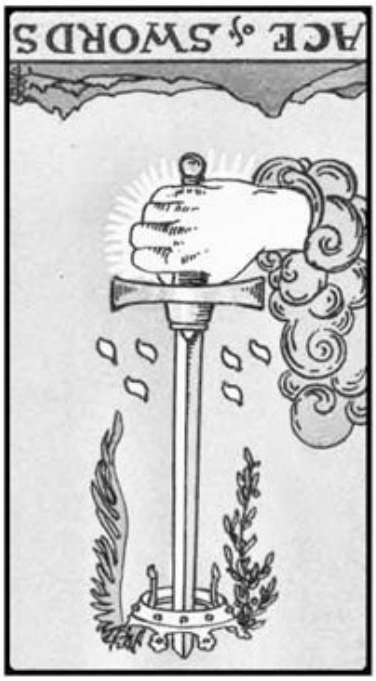
Expression

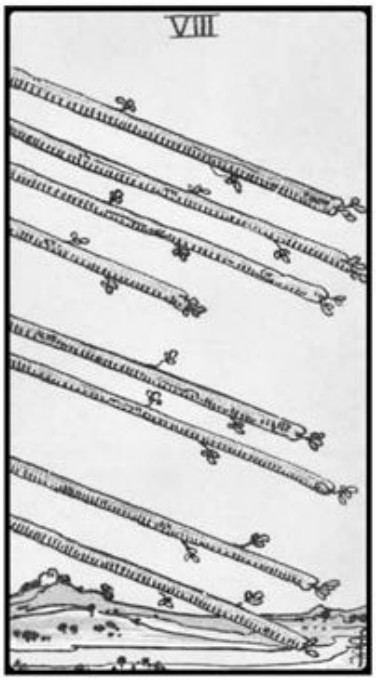
Having an outlet for expressing pain is crucial for resilience and, for many, crucial for maintaining one's sanity. Typical artist cards like the Three of Pentacles and Eight of Pentacles, while more pertinent to craft as a profession rather than mere expression, can often reveal outlets for expression. The suit of Cups is the suit of human expression, and the court cards of the suit remind us to be expressive. A Cups court card often appears in reverse and takes on a figurative meaning for Seekers who are in need of expressing themselves, people who have been bottling their feelings. Such Seekers should thus be encouraged to use outlets of expression to get the pain out of their systems.

When a Seeker is going through a crisis and consults a tarot practitioner for a reading, the practitioner should use the opportunity to remind the Seeker of the importance of expression. Expressing one's pain through the arts helps tremendously with coping. Oftentimes when the question is about how the Seeker can cope with emotional pain, many Cups cards will appear in the spread, suggesting the need for expression.

Focus







When The Chariot appears inreverse in a reading, it could indicate that one of the reasons for the Seeker's troubles is a lack of focus. The Seeker's personality and desires are dispersed in too many directions and he or she must channel them in a focused way to meet the objective. The two yang aces, the Ace of Wands and Ace of Swords, also denote focus, so when they appear in reverse they suggest a Seeker who is insufficiently exercising his or her will and determination. The Eight of Wands is another card about focus. Upright, it can indicate that focus is a key point for the Seeker. Reversed, it can indicate that the Seeker is too passive and needs to be more driven.

Cards that denote focus in a reading urge the Seeker to be persistent and to push forward with baby steps. They can indicate stagnation as the main culprit and thus, by identifying what Seeker is not doing correctly, can help the Seeker move forward.

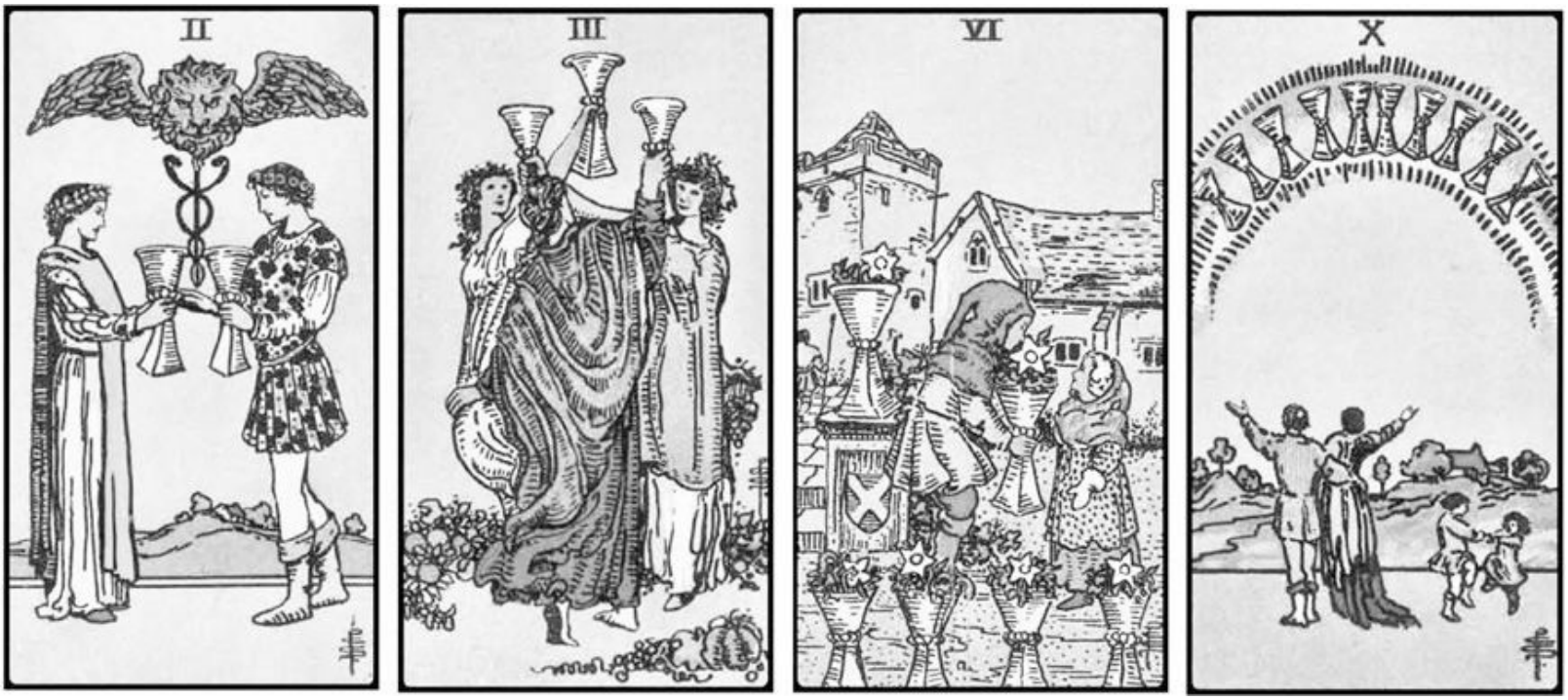
Connections

A strong human support network is critical for crisis management. When we are alone with our pain, our pain intensifies and we have no other energies of warmth around us to help absorb some of our negativity. If the personal aura is weak, it is critical to be around stronger, more positive auras, to borrow another's strength for a while, until we are able to generate our own.

Oftentimes a Seeker will be in trouble, but will not have told anyone in his or her life about the troubles. As a result, the Seeker is dealing with the pain alone and the solitude has in fact exacerbated the trouble. In these cases, cards may appear that urge the Seeker to reach out and get help or support from loved ones.

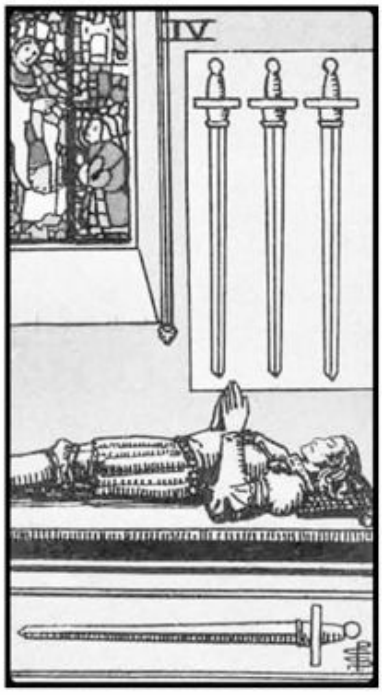
The Two of Cups suggests friendship or connection. While it generally denotes a romance with a strong foundation of friendship, it can also take on the meaning of a best friend or confidante, a single other peer who is there for us. The Two of Cups is about connecting with our soul mate. The Three of Cups suggests friendship or connection in a group of friends, often of the same gender. Most prominently, it denotes sisterhood and female companionship for female Seekers. The Six of Cups is about connections to our past. The Ten of Cups suggests family connections. It may remind the Seeker of his or her strong familial support and the value of reaching out to them now in the Seeker's time of

need.



Note how the Three, the Six, and the Ten in the suit of Pentacles resonate with the connective messages of the Three, the Six, and the Ten in the suit of Cups, previously discussed. The Three of Pentacles is about connecting to our professional peers or our professional establishment. The Six of Pentacles is about connecting to other social classes. Philanthropy is not often thought of as a social connection, but when one is lonely or troubled, an effective way of assuaging those troubles is through charity work. By being a benefactor, you bring goodness into your life. Thus, the Six of Pentacles could suggest that a Seeker consider volunteer work, or adopt a personal mission or philanthropy. The Six of Pentacles can indicate our connection with society. The Ten of Pentacles is about connecting to family or forging familial alliances for mutual gain.

Devotion



I have synthesized several crisis management concepts under the component "devotion." Studies have found that resilient individuals who successfully navigate through crises have faith. That could be a spiritual or religious faith, or it could be faith in their abilities to endure through the darkness. That is different from confidence, which is a trust that the Seeker can accomplish what he or she sets out to accomplish. Faith is a trust that the Seeker has in his or her own greater purpose.

A secondary component to devotion is devotion to personal health and wellness. I have connected health and wellness to faith because faith begets a natural inclination to treat the body as a temple and care for it. So, for example, when the Temperance card appears in reverse, or the Four of Swords, or Five of Pentacles, the Seeker should take better care of his or her body and mind. The Hierophant can suggest the need for spiritual or religious faith, and Temperance can suggest personal balance, the need to observe healthier personal habits to restore temperance of the body. The Four of Swords is also a red flag to the Seeker to pay more attention to his or her health and well-being.

The Analytical Process of a Resilience Reading

While card-by-card analysis and assessing the landscape of a tarot spread is the typical approach to a reading, when there is a specific need for crisis management or the practitioner intuits that a Seeker is in immediate need of building greater resilience, the practitioner may opt for a more focused approach that will lead the Seeker to an affirmative action plan.

The Resilience Reading Approach jumps around between the cards of a spread. Instead of starting from the first card placed down in a spread and interpreting the cards in the order of their position, the practitioner starts by addressing the pain or tension that is at the crux of the Seeker's situation.

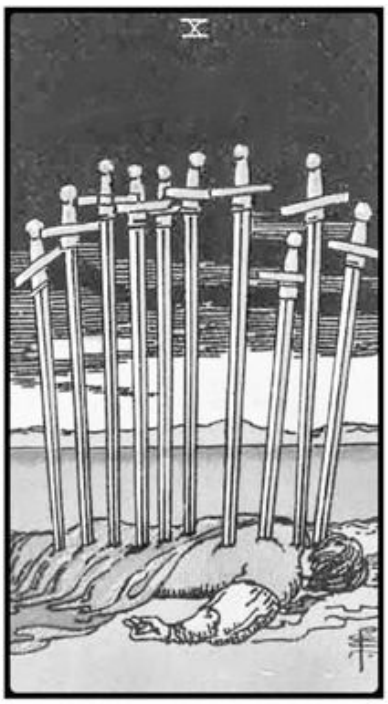
When a Seeker comes to a tarot practitioner with a specific reading request or question, that Seeker is dealing with a specific pain. Address that pain first. After listening to the Seeker's question, identify why and how that situation is bringing pain, stress, frustration, anger, or restlessness into the Seeker's life. Scan the entire spread for cards that indicate that pain, and begin the analysis there.

The natural reaction to pain is fear and pessimism. If there was neither fear nor pessimism, then

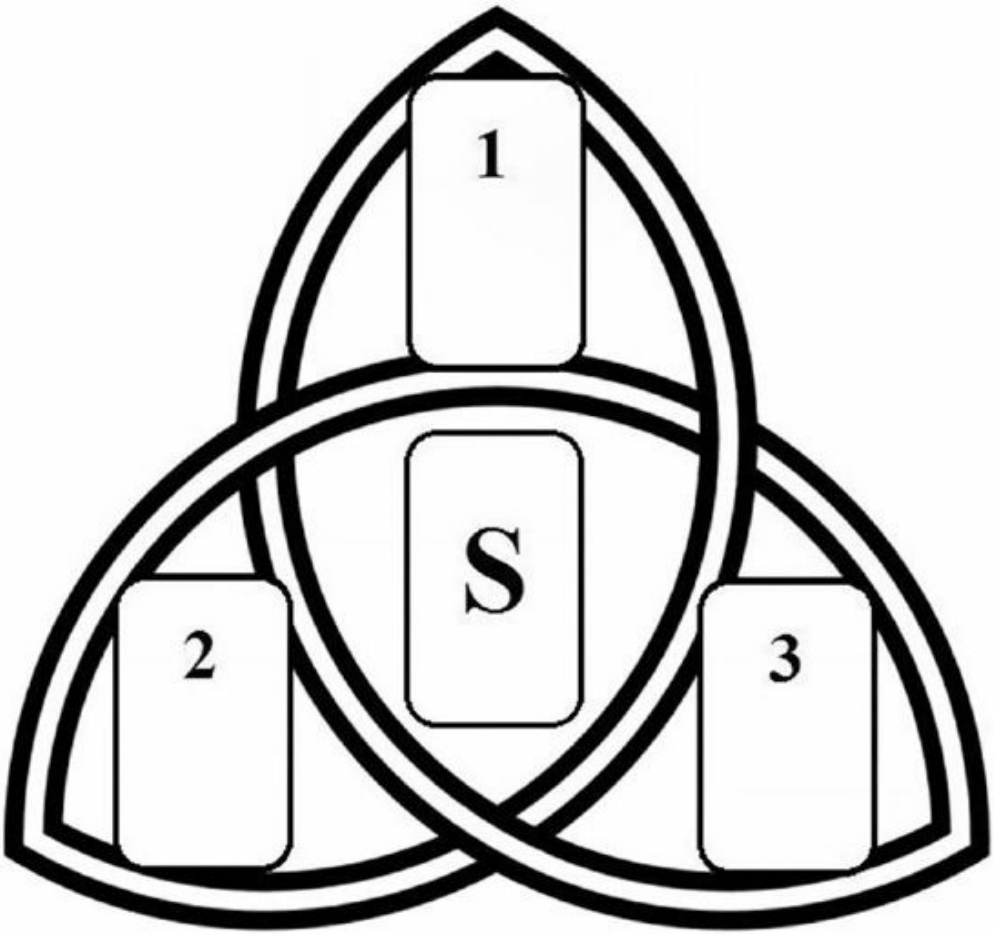
that Seeker would not be seeking the tarot practitioner's help. Scan the cards again, this time looking for signs of what the Seeker's fears are and areas of negative outlook or attitudes. Pinpoint these areas for the Seeker.

Next is what I refer to as the cross-examination. Point out weaknesses in the negative statements made from the Seeker's fears and pessimism. For instance, the Eight of Swords: the Seeker may *feel* stuck because of the blindfolds, but she is not actually stuck. There is a way out. Remind the Seeker of her creativity and resourcefulness. She will be able to cut herself loose. If it's the Five of Cups that appears, point out the two remaining intact cups in the Seeker's life and work with her to determine what those two cups symbolize.

Reconcile between the negative and the positive. Lead the Seeker to an internal place of compromise. Help the Seeker build resilience by addressing the seven characteristics of resilience: (1) optimism, (2) confidence, (3) humor, (4) expression, (5) focus, (6) connections, and (7) devotion. After you have identified the Seeker's fears and pessimism, next figure out which of the seven characteristics would best help the Seeker to counteract the negativity. Does the Seeker need more confidence? Scan the cards to note what the Seeker's personal strengths are and remind the Seeker of these personal strengths. Do certain cards suggest that the Seeker lacks focus? Is she trying to do too much all at once? Remind her to prioritize. Does the Seeker need to reach deep inside and resurrect her faith? Faith is undeniably powerful and empowering. Perhaps ask the Seeker about her faith and suggest a more concentrated engagement with her faith practices.



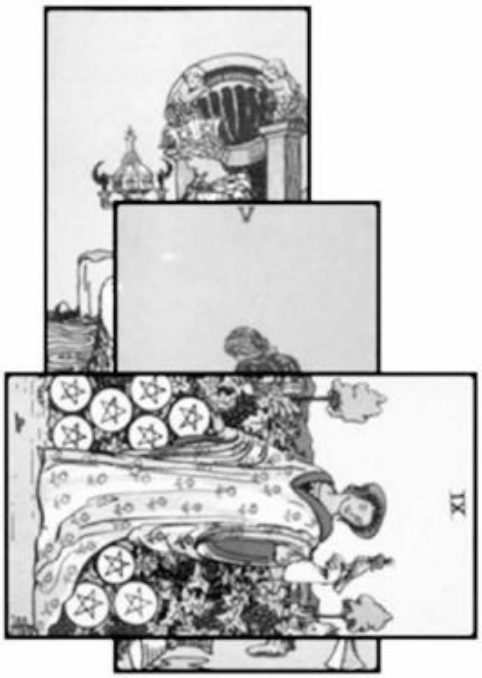
Scan the cards once more to form affirmations. If, for instance, the Six of Wands appears, state to the Seeker, "You will succeed and be victorious when all this initial but necessary suffering is over." If the card is not quite as directly positive, such as the Eight of Swords, state, "You will find your creative solution to this problem. You are going to get out of this rut you're in right now." If the card is the Ten of Swords, state, "You will rise again, because there is gold in your horizon." In every negative or hostile situation, there is a positive opportunity presented to the Seeker. The practitioner should use the tarot to help lead the Seeker to see the positive opportunities. Then present these positive opportunities as positive affirmations to the Seeker.

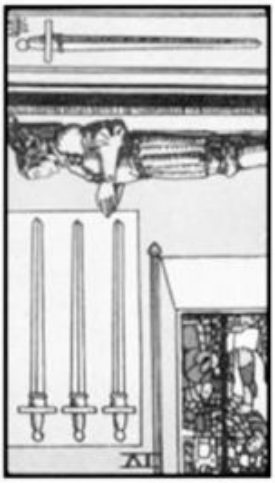


Conclude the reading with an action plan. The cards may indicate what next steps the Seeker should take to resolve the issue. The practitioner could also perform the Triquetra Outcome Management spread to identify the three main forces or energies that the Seeker should focus on honing to combat the fears and pessimism. An Adjustment Card could also be drawn.

Case Study: Jane

Jane is a woman in her early fifties who is afraid that it is “too late” for her to find love. She consults the tarot to see what her prospects are for finding love again. Jane is a Water sign and you use the Celtic Cross to read for her. The cards drawn were as follows:
Here is how the practitioner might read the cards through the Resilience framework.





SIG.	Queen of Cups

1	Five of Cups	**6**	King of Wands
2	Nine of Pentacles	**7**	Key 17: The Star
3	Knight of Pentacles, Rev.	**8**	Four of Swords, Rev.
4	Four of Wands	**9**	Eight of Swords
5	Key 16, The Tower	**10**	Four of Cups, Rev.

Method of Analysis

1. The Issue.

What is the situation? What is Seeker's inquiry or reading request?

Restate the question (or slightly rephrase it) and get a confirmation from the Seeker.

Resilience Reading

When a Seeker has a specific inquiry, there is nothing more important for the practitioner to do than to answer the question asked, a seemingly obvious task that nonetheless eludes many novice tarot practitioners. The best way to stay aligned to the question is to restate the question and channel the interpretation of each card through the repetitive restatement of that question. Here, Jane had asked whether she would find love again. Jane wants to know what it is she has to do to be able to find love again. Confirm that inquiry with Jane before proceeding. Then, for a resilience reading, proceed to note from the cards what Jane must do—her action plan—for her to find love.

Method of Analysis

2. The Pain

What is it about the situation that brings pain, stress, frustration, anger, or restlessness to the Seeker?

Identify the "pain" cards.

Resilience Reading

Instead of following the order of cards 1 through 10 in a typical Celtic Cross reading, start by identifying cards that suggest Jane's pain in the situation. The Five of Cups suggests a present mental preoccupation with loss. The Eight of Swords repeats that theme of mental imprisonment. The Four of Swords in reverse suggests severe spiritual and emotional pain, exhaustion, and the immediate need for reclusion, rest, and recovery.

Method of Analysis

3. Fears & Pessimism.

What is the Seeker afraid of? Identify Seeker's negative thoughts and emotions related to the situation.

Identify the "fears and insecurities" cards.

Resilience Reading

The Nine of Pentacles crossing Jane's path suggests a fiercely independent woman, yet one who is afraid that her independence and free spirit will intimidate potential lovers from wanting to

commit. The Tower here in Jane's reading is not a "pain" card because of the position it's located in: it is still speculative. It does not suggest events that have passed yet, but rather it indicates Jane's fears. The Eight of Swords also suggests Jane's fears and insecurities.

Method of Analysis

4. Why the Fears & Pessimism Are Not Absolutes.

For each fear or negative thought, what is the upside? What is the yang to each yin? Cross-examine each point of fear or negativity to reveal to Seeker that nothing is absolute.

Neutralize the negative cards in the spread.

Resilience Reading

Look for any cards that balance each of the negatives or address the positive aspects of the negative cards.

Negative Card		*Positive Balance*
Five of Cups	▷	Nine of Pentacles
Nine of Pentacles	▷	King of Wands
Eight of Swords	▷	Hidden Sword in the Four of Swords below the Eight of Swords
Four of Swords	▷	The Star
The Tower	▷	Four of Cups, Rev.

While the Nine of Pentacles is not a "negative" card per se, it does express some of Jane's inner fears of isolation and loneliness. The King of Wands suggests that there is hope for her, as further echoed in The Star card for keeping an optimistic outlook. Thus, the grieving expressed in the Five of Cups is temporary. A shift in perspective will help her see her options clearer.

The Nine of Pentacles in Jane's reading represents a cause and The Tower card the effect. There is a strong sense of self-pride in the Nine of Pentacles, someone who values her independence over the sake of compromise, which may have caused the destruction of her previous marriage. Note the Four of Wands in the past position, which does indicate that there were beautiful, harmonious, and happy times. Those came to an end in some part to Jane's willful, overpowering disposition. The Four of Cups neutralizes The Tower in a sense because it suggests personal reflection, self-awareness, and in reverse, is a positive indication to Jane to re-emerge from her shell and seek out new relationships, namely one with a certain King of Wands.

Note the overall landscape of the cards, in particular how the Eight of Swords and Four of Swords are stacked vertically in a way that suggests that another secret weapon for the woman depicted in the Eight of Swords is in fact the hidden sword from the Four of Swords card, which appears directly beneath the feet of the Eight of Swords woman. That sword is further related to prayer and faith, and thus one of the characteristics of resilience that Jane must nurture is her faith.

Drawing connections between cards and interpreting patterns is what distinguishes a novice practitioner from an intermediate.

Method of Analysis

5. Reconciliation.

How can Seeker find an internal compromise between high expectations and fears/pessimism? Seeker must make peace with imperfection, with disappointment, with life not going exactly as planned.

Resilience Reading

The Four of Cups reversed represents the key to how Jane can reconcile her yearning to find love again yet maintain her own independence, and not let herself succumb to her fears.

The Knight of Pentacles in reverse could take on a literal meaning, representing a former spouse. He was too dull for her and she exerted her will over him too strongly, which ultimately ended the relationship. If she can find a firebrand personality to match hers, someone like the King of Wands, she would respect him more and be more yielding. By nature both the Knight of Pentacles and Jane, the Queen of Cups, are by nature malleable, receptive "yin" personalities, but when the two of them came in contact with one another, Jane became the "yang," too much so that it caused imbalance. She didn't respect the former Knight of Pentacles, which is why she refused to yield to him. That hubris is what caused the downfall of that relationship.

Method of Analysis

6. Positive Affirmation.

State each negative card as a positive affirmation. See the subsequent pages for examples. Restate the optimistic outlook of the positive cards.

The subsequent pages provide tables of positive affirmations in the tarot that the practitioner can integrate into Resilience readings.

Resilience Reading

Guide Jane to focus on the King of Wands and also The Star. The Star here represents the beauty and abundance that is still Jane.

Positive Card	*Affirmation*
King of Wands	"You will conquer with your domineering, headstrong spirit." (Note also that in terms of spouses, going forward Jane should find someone domineering and headstrong as well, someone who will be more "yang" so that she

	can respect that spouse more than she did her former.)
The Star	"There will be plenitude when you become the beacon of hope to others and also to yourself."
Four of Cups	"You will contemplate every option with care and your decision will be the right one."

Method of Analysis

7. Action Plan. Look to the cards that indicate action and what next steps the Seeker can take to improve his or her position.

Resilience Reading

Jane should reflect inward with faith (Four of Swords), but not become too comfortable with being recluse (Four of Cups). Have confidence in the physical and spiritual beauty she has still retained to date (The Star) and go meet the King of Wands. She was once happy and harmonious (the Four of Wands). She now knows exactly what kind of love she wants, so with resolve, knowledge, and her experience, she will be able to find the right love this time.

Positive Affirmations in Tarot

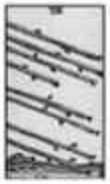
Affirmations in the Major Arcana

	0 - Fool I am a different person now, undaunted by the unknown, ready to soar into the sun.		**1 - Magician** The power of my mind can influence others. I use what I have to manifest my goals.
	2 - High Priestess I possess the clairvoyance to see myself through any obstacle. There is no need to seek the counsel of others. I trust myself.		**3 - Empress** I enjoy abundance and plenitude. My hopes manifest into great successes. I live a fertile life filled with fruition.
	4 - Emperor They follow when I command. To command them, I manifest the conviction and also the integrity of their ruler.		**5 - Hierophant** I uphold tradition and lead by example with my values. (*If reversed:* I am an iconoclast and thrive on nonconformity).
	6 - Lovers My greatest resource is my passion. When faced with a choice, I choose that which brings me closer to the divine.		**7 - Chariot** My abilities of discipline and audacity empower me to be the commander general of my own destiny.
	8 - Strength My compassion is my fortitude and I use that trait to tame the wild beast of circumstance.		**9 - Hermit** I heed the wisdom of sages. Introspection is the inner light that illuminates my lantern.
	10 - Wheel of Fortune I summon my powers to spin the Wheel of Fortune in my favor. Greatness is my destiny. My life changes for the better.		**11 - Justice** I am both the sword and the scales and embrace justice with my mind, not my heart. I always do what is right.

	12 - Hanged Man I choose to sacrifice myself for the greater good of others, and for that I am remembered and honored.		**13 - Death** The pain of change yields in time and the new beginning to come brings me catharsis. It is the dawn of a new sunrise.
	14 – Temperance I find balance between my extremes and allow my higher self to guide me. I heal myself through moderation.		**15 – Devil** I vanquish my own inner demons. I detach from superficial bonds and begin my journey out of darkness.
	16 – Tower I reach skyward for noble reasons beyond my vanity. I detach and thus ascend from my ego. No matter the fall, I get back up and thrive.		**17 – Star** I am a beacon of hope to others. With my goodness I revitalize the life around me. My mind is at peace.
	18 – Moon It's not that I'm changing; it's that I'm finally revealing. Emotion and intuition converge to guide me.		**19 – Sun** I attain the highest echelons of success and glory because the heavens shine righteously in my favor.
	20 - Judgement I reach the right epiphany at the end of this road and the pain I endure come to reveal its higher spiritual purpose.		**21 - World** This is the time I complete my magnum opus and realize my life's purpose. I am meant for greatness and I am on the right path for achieving that greatness.

Unless otherwise noted, the following affirmations apply whether the card appears upright or reverse.

Affirmations in the Suit of Wands

	Ace of Wands It's no longer just a dream; it's now my reality. I start a new journey and a new chapter of opportunities in my life.		**Two of Wands** To achieve greatness, I venture far from what I once knew. I surpass the past and begin on a path of conquest and triumph.
	Three of Wands My investments pay off and what I send out returns in fortuitous abundance.		**Four of Wands** I bring harmony and balance to my surroundings. My work brings me happiness and contentment.
	Five of Wands I prevail over my competition, whether that rival is another or my own inner insecurities.		**Six of Wands** Despite initial setbacks, I succeed. I gain the admiration and respect of those around me. I am victorious.
	Seven of Wands I stand my ground and defeat those who try to overpower me. I fight for what is right. I stand up for myself, especially when others will not.		**Eight of Wands** I won't slow down, I won't stop. I aim and shoot for my goals. I see my target and never take my eyes off it.
	Nine of Wands I let love and faith in to my life. I can let my guard down. It's okay to show my vulnerabilities.		**Ten of Wands** I put my own needs first and I don't let others push their responsibilities onto me.
	Page of Wands I am not afraid of adventure. I am not afraid of the quest. I am motivated to succeed.		**Knight of Wands** My passion is my galloping horse, not my weapon. I finish what I start. I am not afraid of rocky terrain.
	Queen of Wands My power of attraction and easy confidence will be the way I materialize my goals. With a genuine smile, I win them over.		**King of Wands** I conquer with my domineering, headstrong spirit. I am a noble ruler born of fire. I claim my power. I command authority.

Affirmations in the Suit of Cups

	Ace of Cups My heart leads me to what will fulfill me most, to discover my personal holy grail.		**Two of Cups** My best friend will see me through these times of hardship. Compassion heals. Love prevails.
	Three of Cups I can find the humor amidst the tragedy. I choose friends who love and respect me, who won't judge me for my choices.		**Four of Cups** I don't need others to tell me what I want. I will find the answers I seek by looking inward.
	Five of Cups I am more blessed than I realize. I have just enough left to rebuild. I choose to be hopeful and optimistic.		**Six of Cups** My past does not determine my future. My present and who I choose to be are what matter.
	Seven of Cups I forego the easy temptation of riches and fame and instead choose what matters most to my heart.		**Eight of Cups** I serve a higher spiritual purpose and that purpose is to guide the masses toward a greater good.
	Nine of Cups I am accomplished and I am respected. My past daydreams become my present reality.		**Ten of Cups** I am a role model for my family and I am the impetus for them to achieve new heights of happiness.
	Page of Cups I am blessed by my muses with constant creative flow. I am a visionary.		**Knight of Cups** My charisma and gift of expression and communication sway the majority in my favor.
	Queen of Cups My empathy and display of tenderness wins their loyalty.		**King of Cups** I lead by example and conquer with my diplomacy.

Affirmations in the Suit of Swords

	Ace of Swords I am the warrior philosopher destined for greatness.		**Two of Swords** I make the right choices every time. I draw from my intelligence and my keen intuition.
	Three of Swords Yes, I braved a severe storm of the heart, but my scars strengthen, not weaken me.		**Four of Swords** With my prayers I summon health and harmony into my life. I do not worry about what I cannot change.
	Five of Swords I am a fighter who wins my battles, but I take care to win by ingenuity, not cunning.		**Six of Swords** I have made peace with my past and leave it behind. My journey now takes me afar to start anew.
	Seven of Swords When the odds are against me, I can one-up the odds by not playing by their rules.		**Eight of Swords** My creativity releases me from every hardship. My thoughts empower me, not limit me. All my problems have a solution.
	Nine of Swords I let go of all sorrow and shed tears to sanctify my conscience. I embrace the night.		**Ten of Swords** I rise again because there is gold in my horizon. Hardships always work out for my higher good.
	Page of Swords I am born to excel, born to reach the top. I push myself to prevail above all others.		**Knight of Swords** I am a strong, fearsome competitor and I defeat my challengers.
	Queen of Swords I accomplish my goals through my intellect and acumen, but I won't forget to nurture my soft skills as well.		**King of Swords** I lead with my righteous campaign and wield influence with my logic, reason, and power of rhetoric.

Affirmations in the Suit of Pentacles

	Ace of Pentacles I attract financial gains. Opportunities flow into my life effortlessly.		**Two of Pentacles** I can do it all; I can have it all. Spirit takes care of my every material need.
	Three of Pentacles I am recognized for my talent. I work with everything I've got to perfect my magnum opus.		**Four of Pentacles** I am prudent with my resources, but not miserly. I create prosperity by sharing with others.
	Five of Pentacles I persevere through hardships and embrace the light of my faith to see me past the winter.		**Six of Pentacles** My charity to others returns riches to me six-fold. Abundance is my birthright.
	Seven of Pentacles I have worked hard and now I am in a state of abundance and personal fulfillment.		**Eight of Pentacles** I continue the diligent and humble pursuit of my craft, anticipating the day I become the master.
	Nine of Pentacles I take pleasure in my own solitude. Though my stature intimidates them, I will not stop trusting in the good of people.		**Ten of Pentacles** My acumen, investments, and efforts bring great status and success to my family.
	Page of Pentacles What I have to offer this world matters a great deal. My mark will make all the difference.		**Knight of Pentacles** My methods attract success. I prosper because I am thorough, dedicated, and unwavering in my convictions.
	Queen of Pentacles I have the poise of an aristocrat. My enterprises flourish because I am resourceful and clever.		**King of Pentacles** My astuteness and sound judgment brings great prosperity to my domain. I am accomplished and I attract great wealth.

CHAPTER 29

Depth Diagnostics

Depth Diagnostics is a modern multilevel tarot reading session. If the full procedure is observed, it requires two tarot decks, the second deck organized in advance of the reading into the Major Arcana, the Wands, the Cups, the Swords, and the Pentacles.

Depth Diagnostics can be used to help a Seeker access his or her unconscious for answers about a particular situation. The many stages are intended to advance the Seeker's thought process from the conscious to the deeper levels of awareness within. It is a method of triggering different perspectives on a single issue, not unlike the traditional Opening of the Key method from the Golden Dawn explained later in Chapter 30.

Depth Diagnostics cannot be used to replace formal psychological counseling. It is a mere meditative tool. Depth Diagnostics can help a Seeker along in reaching a decision. As a tool, the tarot narrates the Seeker's personal story by transference, or organizing the elements of the Seeker's personal story into the more organized and coherent expression of that story in the cards' imagery. Depth Diagnostics helps a Seeker to better understand personal motivations and impulses.

Case Study: Tina

In explaining how to apply Depth Diagnostics, a case study is given. We'll call the Seeker Tina. Tina and her husband are at the brink of divorce. They have sought marriage counseling and Tina herself has been seeing a therapist. She comes to you in hopes of gaining some additional insight into her situation. Tina says she does not love her husband anymore and is ready to leave him. Yet she still feels tied to him. She is unsure of what to do.

Step One: Selecting the Signifier

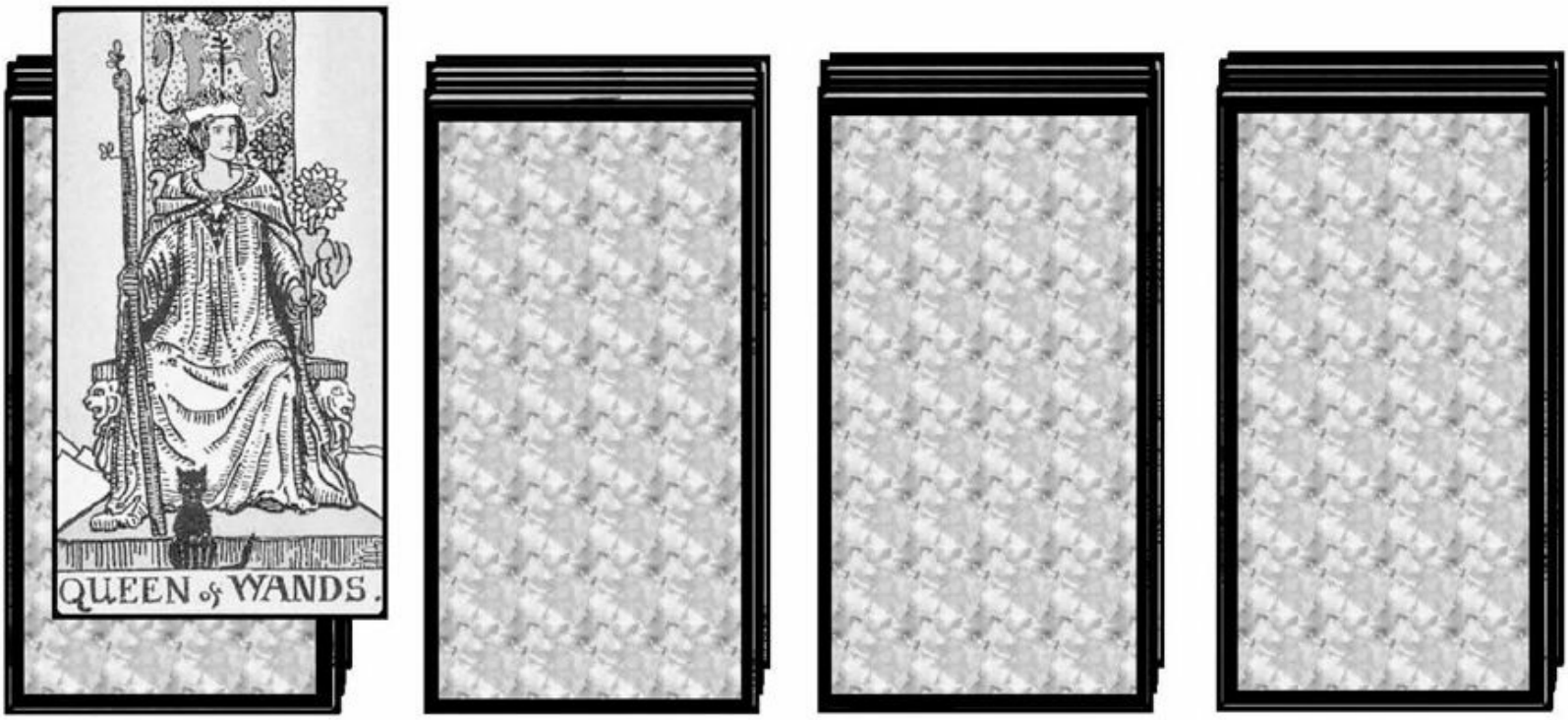
The first step is to select a signifier card for the Seeker. Signifier cards are explained in Chapter 10. Selecting the signifier is a critical step for the Seeker because it grounds the ego and begins the process of thinking about the full spectrum of cosmic influences as they affect the present ego. Thus, the signifier card is the Seeker's anchor.

Tina's date of birth is June 18. She is a Gemini. The Major Arcanum associated with Gemini is Key 6: The Lovers. Gemini is an Air sign, so she is associated with the suit of Swords. For an adult woman, you would probably select the Queen of Swords if going with a court card as the signifier.

Leave it up to her, however. Take out both The Lovers and the Queen of Swords to explain the character significance of both. You also note that Tina has fair hair, a light complexion, and is quite bubbly and energetic. Take out the Queen of Wands also and explain how signifier cards can also be selected by complexion or personality trait. Tina tells you that The Lovers card really doesn't speak to her at this stage in her life, nor does she feel she is the Queen of Swords. She is actively connected to the Queen of Wands, however, and tells you that she sees herself as the Queen of Wands. Thus, select the Queen of Wands as her signifier.

Step Two: The First Operation

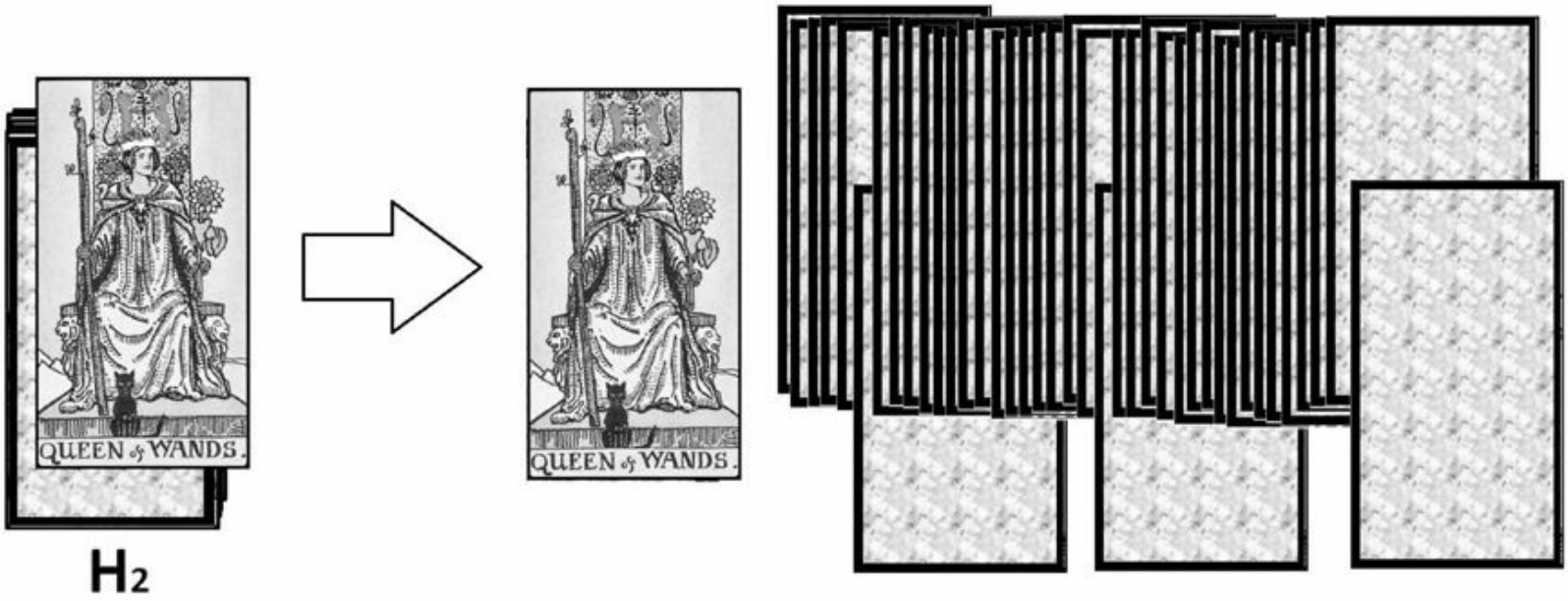
In Depth Diagnostics, the First Operation is used specifically to identify the main driving force behind the matter at hand. (Performing the First Operation is introduced in Chapter 11.) For example, I often find that career inquiries can result in the signifier appearing in the last pile, H2, rather than the more common first pile, I. In these cases, it is interesting to note that while the Seeker is interested in his or her career prospects, the heart of the issue for that Seeker is how he or she can secure financial stability through those career prospects. The true concern of the Seeker is money. For better or worse, I often find the signifier in the last pile. Money is often the driving force in our matters today. Nevertheless, it is important for the Seeker to identify this early on. Thus, the First Operation helps the Seeker confront what the problem behind the problem is.



In our case study, Tina's signifier, the Queen of Wands, appeared in pile H_2, corresponding with finances, money, and property. This suggests that a driving force behind the conflicts between Tina and her husband is related to finances. If she is interested in reconciling their differences, reconciling the issue of finances is going to be crucial.

Step Three: Preliminary Brief

Take only the pile that the signifier card appeared in. Remove the signifier card and place it on the table. Next to the signifier, fan out all the cards from that pile onto the table, back side up so that the Seeker cannot see the face of the cards. Have the Seeker pull out three cards from the fan, the first indicating the present; the second, placed to the left of the first card, indicating the past; and the third, placed to the right, indicating the future. Perform a three-card spread on the subissue identified by the First Operation.



Tina had selected the Eight of Pentacles first (centered below), then the Four of Wands in reverse (left, the past), and finally Key 2: The High Priestess in reverse (right, the outcome). The first card, the Eight of Pentacles, suggests someone who is an apprentice, working diligently at his or her craft. You note that Tina is somewhat mature in age, so you ask her whether she has recently begun a new project or new endeavor, or started a new career. Tell her it seems to be a craft that she does have past experience in, something she's quite good at, but pursuing it as a formal venture may be what's new to her. She tells you that yes, in fact, she has. Tina has recently decided to start her own catering business.

The card in the past, the Four of Wands in reverse, suggests to you a family with a very strong harmonious foundation, but one that recently may have begun to experience upsets in work–life balance. You point this out to Tina and she tells you that as she started to think more seriously about her catering business, she realized it would require bootstrapping

from their family funds. Her husband, Jack, has been resistant to the idea of risking their savings on Tina's catering business. Since the Four of Wands precedes the Seven of Pentacles—and Tina is the Queen of Wands, a woman with a fiery temper and a great deal of energy—you smile and remark to Tina, "But you've gone ahead and started pursuing your catering business anyway, against the advice and opinion of Jack." Tina smiles back and says, "Yes, you're right. That's exactly right."

The High Priestess reversed here may have several implications. The High Priestess is about intuition and the divine feminine. In reverse, it suggests that there may be duplicity involved, attempts to suppress the truth, but it could also suggest untapped intuition. You tell Tina that she's been withholding a great deal of information from Jack and it looks like she has no intention of revealing her reality to him anytime soon. However, beyond that, at this point you are not entirely sure what else The High Priestess could mean as applied to Tina's situation. Simply report the objective meaning of the card and let Tina guide you.

Step Four: Main Tarot Spread

Step Four is the main tarot spread. I like to use the Insight Spread, Lemniscate, or the Rose, though the traditional Celtic Cross would also work. If a particular multipurpose tarot spread works for you, then use that one here. The main tarot spread will examine the overall issue. Proceed with Step Four as you would with any full tarot reading.

For Tina, you decide on the Celtic Cross. The full analysis that you would provide for Tina in a session won't be delved into here, but the main points will be summarized.

The Queen of Swords in reverse that covers her takes on a figurative meaning here, representing an aspect of herself, who she has been acting like. Rather than letting her more natural Queen of Wands personality shine, she has been the Queen of Swords in reverse toward her husband. For starters, that could be a contributory factor in the marital tension. She hasn't been acting like the person he thought he married. The Seven of Wands that crosses her path, which is also read in reverse here, suggests resistance and standing in a defensive position, though for good reason. There seems to be a great deal of hostility directed at Tina lately.

Tina then begins to tell you about the fights over money she's had with Jack. Let her talk. The purpose of tarot here is not fortune-telling or showing off your psychic gifts. The purpose is to help Tina gain insight on her own into her situation, so that she can feel more informed about the subsequent decision she makes. Keep in mind that within the trinity of Seeker, practitioner, and tarot, you are not Tina's friend. Do not insert your own advice. You can look to the cards and objectively interpret the meanings of the cards to her, helping her apply those meanings to her specific situation, but you should not tell her what *you* think. What *you* think does not matter here.

0
THE FOOL.

X
WHEEL of FORTUNE.

QUEEN of SWORDS
III

V

VI

IV

II

ACE of PENTACLES

VI

Explain to Tina that her husband's and his family's combativeness toward her seems to be a reaction to the change in her personality, or the person she becomes, i.e., the Queen of Swords in reverse, when she deals with her marriage. That tension is the crux of the problem, as suggested by the cross created between the Queen and the Seven of Wands. The two cards appear as a knot in the center of the entire spread. These two opposing forces intensify each other, and if that tension is not resolved the problems will escalate. What's more, both cards appear in reverse, suggesting a great deal of negativity. To start, Tina needs to change her personality, stop acting like the Queen of Swords in reverse. She is, after all, the Queen of Wands. Tina sighs. She tells you that she knows. However, it isn't that simple. "It's complicated," she says.

The next card in the spread below the signifier is the Six of Wands, one of the positive cards in the spread. The Six of Wands is at the foundation of the spread. Here, it seems to suggest that Tina made a great deal of career advancements in the past, but the Wheel of Fortune suggests an abrupt change in her career path.

Note that a spread layout does not need to be read by the practitioner in chronological order. If a subsequent card after the one you just explained isn't positive, it may be good practice to skip for the time being to one of the positive cards in the spread, to balance out the tensions and negativity of the first two cards. As you proceed in a reading, by tempering between positive and negative cards throughout the session, you will in turn help the Seeker temper the positive and negative aspects of the situation. Thus, it is not necessary to read a spread in the order that the cards were laid out. You can skip around.

Step Five: Deconstruction

As mentioned earlier, it is optimal to use two separate decks for Depth Diagnostics. You can use one, but it will slow you down. After the main spread, you will have to take the time to separate the cards into the Major Arcana and the four suits. If you have a second deck on hand that has been sectioned off already, the Depth Diagnostics session can continue uninterrupted.

In Step Five, called Deconstruction, you will extract the prevailing force in the many sub-categories of the issue at hand. The Major Arcana will reveal what external force has the most impact on the situation. The Wands card articulates personal motivations and impulses; the Cups relate to the dominant emotions; the Swords give insight into the crux of the conflict, Seeker vs. the Self, Seeker vs. Others, or Seeker vs. Environment; and the Pentacles card helps the Seeker confront the material or monetary concerns at hand.

First, hand the pile of Major Arcana cards to the Seeker to shuffle. Once the shuffling is complete, fan the cards onto the table and have the Seeker select one card only. This card represents the force majeure that most influences the present situation. After explaining the card to the Seeker, lay it down on the table.

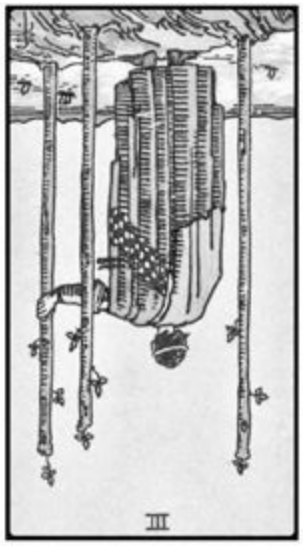
In Tina's reading, you draw the Justice card. The many parties involved in Tina's situation feel justified about their own positions, and a personal sense of what is fair and what is not governs each party's behavior. The Justice card represents the subjective sense of balance, however, unlike the Temperance card or even the Wheel of Fortune. Thus, a driving external force perpetuating the familial tensions is the inability to deliberate a fair, impartial judgment. At this time, Tina should be urged to think about what is fair in the situation, and to contemplate Jack's arguments or defenses. The Justice card here may further suggest that mediation between Tina and Jack is needed, such as marriage counseling.

Next, hand just the pile of Wands to the Seeker to shuffle. Again, after the shuffling is complete, fan out the cards and have the Seeker draw one card from the suit of Wands. This card represents work or career influences, personal projects, goals, creativity, or creation. Set this card next to the Major Arcanum.

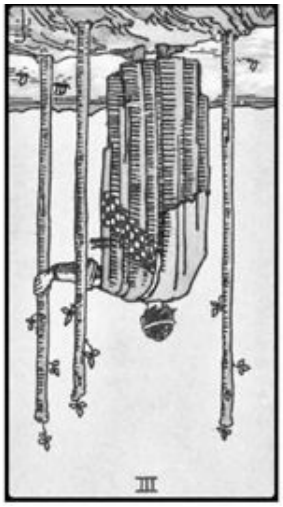
Tina is presently driven by the desire to pursue her personal business ambitions. Her interest has shifted from the domestic inner sphere of caring for husband and family, to the

outer sphere of trying to gain professional recognition. However, the Three of Wands in reverse indicates severe delays in her ability to move forward on her personal projects. The tension between her desire to move outward into the external sphere and her husband's resistance to that is a primary drive in both of them toward opposite positions.

Continue on to the suit of Cups. The card drawn from the suit of Cups will represent interpersonal relationships that have an effect on the situation, or the dominant emotional forces. Set this card down as well, next to the Major Arcanum and Wands card. Continue on to the suit of Swords.



In Tina's situation, you draw the Five of Cups and the Three of Swords, both in reverse. Interpret the reversals here as indicating a great deal of negative, hostile energy. The Three of Swords in reverse shows the primary conflict here: Seeker vs. Environment. The Three of Swords can be interpreted as either Seeker vs. Others or Seeker vs. Environment, but here it more likely indicates tension between Tina and her environment, because she is stuck by her circumstances. It isn't so much her husband, Jack, or her family who personally oppose her objectives—it's the financial circumstances that the family is in as a whole that induce Jack to oppose risking investments into Tina's catering business. Tina feels stuck between a rock and a hard place, and in response to feeling stuck she rebels and tries even harder to escape. All these factors create the conflicts in Tina's life right now. Thus, to resolve these tensions, the conflict to address is Tina vs. her current environment. In other words, what can she do to improve her present circumstances and put herself and her family in a position where she can pursue her personal career dreams and still reconcile with Jack?



Finally, the suit of Pentacles is addressed, and the card drawn from that suit represents material concerns involved in the situation, money matters, property, etc. The Queen of Pentacles in reverse compels Tina to think on her character flaws. Is she thinking prudently about her family's finances? Is there a way for her to still pursue her dream of opening a catering business, but not in a way that would jeopardize their financial stability? The Queen of Pentacles in reverse suggests the temptation to use money imprudently. Thus, Tina is urged to expand her focus from herself only to what would be best for her family overall.

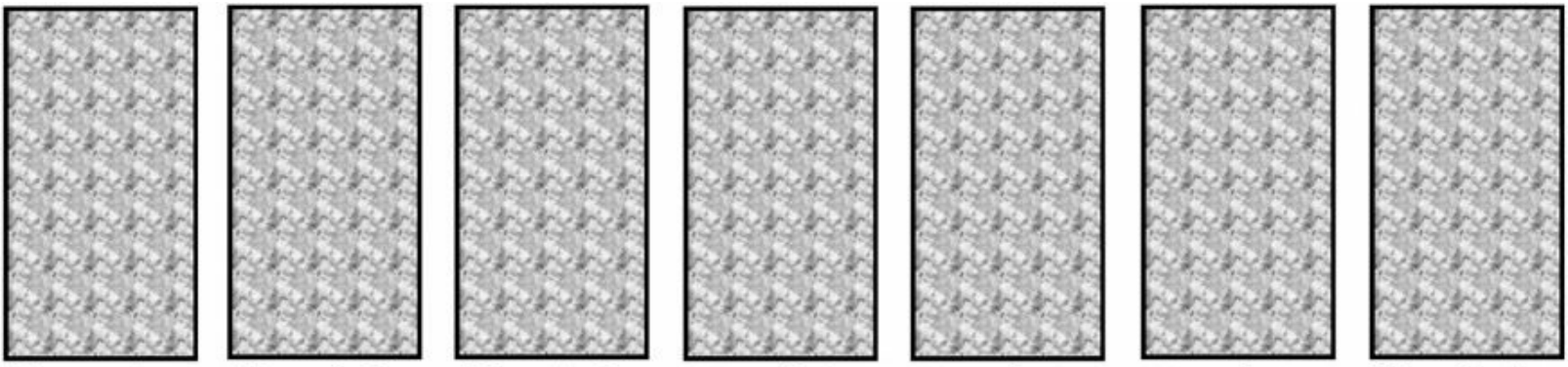
There should be a spread of five cards in a row now. Examine the spread for any connections or relationships, applying analysis of the spread landscape. Are there any dominant colors, directionality, or any notable imagery among the five cards that stand out to you? Are there any repetitions of cards between the main tarot spread and Step Five? Repetitions will be worth noting. Narrate a summary of the five cards to the Seeker and draw connections between these five cards and the main tarot spread.

Note also that this is only my suggested six-step approach to Depth Diagnostics. You can also skip Deconstruction altogether and conclude the session with the final step, Projections.

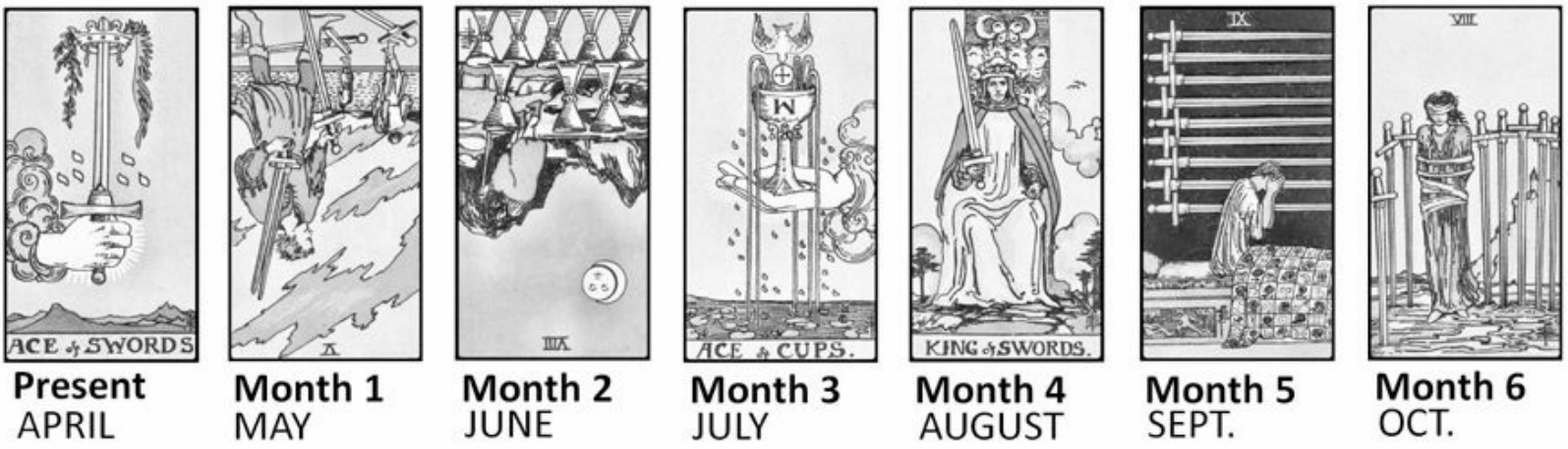
Step Six: Projections

Oftentimes Seekers are interested in the timing issues of a situation. Step Six offers a six-month projection about the matter at hand.

Start by setting the first card face up. This is the one-card reading projection on the matter at hand for the present month. In Tina's case, you draw the Ace of Swords for the present, which we will say is April. Now set down six cards in a row, face down, left to right.



These will be the projections for the coming six months, May through October. Reading these projections to the Seeker can be as detailed or as cursory as you decide. For example, the current month for Tina will bring small victories, as suggested by the Ace of Swords. You can end there and move on to the next month, Month 1, or you can offer greater detail based on the suit, the Swords, the numerological association, etc.



The next month may also bring gains, but of an unethical nature, and those gains will be short-lived. Any secrets that Tina has been trying to cover up could backfire on her that month, so she needs to be careful.

MAY—**Five of Swords, Reversed** Spitefulness. Unfair advantages gained. Note how this Swords card about victory is related to the preceding Ace of Swords. The victory won in April may feel empty in May.

JUNE—**Eight of Cups, Reversed** Veering farther from the spiritual path. Tina may be tempted to become recluse, move away from Jack mentally and recede inward toward herself. She should be urged to not retreat into her own shell but to focus outward and continue to confront the problems and address them head-on.

JULY—**Ace of Cups**. Abundance. Good omen. July will be a great month, filled with happy emotions, as the suit of Cups is related to our emotions. July will bring abundance and some emotional reconciliation.

AUGUST—**King of Swords**. Another Swords card, suggesting strife. However, here it is

tempered by a detachment or sternness in the King. He may represent Jack and Tina's relationship with Jack. Overall, August is about authority and feeling in control.

SEPT—**Nine of Swords**. September may bring with it losses, a sense of mourning, or haunting; sleeplessness and insomnia due to restless thoughts related to Tina and Jack's marriage. Seems like the reconciliation from the summer will be short-lived. Urge Tina to try harder for a permanent reconciliation, or else by Autumn, the forecast for her marriage won't look good.

OCT—**Eight of Swords**. The Eight of Swords is about Tina feeling stuck in her situation, feeling mentally tied down. If Tina doesn't seek out mediation with Jack as suggested by the Justice card, she is going to feel imprisoned by her marriage, come to resent it, and her situation will get worse.

The projections are a forecast only, like a forecast of the weather to come, so that one might be able to plan accordingly. The future is never set in stone, and every aspect of a Seeker's life is mutable. The projections are a way for a Seeker like Tina to understand the likely consequences of her present actions and offer tangible, concrete steps for avoiding unwanted outcomes. For instance, both the Nine of Swords and Eight of Swords in the last two months of Tina's projections suggest a lose-lose situation: she won't be able to reconcile her marriage and she won't be able to pursue her catering business. Thus, to rectify one, she must rectify the other. Both are intricately connected in her situation. She should be urged to seek out mediation with her husband and find a way to balance both her marriage and her personal ambition of starting a small business.

Depth Diagnostics is a powerful method for assessing underlying issues in a situation. It is an effective way to compel a Seeker to confront causes and effects that he or she might otherwise be tempted to avoid. With Depth Diagnostics, the tarot becomes a psychoanalytical tool that you can use on yourself or to help guide others.

Remembering the process is simple: the First Operation, followed by a Preliminary Brief (a simple three-card past, present, future spread), and then the main tarot spread of the practitioner's choosing. It could be any of the multicard-spread layouts set forth in this book, or one that the practitioner has devised. Deconstruction is best performed with a second tarot deck that has already been ordered, and then one card is drawn at random from the Major Arcana, the suit of Wands, the suit of Cups, Swords, and Pentacles respectively, for a total of five cards. Note that in the interest of time, the Deconstruction step may be skipped by the practitioner so that the Depth Diagnostics procedure remains manageable for clients. Finally, the projections: the drawing of one card to forecast each of the coming six months.

Chapter 30

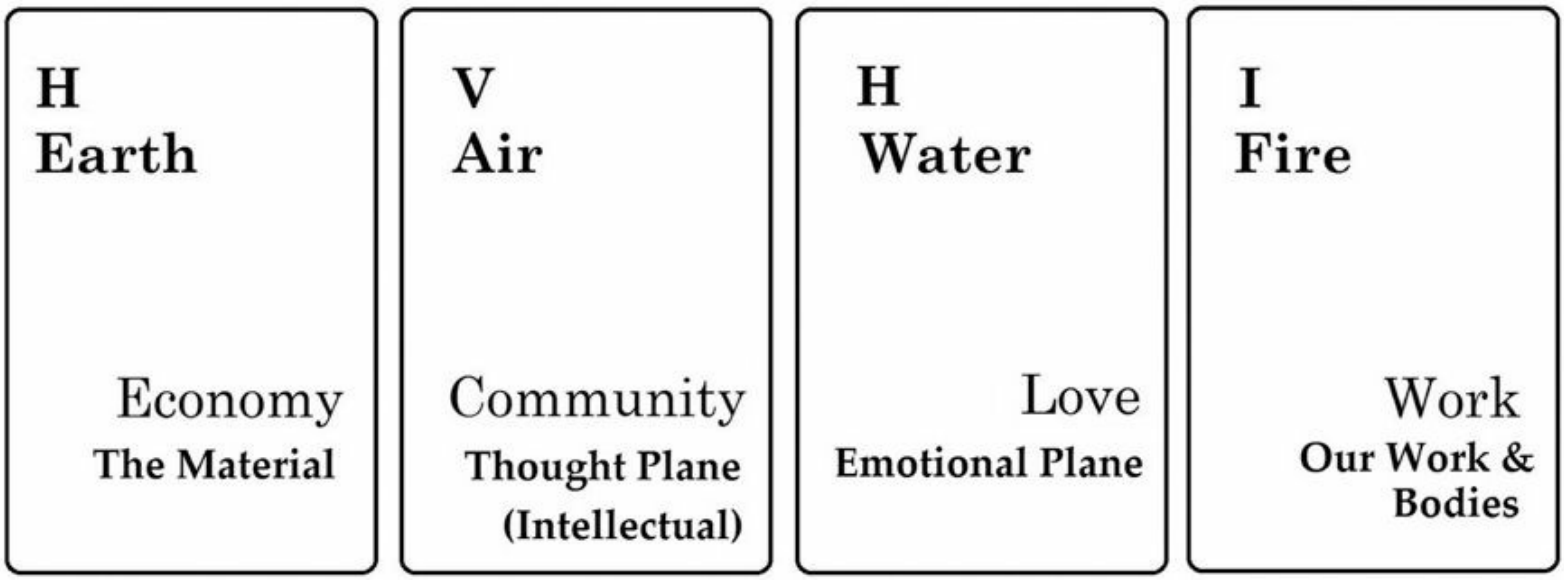
The Opening of the Key

WHETHER THOSE INTERESTED IN the Golden Dawn then acquire an enthusiasm for learning tarot or those interested in tarot then acquire an enthusiasm for learning about the Golden Dawn is a bit of a chicken or egg question. Suffice it to say that one cannot realistically study tarot without coming across the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an English-based occult society tha integrated ceremonial magic and divination into its theosophy. At the heart of Golden Dawn divination practice is the Opening of the Key. It is the tarot divination method taught to Golden Dawn Second Order Adepts, or mid-level members in the society's hierarchy.[1]

This chapter provides a primer on the Opening of the Key divination method, which can be adapted for use outside of any theosophic belief systems. The Opening of the Key is an exhaustive, comprehensive methodology that can serve as counseling, as life-coaching, as inspiration and motivation to empower an individual to achieve success and happiness. It is an incredible tool for gaining a panoramic understanding of one's present situation and works with the Seeker through analytic methods to formulate strategic action plans.

Keep in mind there are many variations of the Opening of the Key method in circulation, each one claiming to be the "original" Golden Dawn version. Provided here is one variation that is by no means "original," but is the author's personal synthesis of the better known versions, along with suggested modifications for the contemporary practitioner. At present there is no publicly available confirmation of what the "original" Opening of the Key method is. There are, however, commonalities among the many variations. Most versions consist of a basic five part structure, or Five Operations,[2] that includes the use of a signifier (traditionally referred to as a significator), cutting the deck into four piles corresponding with the Tetragrammaton (YHVH or IHVH) to affirm that the Seeker's inquiry and the cards' responsiveness to that inquiry are aligned. There is an undeniable integration of tenets from astrology, the Hermetic Qabalah, and, of course, the use of an extravagant number of cards. Beyond those commonalities, the variations differ from publication to publication, practitioner to practitioner. The earliest dated Golden Dawn publications about the Opening of the Key are vague and confusing at best. Yet a primer on the method is included in this book because the serious tarot practitioner should have a working knowledge of the methodology.

First Operation: The Opening and the Narrative

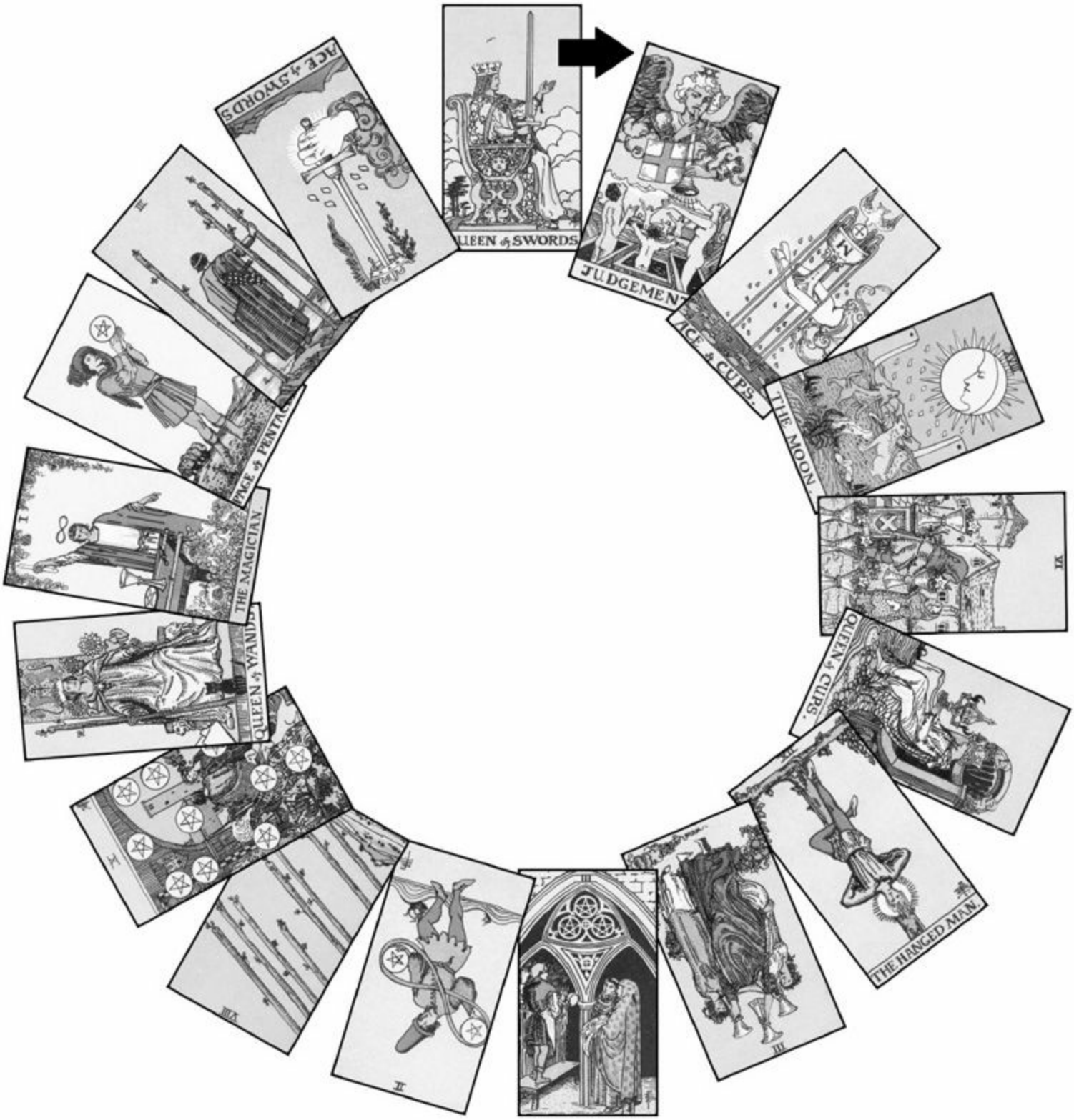


The First Operation is the opening of the divination. Traditionally under the Golden Dawn system, the tarot practitioner begins by holding the deck in the left hand, hovering the right hand over it, and reciting a prayer to invoke the energies of the practitioner's faith. The book *Liber T*, one of the seminal texts publicly available on the traditional Opening of the Key method, provides the complete language of the Golden Dawn invocation. The end of Chapter 21 in this book also covers invocations briefly.

Select the signifier and then perform the First Operation. In the traditional Golden Dawn method Key 1, The Magician is used for a male Seeker and Key 2, The High Priestess for a female.[3] You can adhere to the traditional method or adopt any of the other methods of selecting signifies from Chapter 10. To refresh your knowledge of the First Operation, read Chapter 11. Assume for the purposes of the illustrations below that the signifier being used is the Queen of Swords.

As you look for the signifier in the piles, you are sifting through the cards face up. Once the signifier is located, stop and remove the remaining pile of cards below the signifier, including the signifier.

Place that pile, with the signifier facing up, on top of the original pile so that you return the pile into one, this time with the signifier pile on top, and the signifier card facing you. Set the signifier card down. It should appear to face a particular direction, either right or left. Set down all the cards in the pile into a circle face up, in the direction that the signifier card seems to be facing. Thus, if the signifier seems to be facing right, set the cards down clockwise in a circle. If the signifier seems to be facing left, set the cards down counter-clockwise.[4]



The signifier faces right, so the practitioner would set the cards down clockwise.

The traditional texts on the First Operation then proceed to explaincard counting. Start at the signifier. The cards each correspond with an assigned number based on the card's essence.[5] The subsequent table provides the number assignments for all 78 cards. In the preceding illustration, the Queen of Swords would be assigned the number 4 per the given correspondence table.

CORRESPONDENCE TABLE OF NUMERICAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR CARD COUNTING (MAJORITY VIEW)

Major Arcana					
Planetary Cards	**9**	**Zodiac Cards**	**12**	**Elemental Cards**	**3**
Key 1, The Magician Key 2, The High Priestess Key 3, The Empress Key 10, Wheel of Fortune Key 16, The Tower Key 19, The Sun Key 21, The World		Key 4, The Emperor Key 5, The Hierophant Key 6, The Lovers Key 7, The Chariot Key 8, Strength Key 9, The Hermit Key 11, Justice Key 13, Death Key 14, Temperance Key 15, The Devil Key 17, The Star Key 18, The Moon		Key 0, The Fool Key 12, The Hanged Man Key 20, Judgement	

Minor Arcana			
Ace	**11**	Eight	**8**
Two	**2**	Nine	**9**
Three	**3**	Ten	**10**
Four	**4**	Page	**7**
Five	**5**	Knight	**4**
Six	**6**	Queen	**4**
Seven	**7**	King	**4**

Note that the majority view on card counting observes planetary, zodiac, and elemental assignments for the Major Arcana. Chapter 14 provides an alternative minority view on card counting numerical assignments and a rationale for that different approach, which is the approach that the author of this book adopts. Nonetheless, this chapter will instruct the Opening of the Key with the majority view to honor tradition.

As for the card counting, the prevailing approach is to count the signifier as 1.[6] Thus, in the example illustrated, the Queen of Swords would be card 1, and then Judgement to her right would be card 2, the Ace of Cups would be 3, and The Moon would be card 4. The Moon, the fourth card would be noted and marked for later analysis.

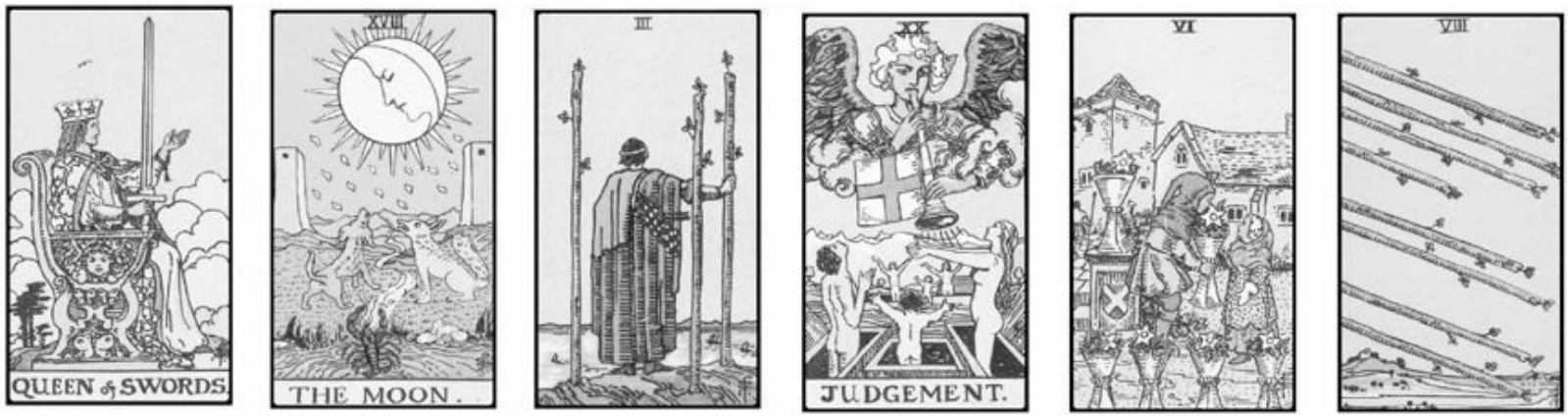
Continue the technique, noting and marking the cards until a count stops at either the signifier or a card that has previously been marked. The subsequent illustration continues the example with the Queen of Swords. Since she is assigned 4, four cards over (counting the Queen as 1) is The Moon, so

that card is marked with a star. The Moon is a zodiac card, so it is assigned 12. *Not* counting The Moon (since it has already been counted), the next card, the Six of Cups, would be 1, then the Queen of Cups would be 2, and so on up to the Three of Wands for card 12.

The Three of Wands is marked by a star and the counting continues, with the Ace of Swords in reverse as 1, up to card 3 (since the Three of Wands is assigned the number 3), which is Judgement. Judgement is an elemental, and so it is assigned the number 3 per the given correspondence table. The Ace of Cups is 1, and the Six of Cups is card 3. For the Six of Cups, count six over to arrive at the Eight of Wands. A count of eight over is the Judgement card, which has been previously marked. Thus, the counting concludes. Note all cards that have been marked. In the diagram above, marked cards are indicated by a star.

Now pull out the marked cards. The interpretation of the cards bears significance to the Seeker's

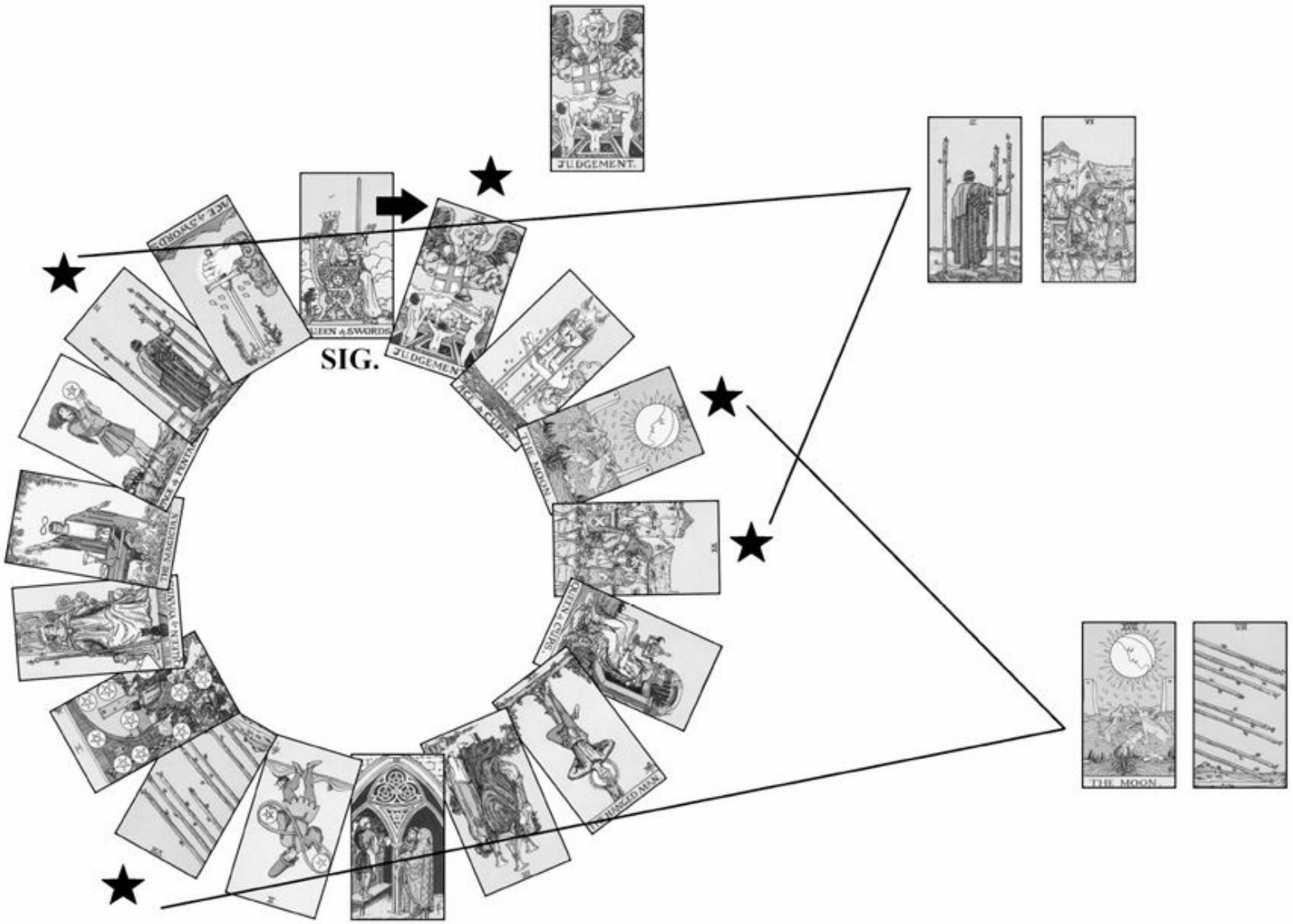
specific inquiry or to the corresponding pile of cards that the signifier was found in per the First Operation. These cards are read as a narrative to understand the metaphorical and metaphysical story of the Seeker's matter at hand. Note that in the below illustration, the cards were set left to right based on the practitioner's preference (with the narrative arc read left to right). Traditionally the cards should be set right to left to follow Hermetic Qabalistic tradition (and thus the narrative arc read right to left).



In the Queen of Swords example, the Queen of Swords was located in the "H_1" pile, corresponding to love and relationships. The Moon suggests the need for reflection on what the Seeker has repressed. Tensions and imbalances between how she feels internally and how she outwardly expresses those feelings are the source of obstacles in her relationships. There is also subconscious resistance to new relationships, and fear. The narrative progresses into the Three of Wands, suggesting a Seeker who has been far more nurturing of her accomplishments, perhaps her career goals, and professional or business projects rather than focusing on the heart. The Judgement card here suggests a form of redemption to occur and the last two cards do suggest a positive outcome for the Seeker's love life: seems like her true love is someone she already knows, perhaps someone from her far past or childhood. The Six of Cups could even suggest her own children to come if she can make her way to the redemption of the Judgement card. The Eight of Wands indicates a positive outcome, a quickly developing and advancing relationship, one filled with fire and passion.

That narrative sets the outline for the Seeker's life path. Details on how she can best walk the path toward romantic success will be provided in the subsequent operations to come. After the narrative interpretation is provided, the reading here is not yet complete. Elemental dignities need to be considered.[7]

Recall the positioning and order of the cards. Starting from the signifier card at the top of the circle, pair the marked cards on either side of the signifier. Leave the unmarked cards intact in the circle, as those cards represent the peripheral forces affecting the Seeker's situation.[8] The marked cards represent the exigent forces, and those are the cards to be analyzed with care. Thus, the first marked card would be paired with the last marked card, the second marked card with the second to last marked card, and so on. Any middle card without a pair is left alone and noted, as its solitude will bear relevance to the Seeker's situation.[9]



First, count up the total number of marked cards attributed to each element, Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. Analyze the significance of any dominant or absent elements. Then read the pairs and note the dichotomies. Do most of the cards cancel each other out with the elemental dignities? Or does a particular element seem to dominate through most of the pairings? Take note of what the elements signify. The correspondence table in Chapter 5 provided the associated traits of each element and which cards are governed by which elements. Chapter 15 provided an overview on elemental dignities.

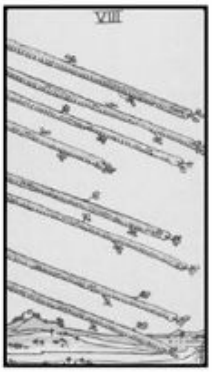
Empower

Empower

WANDS **Fire** Active	CUPS **Water** Passive	SWORDS **Air** Active	PENTACLES **Earth** Passive
Creativity	Alliances	Idealism	Stability
Innovation	Attraction	Intellectualism	Conservatism
Passion	Compassion	Rationality	Dogma
Enthusiasm	Persuasion	Deliberation	Conviction
Ardor	Intuition	Ambition	Potency
Determination	Prophecy	Controversy	Generosity
Vivacity	Relationships	Dialectic	Metamorphosis
Leadership	Sentimentality	Communication	Resourcefulness

Attenuate

Attenuate



Water **Fire** **Water** **Fire** **Water**

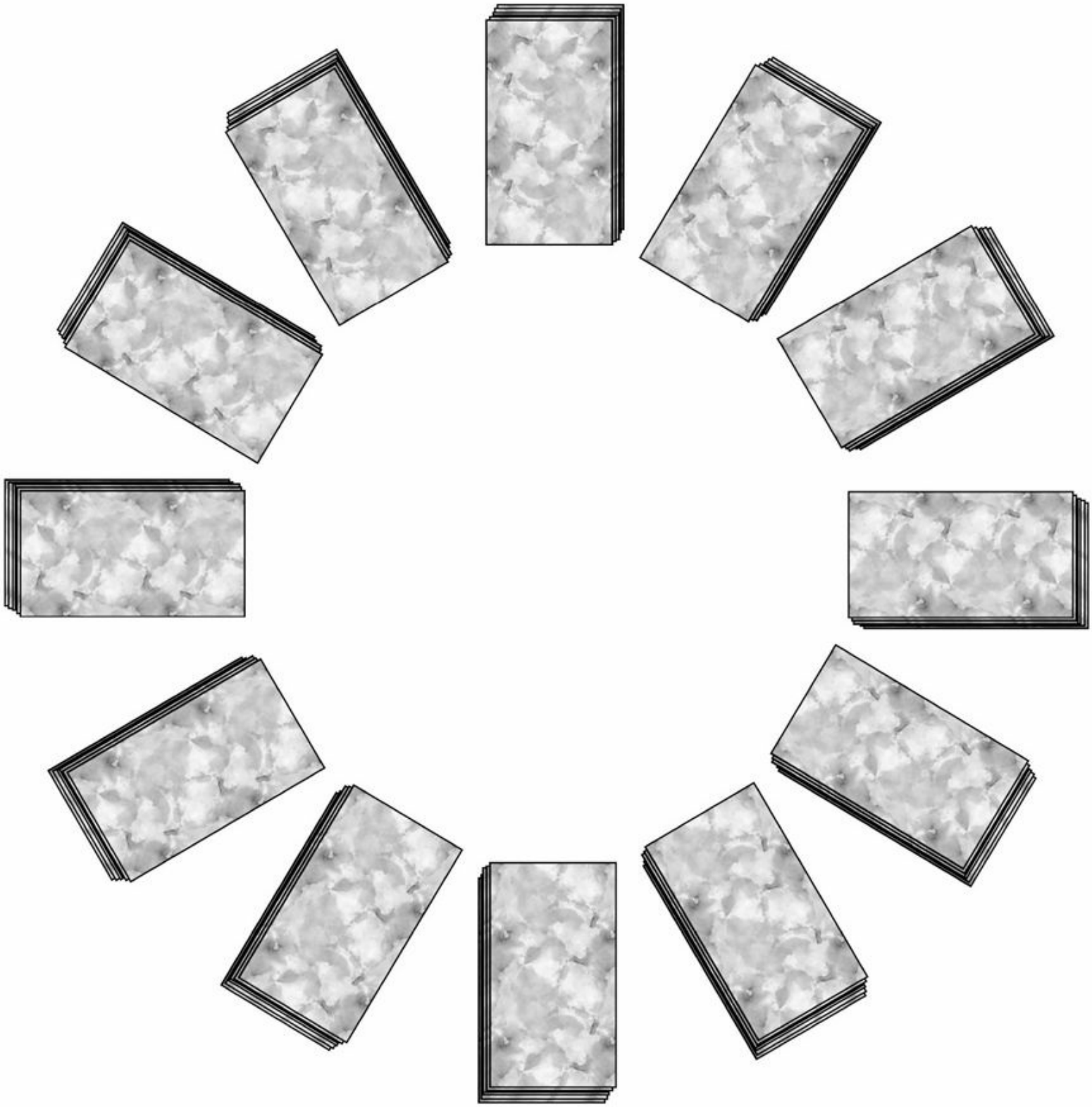
In the Queen of Swords example, all the pairs are ill-dignified, and specifically the attenuation between Fire and Water. The elemental dignities affirm the narrative and reveal the precise cause of stagnation in the Seeker's love life. The aspects of Fire are consistently in opposition with the aspects of Water in her life, and even more peculiar is the lone card, Judgement, which itself is a card in flux between Fire and Water.[10] The elemental dignities here affirm a Seeker whose work life and love life are in contention. Note just how close the contention is: Judgement is the tiebreaker, interestingly enough.[11]

Also note whether the majority of cards are active/yang or passive/yin. Too much yang energy in the cards can indicate an overbearing, controlling personality, someone who has trouble letting go, detaching, or yielding to others. Too much yin energy can indicate passivity, a yielding, softer nature when a more assertive personality is needed. Pinpointing the precise nature of imbalance in a Seeker through elemental dignities will help practitioner and Seeker formulate a definitive solution for correcting the imbalance and producing positive future results.

Second Operation: The Twelve Astrological Houses

There will be two successive twelve-pile operations, the first to develop insights into the matter at hand and the second to provide a contextual framework for thinking about the matter at hand. The spread for the Twelve Houses is based on the twelve houses of astrology. According to Hermetic thought, what occurs among the planets and the constellations is reflected in the occurrences here on earth. The concept "as above, so below" that is the cornerstone of Hermeticism is not unlike Eastern metaphysical thought of divine interconnectivity. It is believed that the tarot can be used to align what is above to what is below and through that alignment, open the bridge between the personal conscious and the collective unconscious to divine information. When that connectivity is established, information from the unconscious, or the divine, can flow freely into our awareness. Forming the cards into the Twelve Houses is in effect using the tarot to align what is above with what is below.

After the First Operation and Narrative, collect the cards with the signifier and shuffle per the Traditional Method. There is no need for any cutting. Once the cards are shuffled, start at the 12 o'clock position for House 1, the House of Aries, and move clockwise through the 12 houses, similar to the Zodiac Spread discussed in Chapter 14, distributing the cards of the full deck through the Twelve Houses.

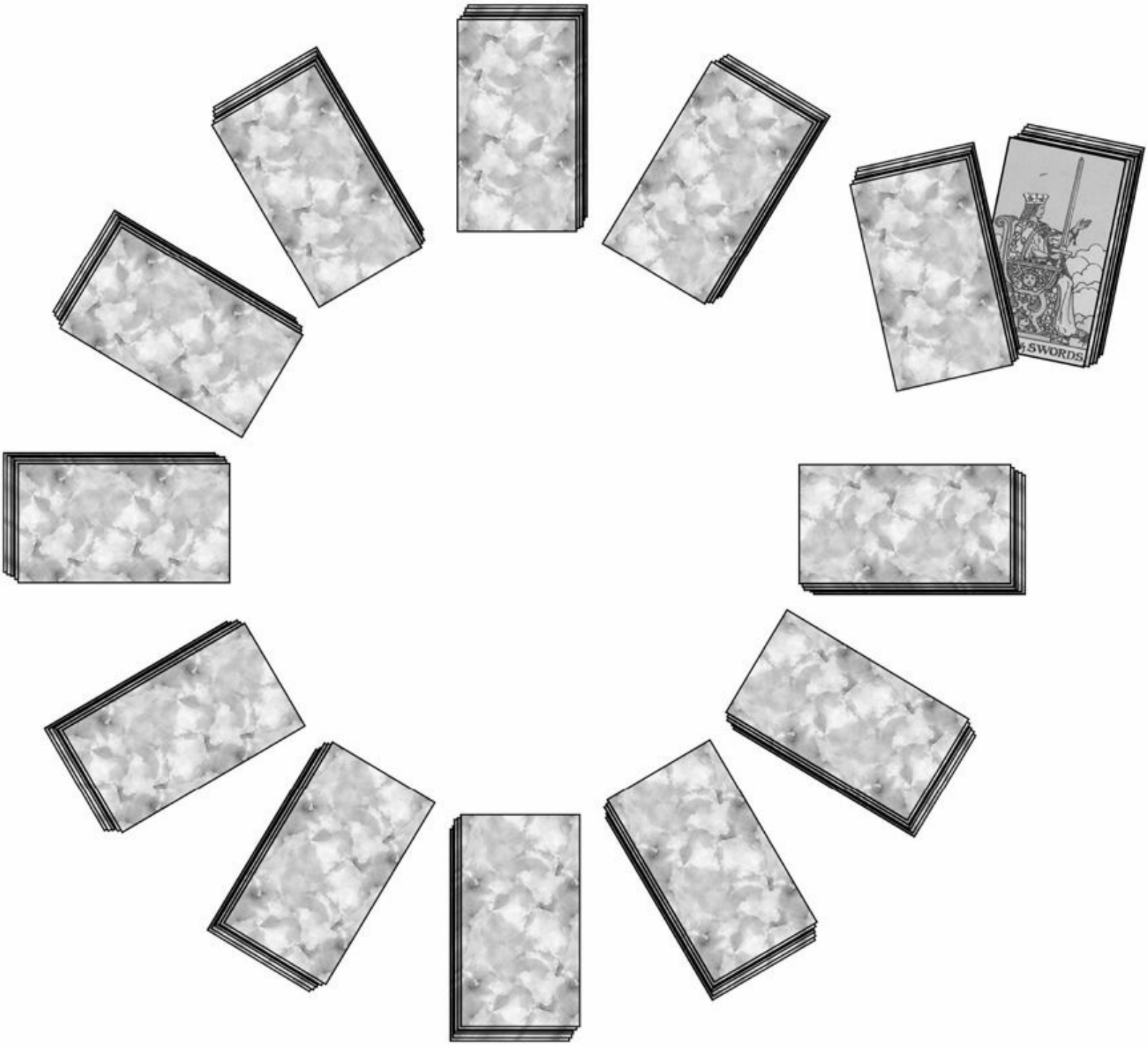


Place the cards face down into the positions for the Twelve Houses, forming piles for Houses 1 to 12 until all 78 cards have been placed. Starting with House 1, search the piles for the signifier card. The pile the signifier is in will correspond to a particular Topic Association keyed to western astrology, which will offer insight into a significant source of flux or opposition that is obstructing the Seeker from gaining the desired success and happiness.[12] The subsequent table provides the House Topic Associations for reference.

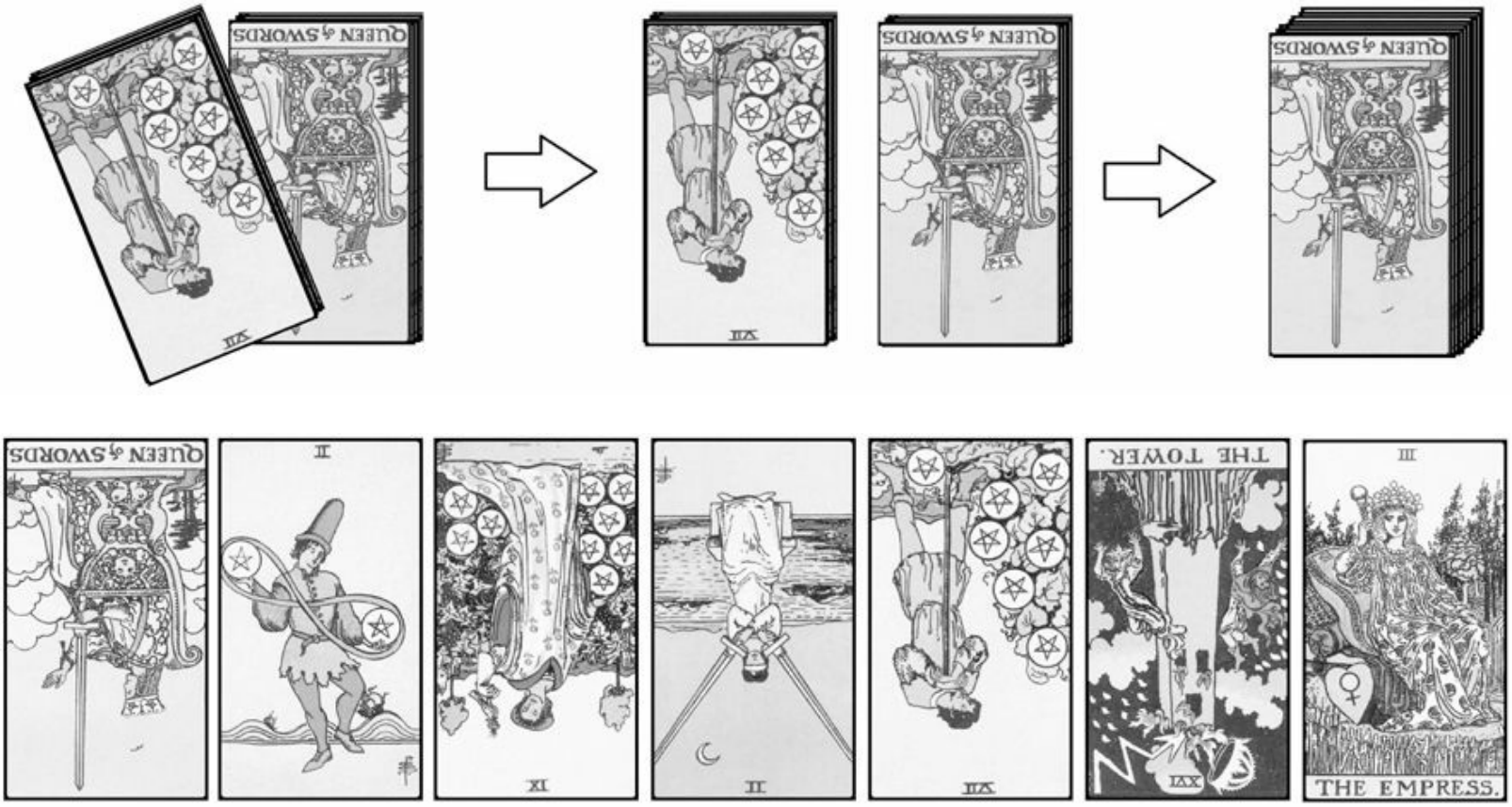
House Correspondence Table of Topic Associations

Zodiac Spread (Card Pile)	Clock Hour Position	HOUSE Topic Association
House 1 (Card Pile 1)	12 o'clock position	Personal Action, Self, Disposition
House 2 (Card Pile 2)	1 o'clock position	Assets, Resources, Finances
House 3 (Card Pile 3)	2 o'clock position	Mental State, Studies, Environment
House 4 (Card Pile 4)	3 o'clock position	Family, Home, Mother Figure
House 5 (Card Pile 5)	4 o'clock position	Hobbies, Pastimes, Children, Happiness
House 6 (Card Pile 6)	5 o'clock position	Job, Occupation, Health, Physical Body
House 7 (Card Pile 7)	6 o'clock position	Marriage, Relationships, Partnerships
House 8 (Card Pile 8)	7 o'clock position	Change, Crisis, Transformations
House 9 (Card Pile 9)	8 o'clock position	Spirituality, Higher Education, Travel
House 10 (Card Pile 10)	9 o'clock position	Career, Social Status, Father Figure
House 11 (Card Pile 11)	10 o'clock position	Friends, Community, Hopes & Fears
House 12 (Card Pile 12)	11 o'clock position	Challenges, Losses, Lessons to Learn

Back to the Queen of Swords example.



The signifier was found in the 2 o'clock position, or House 3, which corresponds with the Seeker's environment and educational background. House 3 is Gemini, with the ruling planet Mercury. Societal influence, intelligence, communication, the mind—these are the circumstantial influences on the Seeker's love life. How these energies manifest exactly will be revealed in the reading of the cards in that pile. As before, take the portion of cards in front of the signifier and move it to the back, so that the signifier is the topmost card in the pile.

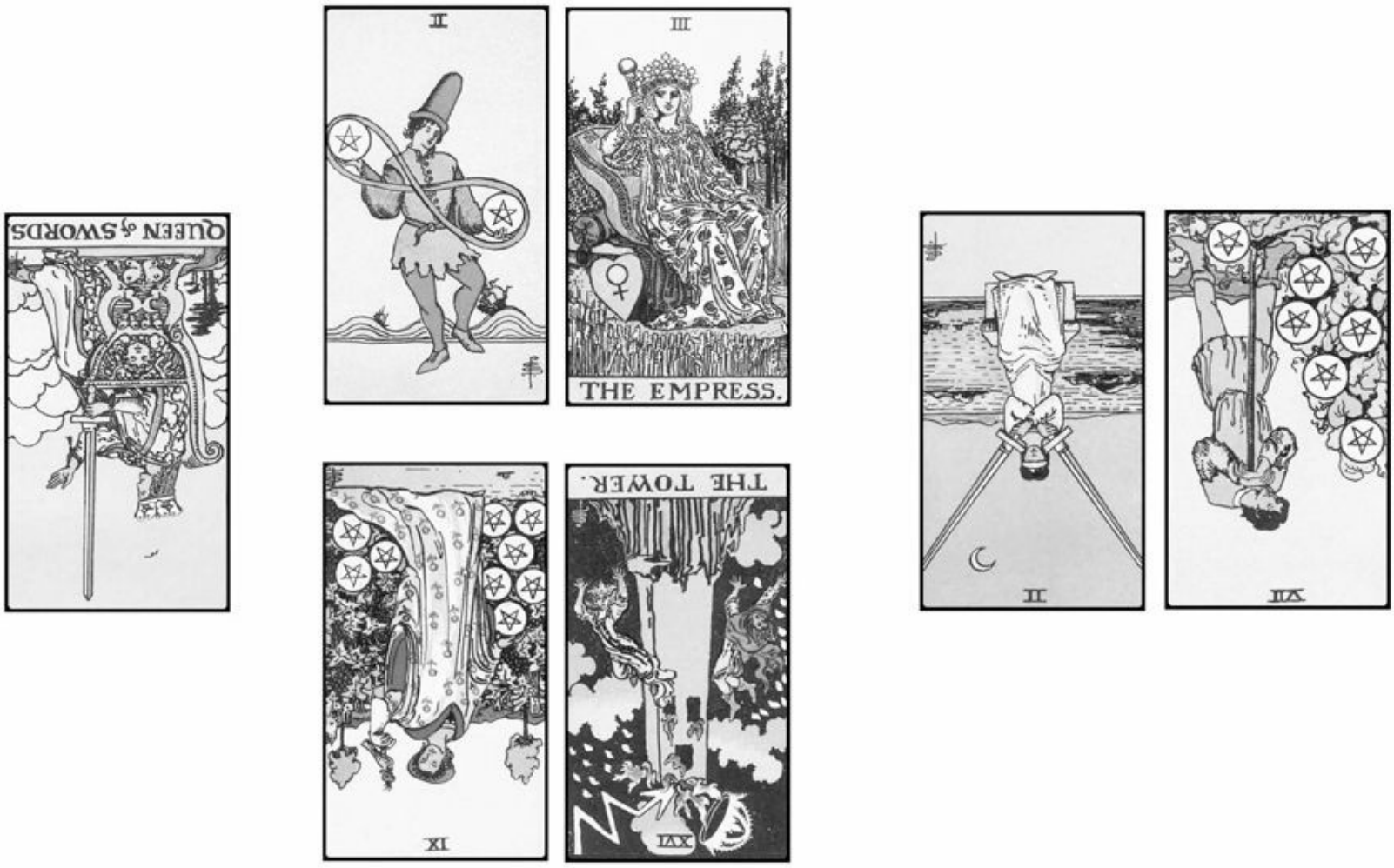


The cards in that pile, led by the signifier, are set out in a row to interpret. Note in the example that the signifier here appears in reverse, or is ill-dignified. Appearing in reverse modifies the energy of the card. Here, the signifier's presence is weak, suggesting unresolved matters in this particular House. Recall that House 3, where the signifier appeared, is ruled by Gemini.[13]

Applying the correspondences to the Seeker's reading, communication would be a deal-breaking point in a relationship and she needs her intellectual equal. Any dissatisfaction with a potential mate would stem from her belief that such an individual was not her intellectual equal. Now, as for finding such a mate, House 3 suggests her arm's length environment. Such an individual would be a member of her close-knit community or even from her same school, as education and educational institutions are relevant associations with the House. The prospective mate could even be someone who is in academia. However, the dignities should be noted. The signifier appears in the pile in reverse, showing a lowered Self. When put in the setting that corresponds with House 3, Seeker is rarely at her best, and that could be a source of the problems she has been facing in love. Note also the dominance of reversals. There is also a dominance of Earth. The row of cards, including the signifier, seems divided straight down the center by the Two of Swords, not to mention the Two of Pentacles leads the narrative. The practitioner might interpret that to suggest good prospects in the past that came and went, and now there is a stalemate. Cooperation does not seem to come easy for this Seeker, noted by the numerological association of the number 2. The end result, though, is fruition, and The Empress is an auspicious card for the Seeker's love life.

Continue the interpretation of the row of cards and read it as a chronological narrative. For the Queen of Swords example, she has juggled several relationships in the past (Two of Pentacles), though the result each time was dissatisfaction and her feeling alone, depressed, and longing for more (Nine of Pentacles, reversed). Denial, being non-confrontational, too passive, not communicating in relationships, and hesitation (hence the multiple good prospects that came and went) are major

weakening factors (Seven of Pentacles, reversed). It may continue to be tough, with strong external forces that seem to work against her relationships, each time causing what seemed to have potential to fall apart. Also, the Seeker needs to be wary of misrepresentations, falsehoods (The Tower, reversed). The matter of misrepresentations extends from House 3's correspondence with communications. The cards, however, suggest that in the end, there will be fruition, marriage, a child even (The Empress). However, at the present moment, and for some time into the near future, there is going to be stalemate (Two of Swords, reversed). Noting the elemental dignities, the suit of Cups and Water energy is entirely absent. That is where the Seeker must focus her efforts, bringing in more Water energy into her life so that she can best ensure the outcome that The Empress bodes.

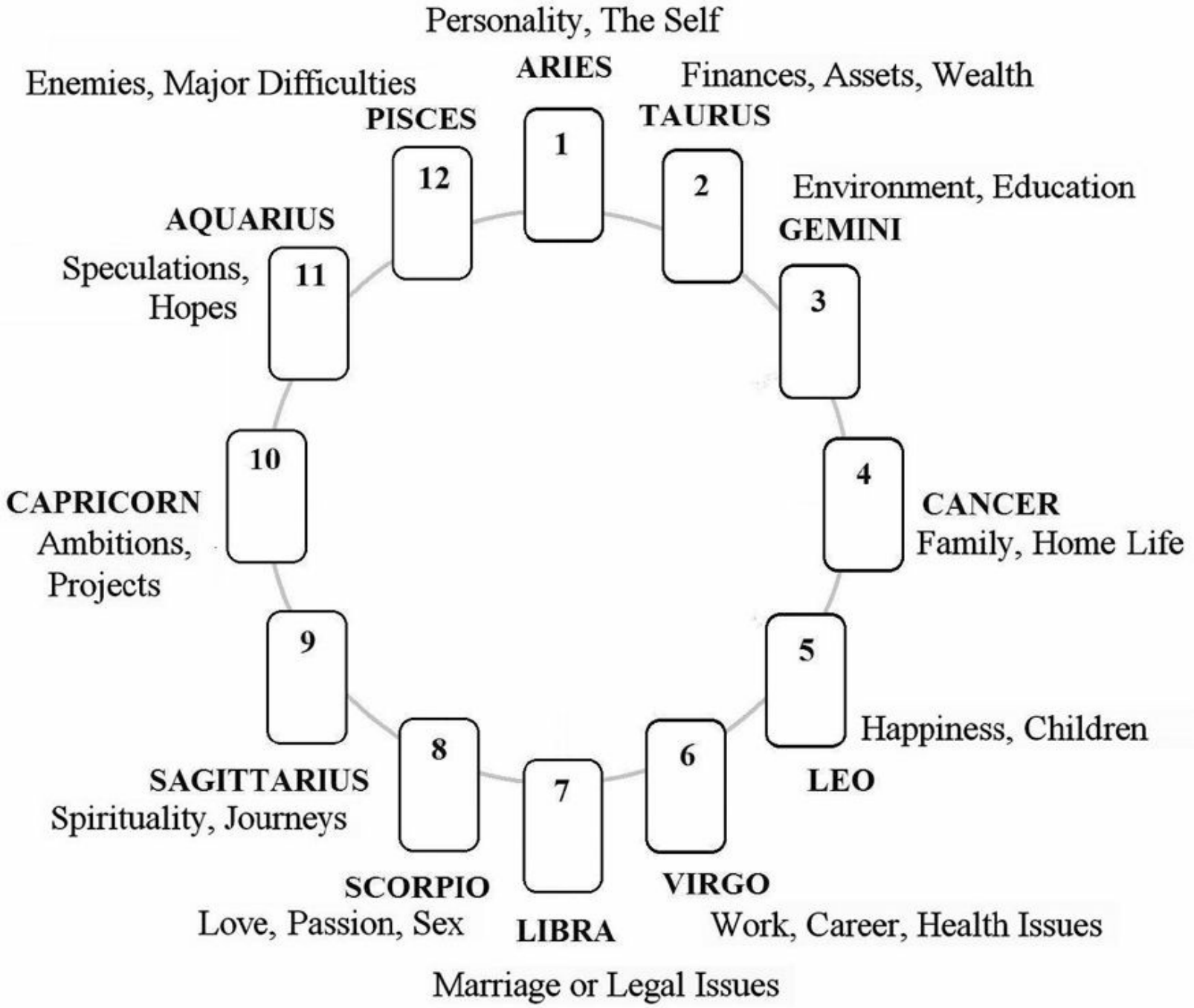


Like the earlier Narrative, the next step is to pair the first card drawn with the last card drawn, second card drawn with the second to last, and so on. Per the traditional approach to the Opening of the Key, the elemental dignities of the pairings are to be read and interpreted to the Seeker. Dignified energies indicate strengths and ill-dignified energies indicate weaknesses, omissions, or flux. Use elemental dignities to affirm the areas of success for the Seeker and to analyze areas for improvement. The purpose of elemental dignities analysis is to help a Seeker find balance and harmony.

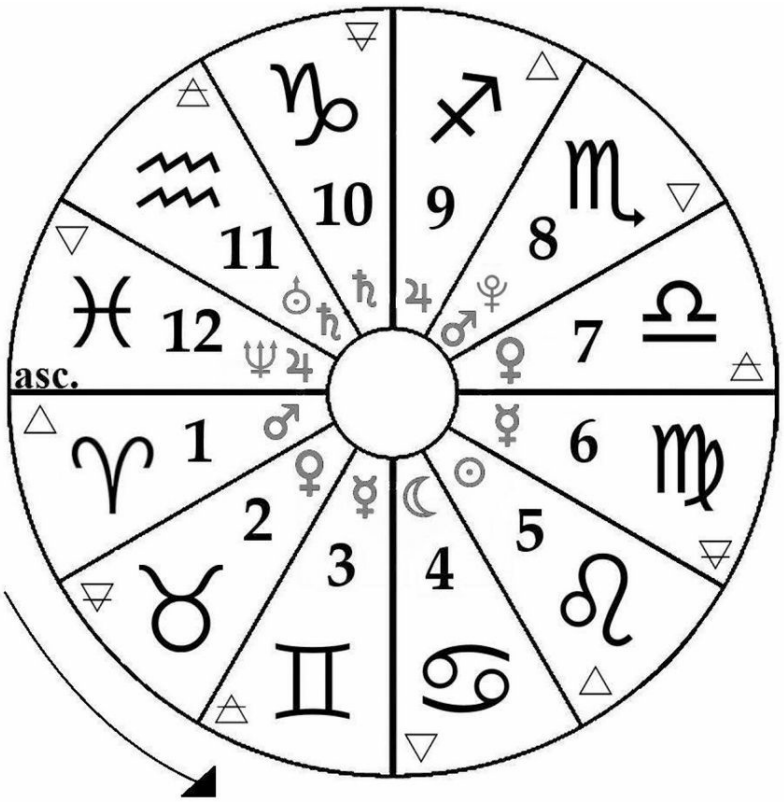
Before moving on to the Third Operation in the Opening of the Key, or the Twelve Signs analysis, understand that there are discrepancies in the approach to how the cards should be set down. There are two schools of thought: the Clock Hour Position and the Zodiac Position. In the foregoing illustrations, the Clock Hour Position was shown, as it is the easiest for most practitioners, especially practitioners without a strong background in western astrology, to remember. The Clock Hour Position also energetically integrates time as a variable into the metaphysical algorithm that is the

Opening of the Key.

Clock Hour Position



However, since western astrology is fundamental to Hermeticism and in particular, the Golden Dawn approach to tarot divination, many will subscribe to the Zodiac Position. For practitioners with a background in astrology, the Zodiac Position will make more sense.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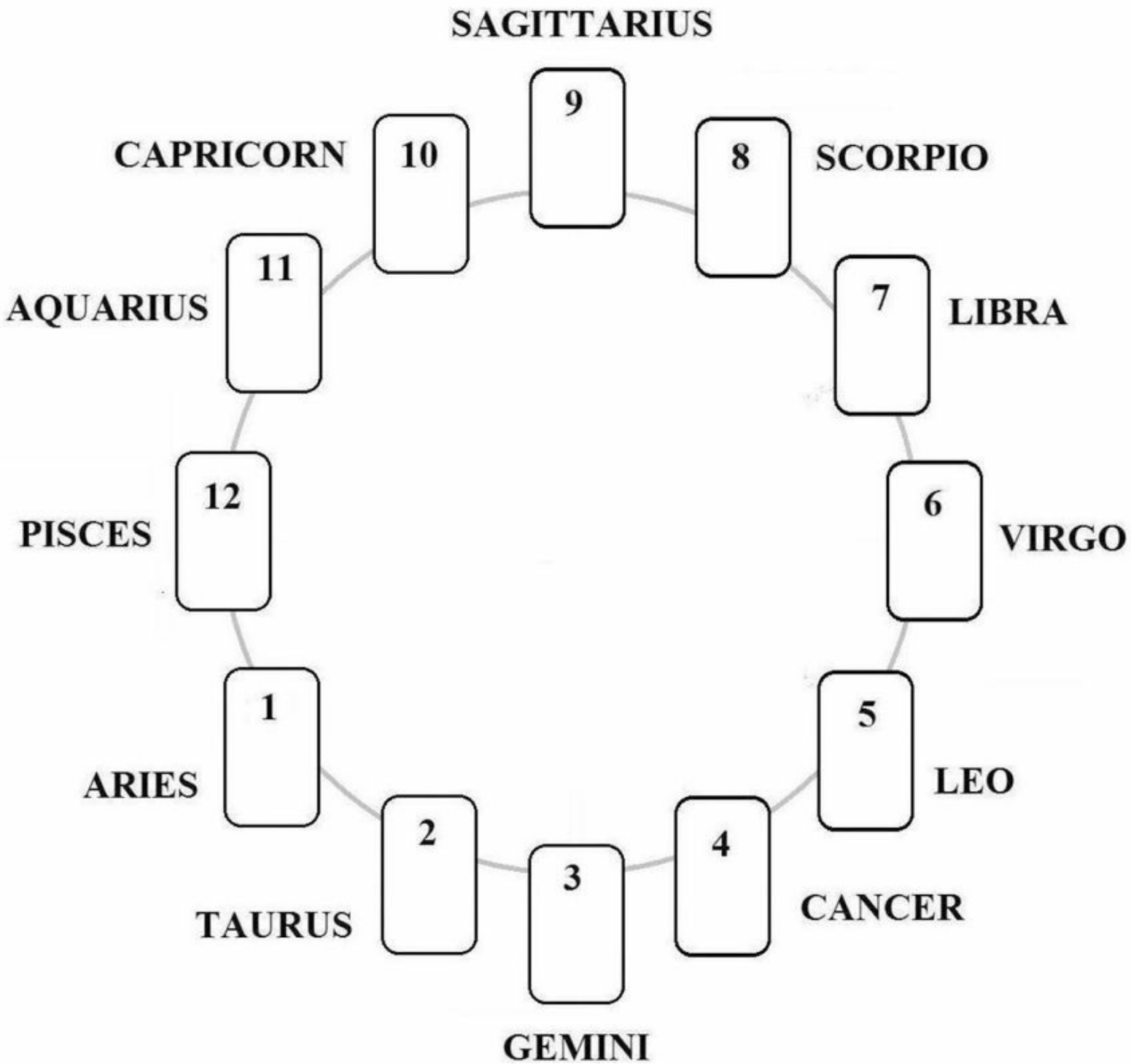
Zodiac Position

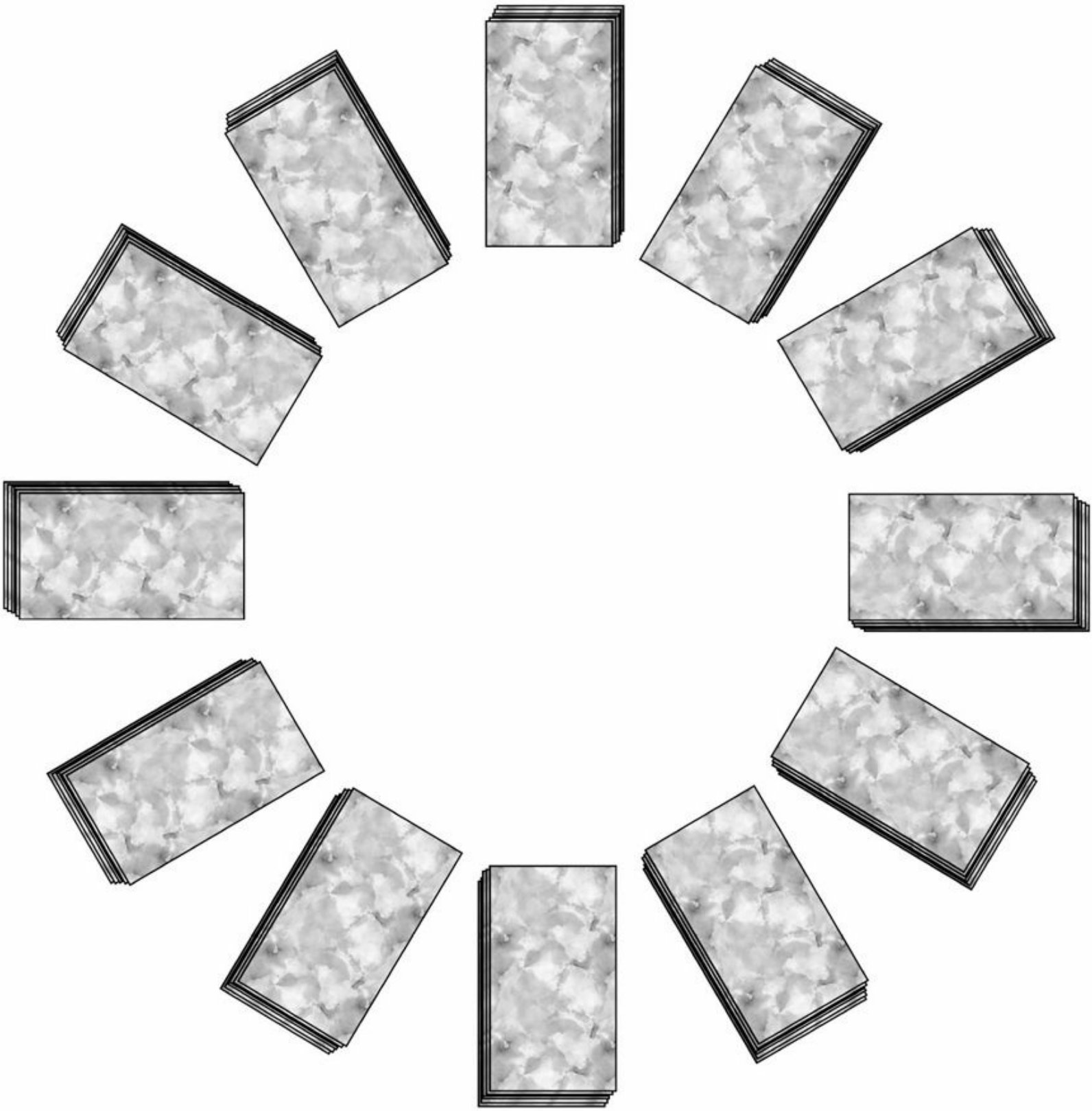


As long as the practitioner is clear in mind as to which pile corresponds to which House and applies a particular spread layout consistently, then either the Clock Hour Position or the Zodiac Position can be used with great accuracy.

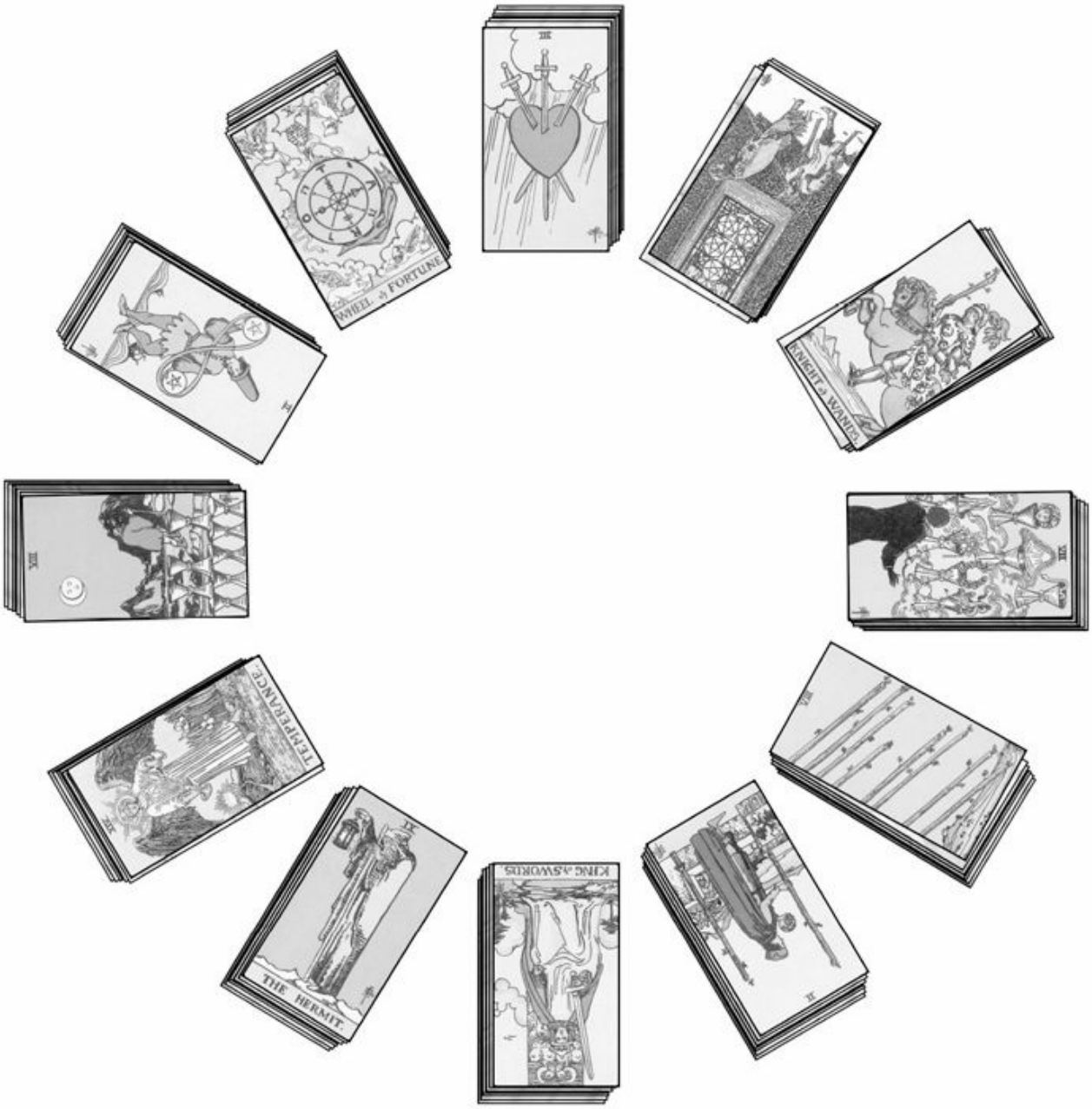
Third Operation: The Twelve Zodiac Signs[14]

After the Twelve Houses analysis, collect all the cards into a single deck again and shuffle. Again, there is no need to cut here. Then distribute the cards clockwise into the Twelve Signs, similar to the first Twelve Houses. The difference here is in purpose. The first Twelve Houses was intended to

gain greater specific insight into the matter at hand. The second Twelve Signs will offer a contextual analysis to understand how the disparate areas of the Seeker's life connect and how those other areas that might not seem to relate to the matter at hand in fact influence the Seeker, perhaps in subconscious ways.



Once the cards have been distributed into the Twelve Signs, turn over the topmost card of each of the twelve piles, using the drawing method that the practitioner has adopted, either the Direct Flip or Turn Over. The twelve cards are read like the Zodiac Spread in Chapter 14.



The following table can help the practitioner organize the Third Operation, especially in a written reading. The Queen of Swords example is used in the subsequent table.

Zodiac Spread (Card Pile)	Clock Hour Position	SIGN Topic Association
Aries (Card Pile 1)	12 o'clock position	Leadership, Achievement
Taurus (Card Pile 2)	1 o'clock position	Possessions, Acquisitions, Money
Gemini (Card Pile 3)	2 o'clock position	Intellect, Persuasiveness, Mental State
Cancer (Card Pile 4)	3 o'clock position	Intuition, Emotional State
Leo (Card Pile 5)	4 o'clock position	Attention Received, Validation
Virgo (Card Pile 6)	5 o'clock position	Analysis of Details, Discipline
Libra (Card Pile 7)	6 o'clock position	Decisions to be Made
Scorpio (Card Pile 8)	7 o'clock position	Willpower, Force, Drama, Conflicts
Sagittarius (Card Pile 9)	8 o'clock position	Adventures, Essence of the Soul
Capricorn (Card Pile 10)	9 o'clock position	Stability, Practical Considerations
Aquarius (Card Pile 11)	10 o'clock position	Social Involvement, Humanitarianism
Pisces (Card Pile 12)	11 o'clock position	Compassion, Sacrifices

Sign (Topic Association)	Clock Hour Position	Card Drawn	Interpretation
1: Aries. (Leadership, Achievement)	12 o'clock position	Three of Swords	Disappointment. Lacking achievement. Clash for leadership.
2: Taurus. (Possessions, Acquisitions, Money)	1 o'clock position	Five of Pentacles, Reversed	Financial situation is getting better.
3: Gemini. (Intellect, Mental State)	2 o'clock position	Knight of Wands	Competitive nature; acting impetuously
4: Cancer. (Intuition, Emotional State)	3 o'clock position	Seven of Cups	Emotional superficiality; temptations of the heart
5: Leo. (Attention Received, Validation)	4 o'clock position	Eight of Wands, Reversed	Inaction; Not getting the recognition deserved
6: Virgo. (Analysis of Details, Discipline)	5 o'clock position	Two of Wands	Awaiting fruition of past hard work and discipline
7: Libra. (Decisions to be Made; Judgment)	6 o'clock position	King of Swords	Must make a swift, cutting decision, and do so with conviction
8: Scorpio. (Willpower, Force, Drama, Conflicts)	7 o'clock position	The Hermit, Reversed	Failure to heed a sage's advice causes conflicts
9: Sagittarius. (Adventure, Essence of the Soul)	8 o'clock position	Temperance	Spiritual lesson to be learned here is one involving balance
10: Capricorn. (Stability, Practical Considerations)	9 o'clock position	Eight of Cups	Consider abandoning current path and start on a different path
11: Aquarius. (Social Involvement)	10 o'clock position	Two of Pentacles, Reversed	Overwhelmed with too many activities; prioritize
12: Pisces. (Compassion, Sacrifices)	11 o'clock position	Wheel of Fortune	Stay optimistic. Tides will turn favorably when the new, different path is taken.

Zodiac Spread (Card Pile)	Clock Hour Position	HOUSE Topic Association
House 1 (Card Pile 1)	12 o'clock position	Personal Action, Self, Disposition
House 2 (Card Pile 2)	1 o'clock position	Assets, Resources, Finances
House 3 (Card Pile 3)	2 o'clock position	Mental State, Studies, Environment
House 4 (Card Pile 4)	3 o'clock position	Family, Home, Mother Figure
House 5 (Card Pile 5)	4 o'clock position	Hobbies, Pastimes, Children, Happiness
House 6 (Card Pile 6)	5 o'clock position	Job, Occupation, Health, Physical Body
House 7 (Card Pile 7)	6 o'clock position	Marriage, Relationships, Partnerships
House 8 (Card Pile 8)	7 o'clock position	Change, Crisis, Transformations
House 9 (Card Pile 9)	8 o'clock position	Spirituality, Higher Education, Travel
House 10 (Card Pile 10)	9 o'clock position	Career, Social Status, Father Figure
House 11 (Card Pile 11)	10 o'clock position	Friends, Community, Hopes & Fears
House 12 (Card Pile 12)	11 o'clock position	Challenges, Losses, Lessons to Learn

Zodiac Spread (Card Pile)	Clock Hour Position	SIGN Topic Association
Aries (Card Pile 1)	12 o'clock position	Leadership, Achievement
Taurus (Card Pile 2)	1 o'clock position	Possessions, Acquisitions, Money
Gemini (Card Pile 3)	2 o'clock position	Intellect, Persuasiveness, Mental State
Cancer (Card Pile 4)	3 o'clock position	Intuition, Emotional State
Leo (Card Pile 5)	4 o'clock position	Attention Received, Validation
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Libra (Card Pile 7)	6 o'clock position	Decisions to be Made
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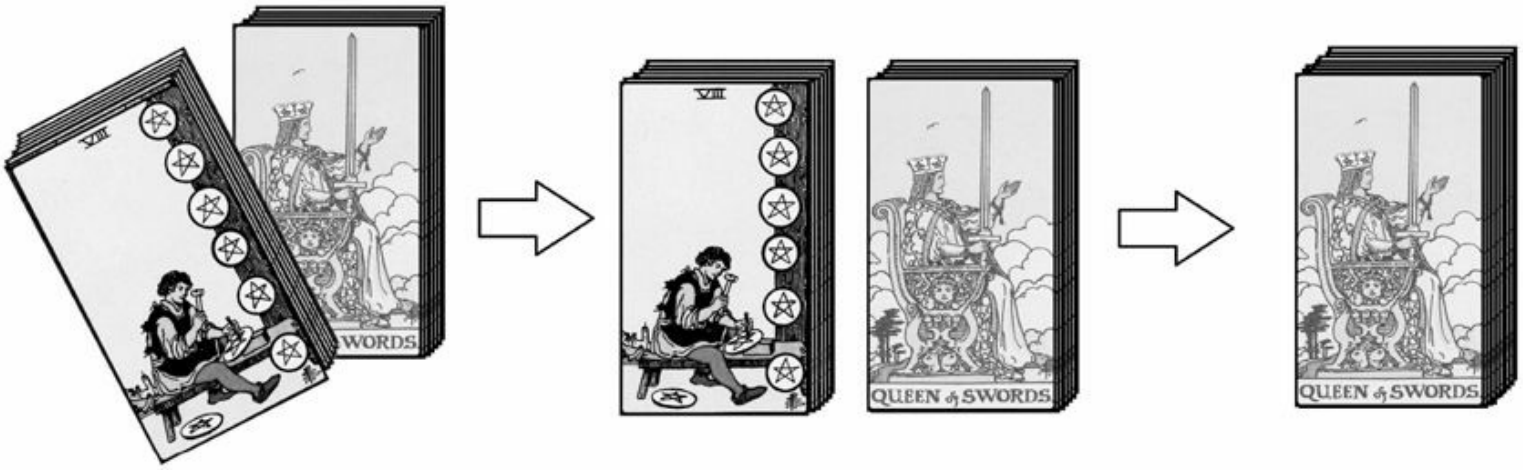
Capricorn (Card Pile 10)	9 o'clock position	Stability, Practical Considerations
Aquarius (Card Pile 11)	10 o'clock position	Social Involvement, Humanitarianism
Pisces (Card Pile 12)	11 o'clock position	Compassion, Sacrifices

The Third Operation is itself a full spread reading. A significant amount of time should be devoted to analyzing each Sign and the present condition of that correspondence in the Seeker's life. Ill-dignities can often show negative influences from that Sign on the matter at hand (as divined from the First Operation).[15] Note repetitions of cards, numbers, or suits. Repeating cards throughout the session are breadcrumbs leading the practitioner and Seeker toward the Key.

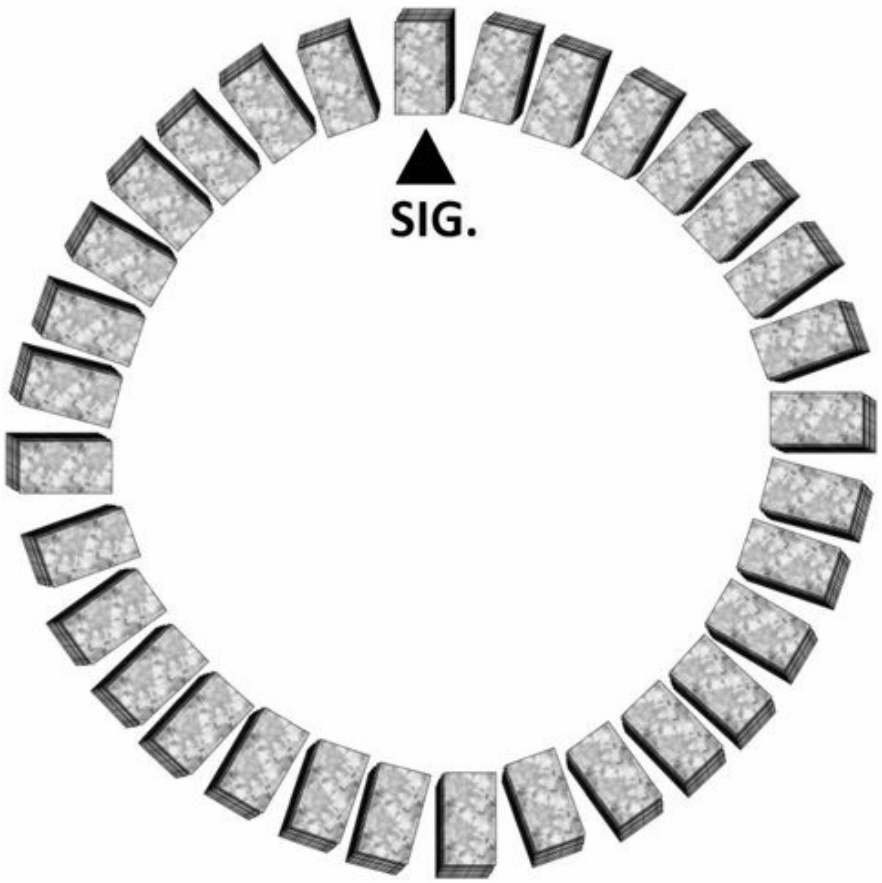
Fourth Operation: The Thirty-Six Decans (The Key)

Some say the Key (of the Opening of the Key) is revealed in the Fourth Operation through the Decans. Others say the Key is not revealed until the final Fifth Operation in the Tree of Life. The Decans are the thirty-six groupings of small constellations (also referred to as the Thirty-Six Decanates) that rise on the horizon through each of the earth's rotations. It is believed that the concept of Decans date as far back as 2000 BC Egypt. Incidentally they also correspond with the thirty-six drekkana of Indian astrology.[16] Although Decans have fallen out of use in popular modern astrology, its legacy can be traced throughout ceremonial magic traditions. Decans are often considered in the crafting of talismans or other energetic renderings. The Fourth Operation in the Opening of the Key is based on the Thirty-Six Decans. To me, it would make sense for the Key to be found in this step,[17] and the final Fifth Operation to be the closing of the operations.

To proceed with the Fourth Operation, start by returning the cards to a single pile and shuffle them thoroughly. The practitioner should turn the deck over face up and look for the signifier. When the signifier is located, take the entire pile of cards below the signifier card and move that bottom portion to the top of the face-up deck.



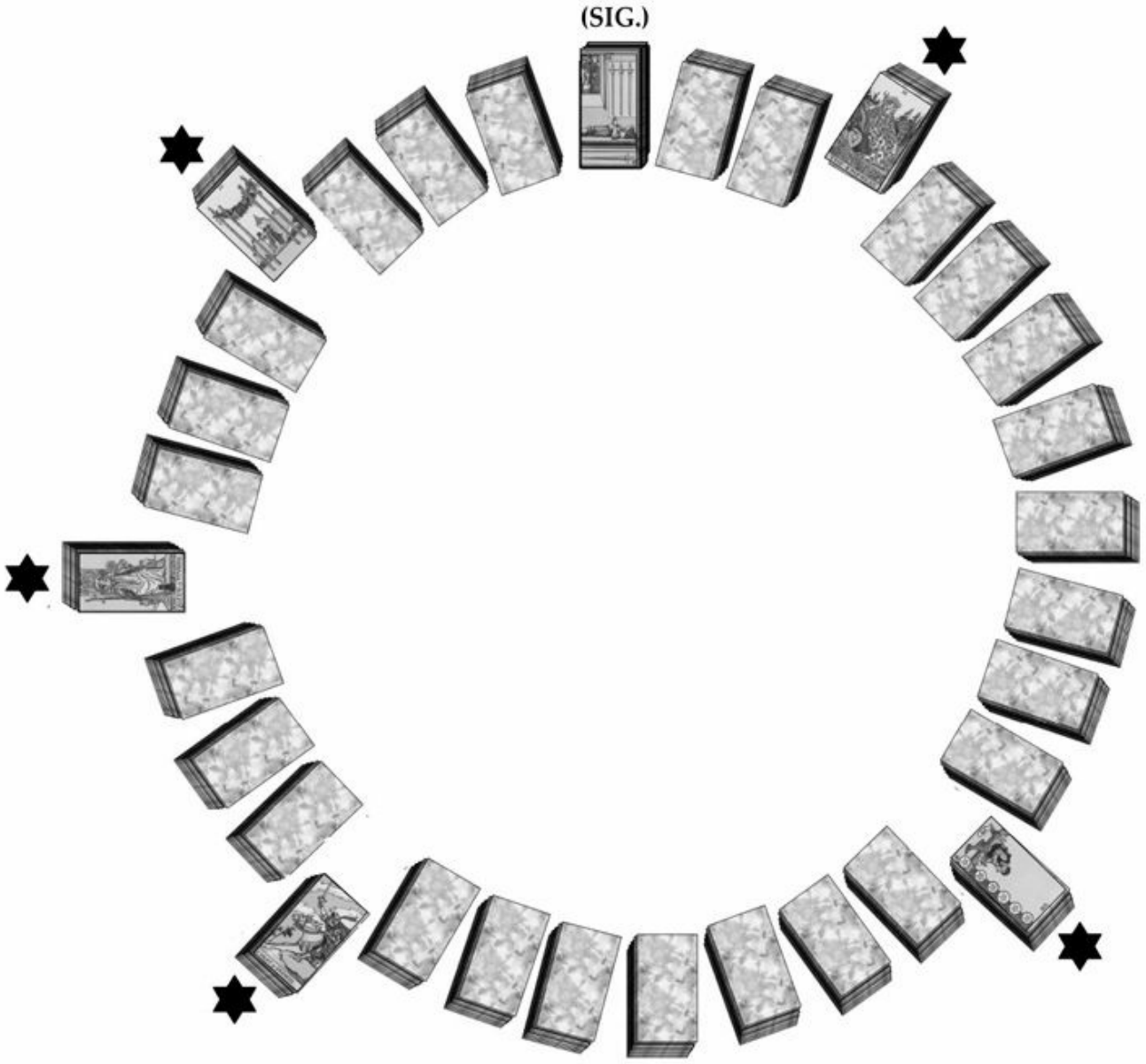
Set down the signifier. Now flip the cards over so they are facing down. Draw the cards from the top of the face-down deck and distribute them into the Thirty-Six Decans, beginning with the placement of the first face-down card over the first Decan, Aries, which should now be covering the signifier.[18]



When all seventy-eight cards of the deck have been distributed into the Thirty-Six Decans going in the direction the signifier faced, turn over the topmost card of the first Decan, where the signifier is. Note the numerical correspondence of that card. The next step will be to apply card counting again per the latter half of First Operation. Recall the Correspondence Table of Numerical Assignments from the Narrative portion of the First Operation. Apply the traditional card counting technique. From the topmost card in the first Decan (where the signifier is), count clockwise or counter-clockwise (depending on the directionality of the card face).

To start the card counting for the Fourth Operation, note the directionality of the card turned over

from the top of the first Decan pile. If the figure(s) in the card unambiguously face right or left, count clockwise or counter-clockwise respectively, according to directionality. If the directionality of the card is ambiguous, such as it is in the below Queen of Swords example (the topmost card drawn is the Four of Swords), then go by the essence of the element. For active/yang elements (i.e., Fire, Air) go clockwise. For passive/yin elements (i.e., Water, Earth), go counter-clockwise.



Trun the marked card over face up. Note the numerical correspondence. Count over per the correspondence and mark the next card. Continue until counting ends on the SIG. or a previously mared card. Pull out all marked cards to interpret.

Here, the directionality of the Four of Swords is ambiguous, so its essential element is considered, which is Air. Air is active, and so the card counting should commence clockwise. The Four of Swords is assigned the number 4. Count the first Decan as 1. On the fourth Decan, turn over the topmost card, which in the illustration provided is The Empress. The Empress is a planetary card (for Venus) and so is assigned the number 9. Since the pile that The Empress appeared in has been counted already, start the count 1 on the subsequent pile. For the ninth pile over, the thirteenth Decan, turn over the topmost card. In the illustration, it is the Eight of Pentacles, which is assigned the number 8. Counting over 8 and turning over the topmost card reveals the Knight of Swords, which is

assigned the number 4. The count makes one complete round of the Thirty-Six Decans and ends exactly on the signifier.

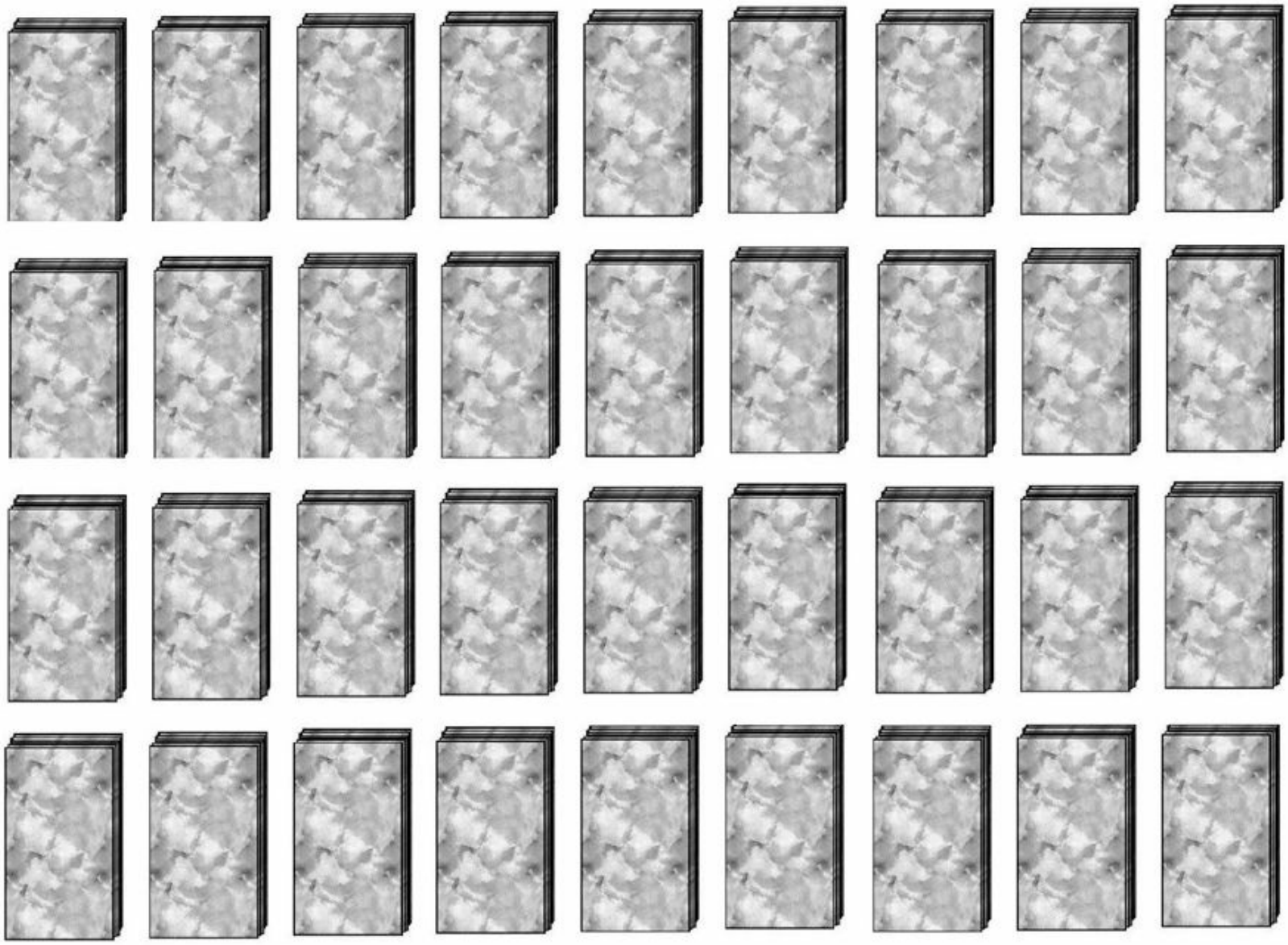
Ignoring the signifier, pull out the marked cards and place them in a row in the order that they appeared around the Decans. These cards are then read cohesively, indicating the answer, the solution—how the Seeker will achieve success, happiness, and ultimate fulfillment in the area indicated by the initial First Operation. These cards represent the Key. They will articulate the Seeker's lifeline.

The preceding illustration shows what the marked cards from the traditional Fourth Operation would look like once set in a row and read to the Seeker. In the actual reading that this Queen of Swords illustration is based on, an alternative spread to the Thirty-Six Decans was used.

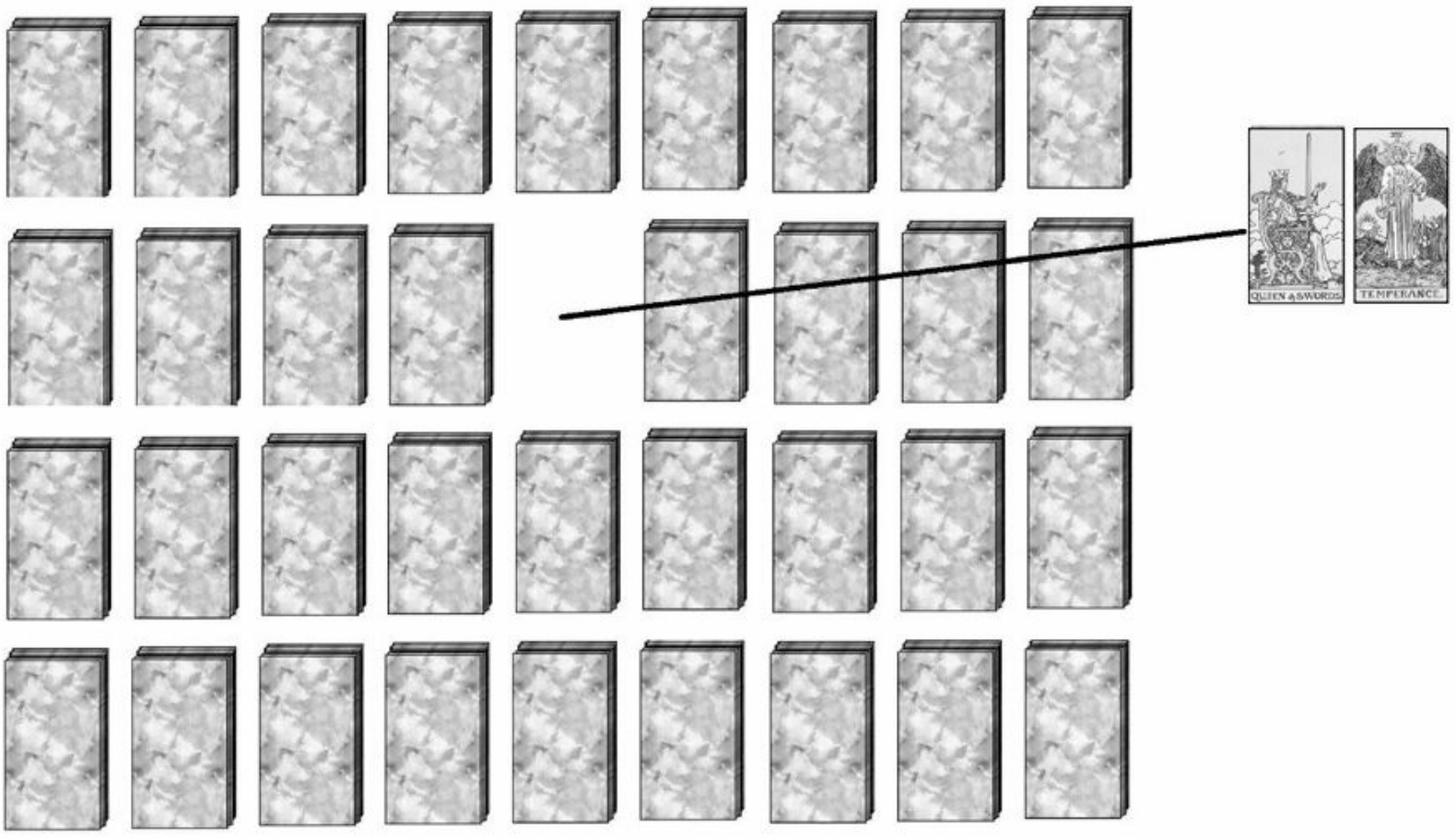
An Alternative Spread to the Thirty-Six Decans

Spreading out a circle of thirty-six piles of tarot cards will demand a great deal of table space, table space that most tarot practitioners might not have available. I have found the Thirty-Six Decans to be cumbersome and so have formulated a contemporary, more practical alternative, which I use and contend stay aligned with the foundational principles of the Opening of the Key.

Rather than set the cards around in a circle and employ card counting, I distribute the cards into thirty-six piles (signifier inclusive), in 4 rows of 9 cards each. The 4 symbolizes the order of the universe and the 9 the longing for change—the Seeker's quest for the Key.



One by one, each pile is sifted through to locate the signifier. The pile of cards that the signifier is located in contains the Key, or answer, the concrete solution, the path that the Seeker must take for the best possible ending. The card or cards yielded from this Fourth Operation is interpreted as the way for the Seeker to overcome present obstacles and achieve success and happiness. Every operation in the Opening led up to this point. Through manifesting the Key in the Seeker's life, the Seeker can manifest his or her Higher Self.



In the Queen of Swords illustration, when using the alternative Fourth Operation over the traditional card counting method, the Seeker's Key is represented by a single card: Temperance. The signifier is not read as part of the Key. Rather, the signifier here represents the Seeker's Higher Self uncovering the Key for the Seeker's present Self.

The practitioner would then provide an in-depth analysis of the Temperance card, in particular how it relates to the Seeker's situation. Temperance is the card of healing. The theme of needing cooperation and balance continues from the earlier operations into the Key. Temperance is governed by Fire, and so its appearance here may suggest the rekindling of passion. Temperance is also related to Sagittarius, and the Archer would be a compatible romantic prospect for the Seeker.

Note that per *Liber T*, the practitioner may elect to skip the Fourth Operation.[19] Perhaps at this point even the Golden Dawn adherents are realizing the extravagance of the method. However, I have found the Fourth Operation to be the step that reveals the Key. To omit it may be an egregious error on the practitioner's part, as it withholds the most crucial insight of the entire process.

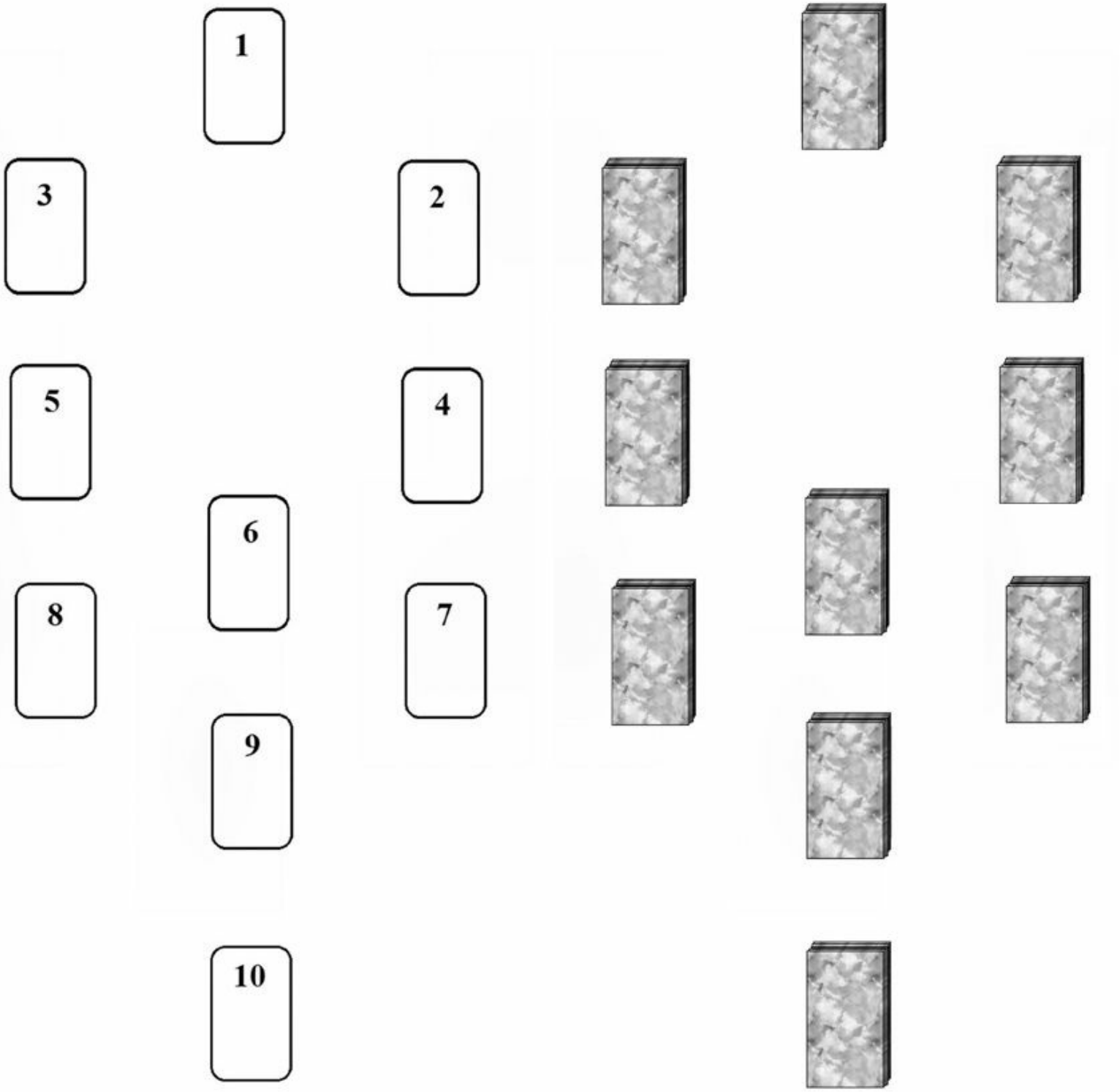
Fifth Operation: The Ten Sephiroth

Before commencing the Fifth Operation, the practitioner turns to the Seeker and asks whether the Seeker has a follow-up question to what has been revealed up to that point. The Seeker is encouraged to take some time to reflect quietly on the Opening (the various Operations) and the Key (revealed in the Fourth Operation, per my personal practice). Once the Seeker has formulated his or her follow-up question (there should only be one) to the practitioner, the practitioner concludes with the final step.

Traditionally, the concluding spread is the Tree of Life spread. See either Chapter 14 or the quick reference sheet in Appendix A to review the Tree of Life layout. However, note that the Fifth

Operation by the Golden Dawn method is a variation on that spread.

Shuffle the cards, this time concentrating on the follow-up question at hand. The Seeker can then be invited to cut the cards. After cutting and reassembling into a single pile, distribute the cards into the Tree of Life layout in the order the card positions fall in, Card 1, Card 2, Card 3, etc. as shown in the diagram. You should have 10 piles total in the layout of the Tree of Life.



Tree of Life Spread **Fifth Operation**

Once all the cards have been distributed into the 10 piles forming the Tree of Life, start with Pile 1 and locate the signifier card. The pile that the signifier card is located in will contain the answer to the Seeker's follow-up inquiry.

Practitioners are divided as to whether the Fourth Operation with the Thirty-Six Decans or this final Fifth Operation provides the Key. For those who subscribe to the Fifth Operation being the step that the Key is revealed in, also look to the significance of the sephirot that the card pile corresponds to. That significance, along with the cards in the pile of the signifier, will reveal the Key. While my approach is to reveal the Key in the Fourth Operation and use the Fifth Operation to close the session and answer any residual questions the Seeker might have, I will still refer to the subsequent correspondence table to offer further insight into the Key for the Seeker.

Card Pile	Sephirot (Emanation)	Significance (Further Development of the Key)
1	Keter (Crown)	Presently beyond the mind's comprehension. There are strong external forces at play. Strong force majeure that the Seeker must overcome. Connect the Seeker's unconscious with the universal unconscious through prayer or meditation. Best tactic for the immediate future is to mitigate the aftershock of the force majeure.
2	Chokhmah (Wisdom)	The resolution to the Seeker's inquiry involves Seeker's fulfillment of one of his or her obligations or duties. Seeker faces a choice, one between what the Seeker desires and what Seeker has committed to doing but now no longer wishes to. Seeker should fulfill the obligation. The realm of education is key.
3	Binah (Understanding)	The resolution to the Seeker's inquiry corresponds with the left hemisphere of the brain. The answer, once it becomes known, will be the most logical, seemingly obvious answer. Continue further reflection. Another interpretation here is that redemption is needed. Seeker has acted in a way that caused detriment to another. Seeker must now repent and seek redemption.
4	Chesed (Kindness)	Do good deeds. The negativity in the Seeker's life is due to karma. Offset the karmic balance through charity and good will. Help the less privileged. Express compassion. Show loving-kindness. The Seeker's benevolence is what will resolve the matter at hand.
5	Gevurah (Severity)	Now is the time to show force. There is no need to conceal. Unleash the full extent of your power. This is the time for justice, judgment, and action. Go forward and execute. Blaze.
6	Tiferet (Beauty)	Resolving the matter at hand to the Seeker's advantage hinges on balance and harmony. Look for symmetries. Spirituality is a key. There could be positive divine intervention.
7	Netzach (Eternity)	Endurance is needed. Seeker must increase his or her stamina. Victory hinges on diligence, persistence, and perspiration. Sheer labor is involved here. A great state of perpetuity will be achieved if the Seeker can endure.
8	Hod (Splendor)	The resolution to the Seeker's inquiry is to be in the submissive or yielding position. Praise another. Let another have face. Give another the opportunity to feel pride. Doing so will fulfill karmic balance and turn the situation in Seeker's favor.
9	Yesod (Foundation)	There will be destruction and a change of phase. Transformation. The resolution to the Seeker's inquiry may involve what is still latent inside the unconscious. There may be issues of sexuality. The answer is within Key 18, The Moon.
		The Seeker's physical world will be highly relevant in the resolution of

10	Malkuth (Kingship)	the matter at hand. Assets, property, matter, objects, the existential. Dominion. Boundaries. Possession and the theme of possession will be critical.

Alternatives for the Fifth Operation

My heritage is East Asian, so predictably I would present the Ba Gua spread as an alternative. Rather than follow the Tree of Life pattern, I am more likely to shuffle the deck and distribute the cards into the corresponding sectors for the eight trigrams of the I Ching, as follows:

South

4 XUN (Wind)	5 LI (Fire)	6 KUN (Earth)
3 GEN (Mountain)		7 DUI (Lake)
2 ZHEN (Thunder)	1 KAN (Water)	8 QIAN (Heaven)

East *West*

North

The card pile that the signifier is located in will contain the answer to the Seeker's follow-up inquiry. Also, the following table of significances offers further insight into the Key.

Card Pile	Trigram	Significance (Further Development of the Key)
1	KAN (Water)	ACTION METAPHOR: PRESS There are still more obstacles for the Seeker to overcome before there can be a resolution. Delays. Seeker's influence over the matter will take time. Be prepared for abnormalities.
2	ZHEN (Thunder)	ACTION METAPHOR: SPLIT Change is coming. Revolution. Division. How it is now will not be what it is then. Strong movement. Rapid development. A great deal of action and excitement.
3	GEN (Mountain)	ACTION METAPHOR: SHOULDERING Bear great burdens, many responsibilities. Stillness. Unable to move due to the heavy load. However, the pause is much needed to Seeker. Use the time to rest both body and mind. Moving too fast with the burden will injure the Seeker.
4	XUN (Wind)	ACTION METAPHOR: PULL Influence gently. Use charisma. There will be growth and development, creativity, triggered by the Seeker. Projects will move on to the next milestone. Small goals will be accomplished. Seeker will feel accomplished, but let the pride be short-lived, because there is more work to be done.
5	LI (Fire)	ACTION METAPHOR: PUSH Strength. Tenacity. Persistence. Seeker must burn bright and long. Seeker will mesmerize others, whether through beauty or words or expression. Show conviction. Use force. Look larger and impress them.
6	KUN (Earth)	ACTION METAPHOR: ROLL BACK Be receptive. Yield. Remain in the shadows. Be ready to receive. Lean toward the traditional, conservative. Be more defensive than offensive. Find the answer in the still and quiet. Embrace femininity.
7	DUI (Lake)	ACTION METAPHOR: ELBOW STRIKE Take aim and strike. Happiness is a pursuit. It is the time to enjoy victory. Be satisfied, at least for the moment, and embrace joy. Cheer. There will be fruits in the Seeker's life to be merry about. Stability.
8	QIAN (Heaven)	ACTION METAPHOR: WARD OFF Strong creative energies. Originality. Make adjustments and minor changes to achieve harmony. Seeker will enjoy good fortune. Vitality is high. The force majeure is in the Seeker's favor, but the Seeker must seize those opportunities. Chance that Seeker may miss the good fortune that presents itself.

The practitioner can also replace the traditional Fifth Operation method with any of the spreads provided in this book. Using the Celtic Cross spread is a powerful way to end the divination. It can be used to answer the follow-up inquiry of the Seeker and further develop the Key. Thus, while the Ten Sephiroth is the traditional closing to the Opening of the Key and the Tree of Life spread closer

to the ideological heritage of the method, the modern practitioner can modify it without compromising efficacy, so long as the practitioner understands *why* he or she is making the modifications and the energetic significance of the modifications.

Also, more frequently than not, I listen to the Seeker's follow-up question first, and then select a spread in the Fifth Operation that would be best tailored to answer the Seeker's specific question. Therefore, I do not use the same Fifth Operation spread for every Seeker. I listen to what he or she wants answered and from there, craft the Fifth Operation to work for each Seeker, on a case by case basis.

In the Opening of the Key, the First Operation calls upon the four cardinal elements, the four directions, and the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, aligning the tarot trinity[20] with divinity. It is the drawing of the four metaphysical corners of the collective unconscious. The Second Operation, the first Twelve Houses, begins to harmonize the tarot trinity with the universe in the context of the Seeker. Essentially, it zooms in on the alignment of the skies above the earth with the earth and how the metaphysical energies of one affects the energies of the other. The Third Operation, the second Twelve Houses, examines the greater external factors of the Seeker's situation, which is why it calls upon the Major Arcana. The Fourth Operation employs the energy of the Decans to uncover the Key. The Fifth Operation is the closing. The traditional method of using the Tree of Life brings the operations back full circle to the one Divinity, a diagram of creation from nothingness. It inspires the god principle in the Seeker. The spread is an affirmation of the Key. The many seemingly exhaustive and rigid techniques of the Opening of the Key are founded on the interconnectivity principle. Each detail is purposeful. The preliminary invocation is about clearing the channel between the planes in your mind, about reaching an altered state of consciousness. Pairing the cards to examine elemental dignities is about understanding the interaction of disparate natural forces. It is about understanding spiritual and metaphysical chemistry. Card counting is a simulation of the dualist nature of cosmic energy, of order and chaos.[21] Every aspect of the method is philosophy.

Chapter 31

Tarot de Marseille and the Thoth

THIS BOOK ASSUMES THAT the reader will learn tarot with the Rider-Waite-Smith system. The approach espoused herein establishes the Rider-Waite-Smith as the standard deck for the novice to start with. It is more user-friendly than the Tarot de Marseille, particularly because the pip cards (aces through tens) on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck are illustrated and on the Tarot de Marseille they are not. Compared to the other prevailing system, the Thoth, the Rider-Waite-Smith is less esoteric. However, the practitioner is urged to know all three systems. Of course one system will be highly preferred over the others (i.e., practitioners who use the Tarot de Marseille *really* love the Tarot de Marseille; those who follow the Book of Thoth *really* love the Thoth), but an understanding of all three will allow for a well-rounded practitioner.

The Tarot de Marseille is one of the earliest known versions of the seventy-eight-card tarot deck. Thus, it tends to be the tarot of choice for purists. However, interpretation of its Minor Arcana calls for higher intuition, since there are no illustrations, as with the Rider-Waite-Smith, or keywords, as with the Thoth, to help a practitioner out. Etteilla's eighteenth-century writings remain today the most influential work on Tarot de Marseille card interpretation. A modern approach to tarot analytics with the deck is to combine numerology with the elemental dignities associated with the four suits. Appendix F provides numerology reference tables that can be used for Marseille card interpretation. Appendix I provides facsimiles of an early Tarot de Marseille for the reader's reference.

When reading with the Tarot de Marseille, the practitioner will search within for imagery and symbols that come to mind based on the number and suit of the cards. A strong innate connection with the cosmic qi or collective unconscious becomes indispensable. Tarot novices may not have acquired or fine-tuned that connection yet, rendering it a challenge to learn tarot with this deck. The following page provides a side-by-side comparison of the three decks.

Marseille-based decks that the practitioner can start working with include the Tarot de Marseille, the Visconti-Sforza, or the Cary-Yale Visconti tarot. There are also the Etteilla-based tarot decks. Etteilla is credited with taking the Marseille-based tarot deck and designing a version for the specific intent of cartomancy. The Book of Thoth Grand Etteilla is a replica of Etteilla's deck. The original is now rather difficult to come by.

Note that the exact date of publication for the Tarot de Marseille is unknown, though most historians source it to the mid-1400s.[1]

	Tarot de Marseille	Rider-Waite-Smith	0Thoth Tarot
Date of Publication	1440 [Unknown]	1909	1969
Total Number of Cards	78	78	78
Creator	Unknown[2]	A. E. Waite	Aleister Crowley
Illustrator	Unknown	Pamela Colman Smith	Lady Freida Harris
Key Numbers and Card Titles of Major Arcana	0—Le Mat 1—Le Bateleur 2—La Papesse 3—L'Imperatrice Priestess 4—L'Empereur 5—Le Pape 6—L'Amoureux 7—Le Chariot 8—La Justice 9—L'Hermite 10—La Roue de Fortune 11—La Force 12—Le Pendu 13—[La Mort] 14—Temperance 15—Le Diable 16—La Maison Diev 17—L'Etoile 18—La Lune 19—Le Soleil 20—Le Judgement 21—Le Monde	0—The Fool 1—The Magician 2—The High 3—The Empress 4—The Emperor 5—The Hierophant 6—The Lovers 7—The Chariot 8—Strength 9—The Hermit 10—Wheel of Fortune 11—Justice 12—The Hanged Man 13—Death 14—Temperance 15—The Devil 16—The Tower 17—The Star 18—The Moon 19—The Sun 20—Judgement 21—The World	0—The Fool 1—The Magus 2—The Priestess 3—The Empress 4—The Emperor 5—The Hierophant 6—The Lovers 7—The Chariot 8—Adjustment 9—The Hermit 10—Fortune 11—Lust 12—The Hanged Man 13—Death 14—Art 15—The Devil 16—The Tower 17—The Star 18—The Moon 19—The Sun 20—The Aeon 21—The Universe
Minor Arcana Suit Names	Batons (Staves) Coupes (Cups) D'Epees (Swords) Deniers (Coins)	Wands Cups Swords Pentacles	Wands Cups Swords Disks
Court Card Titles	Valet, Cavalier, Reyne, Roy	Page, Knight, Queen, King	Princess, Prince, Queen, Knight
	Numerology Christian	Numerology Christian Symbology Greco-Roman Mythos	Numerology Egyptian Mythology Hermeticism Hermetic

Most Notable Ideological Influences	Symbology Greco-Roman Mythos Italian Renaissance Roman Catholicism	Egyptian Mythology Hermeticism Rosicrucianism Hermetic Kabbalah Western Astrology Alchemy Neo-Platonism Martinism	Kabbalah Western Astrology Alchemy Neo-Platonism Martinism Geometry Ceremonial Magick Thelema Taoism

One more key difference between the Tarot de Marseille and the Rider-Waite-Smith is found in the numbering of two particular cards from the Major Arcana: Keys 8 and 11 are switched. In the Tarot de Marseille, Key 8 is La Justice and Key 11 is La Force, which corresponds with Strength; in the Rider-Waite-Smith, Key 8 is Strength and Key 11 is Justice.[3] Note also that in the Tarot de Marseille, Key 11: La Force has been translated to Fortitude rather than Strength. This is most likely because the origination of the card title was more in line with the French term force d'âme, indicating spiritual strength rather than physical strength. The early translations of Key 11 in the English-speaking world had therefore been "Fortitude." In the 1900s, Waite edited the card's interpretation to Strength.

The Thoth tarot, which is the youngest of the three systems, is considered the most intense of the three. The cards are dense with symbolism from esoteric studies that the everyday practitioner may not be familiar with. However, keywords appear at the bottom of most of the cards, most notably the Minor Arcana numbered 2 through 10, and are insightful to the cards' intended significance. The Thoth borrows from an eclectic range of ideologies, Eastern and Western, and unlike the figures depicted in the two preceding decks, which were racially homogenous, the Thoth depicts a diversity of skin tones and for the most part shows abstract human figures with no discernible race. There are many other differences between the Thoth and the Rider-Waite-Smith, such as Keys 8, 11, 14, 20, and 21. The court cards are the Princess, Prince, Queen, and Knight, which are to correspond with the Page, Knight, Queen, and King of the Rider-Waite-Smith respectively.

Some cards and titles in the Thoth run counterintuitive to Christian heritage. For example, Key 11 of the Thoth corresponds with Key 11: La Force or Fortitude from theTarot de Marseille (suggesting spiritual strength and even discipline) and Key 8: Strength from the Rider-Waite-Smith (suggesting internal rather than external strength), but the Thoth Key 11 is called Lust. Crowley's concept of lust in the Thoth diverges from the Christian concept of lust as a deadly sin. Rather, the concept of lust in the Thoth suggests impassioned pursuit of what one wants, and that being a positive attribute rather than negative. The depiction on Key 11: Lust is flaming red and orange, showing a naked woman in a vulnerable position who is holding a large rod or scepter. She rides a multiheaded beast. The corresponding card meaning found in the little white booklet accompanying the Thoth deck is cited as "XI Lust. Courage. Strength. Energy. Use of magical power. Control of the life force. Great love affair."[4] Compare that imagery to Key 8: Strength in the Rider-Waite-Smith, which depicts a gentle woman in white robes subduing a lion with kindness and compassion. In the Rider-Waite-Smith, discipline and control are the reigning traits attributed to strength. It is strikingly similar to the

imagery on Key 11: Strength of the Tarot de Marseille, showing also a woman who gently yet fearlessly reaches for the jaws of a lion.

The Thoth tarot offers deeply spiritual, nonjudgmental readings. The practitioner and the Seeker who use the tarot to gain insight into philosophy and the universe will appreciate the Thoth. For the intuitive thinkers, the pensive, and the introspective, slightly introverted, the Thoth tarot is suggested for readings, especially when seeking hard answers. A working knowledge of esoteric faiths and doctrine are helpful to the Thoth practitioner. On the other hand, the Tarot de Marseille is almost whimsical, with bright, colorful images. It exudes the spirit of the European Renaissance. Even the Death, The Devil, and The Tower cards are not awfully intimidating. Those with an appreciation for history, the academic thinkers, and individuals with vivid imaginations will read well with the Tarot de Marseille. It is the deck for the practitioner and the Seeker who use the tarot to gain insight in their day-to-day lives. A working knowledge of Western divinatory studies, such as Christianity, numerology, and elemental dignities is helpful.

The Rider-Waite-Smith presents a fair center between the Tarot de Marseille and the Thoth. While some images on the Rider-Waite-Smith may still rattle the uninitiated, it is a versatile deck that can cover any objective. Nonetheless, the reader should bear in mind that there is no agreed-upon universal standard in tarot. There are as many standards as there are tarot decks. However, I recommend that the serious tarot student begin on the Rider-Waite-Smith, then after fluency of the system has been obtained, advance on to learn the Marseille (also sometimes referred to as the Historical system) and Thoth. Once you understand these three, you will have the primary intellectual tools and skills you need to master any other tarot deck.[5]

Chapter 32

The Professional Practice of Tarot

THE PROFESSIONAL TAROT READER is one who makes an occupation of his or her tarot readings. Tarot reading is a service and if you accept monetary compensation for that service, then you have commercialized it and must now think of your tarot practice as a business. You have to take the business of tarot reading seriously if you want to avoid potential trouble and legal liabilities. Note, however, that the purpose of this chapter is not to offer legal advice or even business counsel. The purpose is to prompt the practitioner who wants to make a living from tarot analytics to think about how those services will be presented to the public.

Governing Law

Tarot reading is still by and large considered a form of fortune-telling. Thus, before you hang out that shingle and call yourself a professional tarot reader ready to take on clients for a fee, do your due diligence and see whether there are any applicable laws in your city, county, and state. While tarot reading and fortune-telling are protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, your local laws can still regulate it as *commercial* speech and consider certain forms of that commercial speech *fraud*.

For example, Article 165 of the New York Penal Code (at least as of this writing) includes the following:

§ 165.35 Fortune telling.

A person is guilty of fortune telling when, for a fee or compensation which he directly or indirectly solicits or receives, he claims or pretends to tell fortunes, or holds himself out as being able, by claimed or pretended use of occult powers, to answer questions or give advice on personal matters or to exorcise, influence or affect evil spirits or curses; except that this section does not apply to a person who engages in the aforedescribed conduct as part of a show or exhibition solely for the purpose of entertainment or amusement.

Fortune telling is a class B misdemeanor.

Chapter 140 of the General Laws of Massachusetts has certain requirements for licensing as a fortune-teller, and tarot reading is often deemed to be a fortune-telling service.

Note the following:

Section 185I. Fortune tellers; license.

No person shall tell fortunes for money unless a license therefor has been issued by the local licensing authority. Said license shall be granted only to applicants who have resided continuously in the city or town in which the license is sought for at least twelve months immediately preceding the date of the application. No such license shall be transferred or assigned. Unless otherwise established in a town by town meeting action and in a city by city council action, and in a town with no town meeting by town council action, by adoption of appropriate by-laws and ordinances to set such fees, the fee for each license granted under this section shall be two dollars, but in no event shall any such fee be greater than fifty dollars. Whoever tells fortunes for money unless licensed under this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars.

In the state of California, many local cities and municipalities have taken on the task of regulating "fortune telling and the occult arts." Chapter 9.42 of the Riverside County Municipal Code, for example, includes cartomancy (e.g., tarot readings) in its definition for "fortune telling and the occult arts." If you want to set up an establishment for tarot reading services in Riverside County, California, you'll have to apply for a license with the Chief of Police. The filing fee? As of this

writing, $500.

Title 5 of the City Charter for Glendale, California expressly bans fortune-telling, which includes cartomancy, see §§ 5.56.010 and 5.56.020, but interestingly enough, excludes "any clergyman, minister, pastor or missionary accredited to or ordained by any bona fide church, ecclesiastical organization or religious corporation duly organized as such in conformity with the laws of the state" in the subsequent § 5.56.030.

Article 17.1 of the San Francisco Municipal Code (Police Code) regulates fortune-telling, the definition of which includes cartomancy. § 1301 states that a permit is required, though entertainers and ministers of a bona fide church are carved out as exceptions to the rule (also hard to ignore how the ones with the money are the ones with the leverage to carve out exceptions in the rules for themselves). The application process is basically a registration requirement, so that all tarot readers will submit their fingerprints, personal information, and more on city record. Also, all sorts of fees per a fee schedule are required. Oh, and note § 1313:

> The Chief of Police shall provide each fortuneteller granted a permit with an identification nameplate that shall contain a photograph, right thumbprint, name, and permit number of the permittee. The permittee must post the identification nameplate in a location clearly visible from the place where the fortuneteller tells fortunes or otherwise engages in the activity regulated by this article.

Even if you are convinced that your tarot practice is not in any way "fortune-telling," you still need to be wary of how the applicable laws of your jurisdiction might characterize your practice. And if you're characterizing it as a form of counseling, then be even more wary of the entire body of law and strict licensure requirements for counselors. If you are not a licensed professional counselor, then proceed with caution about how you present your tarot practice.

Tarot is still a widely misunderstood practice and, by and large, its practitioners tend to have little to no political clout. As a result, much of the antiquated laws that still incidentally govern tarot reading remain on the books and have not evolved with the times the way other areas of the law have. Thus, today's tarot professional is still a pioneer.

Business Formation

Once you have confirmed that you can do business under the applicable laws of your jurisdiction, consider how you will form and structure your business. If you are practicing on your own, you will most likely be a sole proprietorship, which does not require any registrations or corporate filings with the Secretary of State, but might require a "doing business as" or DBA registration. A DBA is the registration of a fictitious name that you might be using for your tarot reading services, for instance, if your legal name is Jane Doe but you intend to do tarot readings as Madame Isis.

Sole proprietorships do not require any business registration filings, other than any local licensure fees required by your city and the DBA filing if you're going to do business under a fictitious or assumed name. Sole proprietorships will seem like the fuss-free way to go, but keep in mind that it exposes you to personal liability. If someone sues your business and wins, they can collect from your personal assets.

Sole Proprietorships: Tax Filing Guidelines

When Applicable	Use the Following Form(s)
Income Tax	Form 1040 (Your Individual Tax Return) Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ
Self-Employment Tax	Schedule SE
Estimated Taxes	Form 1040-ES
Social Security and Medicare Taxes / Income Tax Withholding	Form 941 (Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return) Form 944 (Employer's Annual Federal Tax Return)
Providing Information on Social Security and Medicare Taxes / Income Tax Withholding	W-2 (Wage & Tax Statement) W-3 (Transmittal of Wage & Tax Statements to SSA)
Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)	Form 940

If you are partnering with other tarot practitioners or starting a holistic business that will include tarot reading as one of its many services offered, consider a limited liability company (LLC) or corporation (Inc.). These require filings and additional filing fees with your Secretary of State. They may also subject you to pay annual franchise taxes, though what those taxes are will vary from state to state. In California, for example, annual franchise taxes are $800 per limited liability company or corporation. In New York, it's calculated based on your income, subsidiary capital taxes, as applicable, and MTA surcharges, as applicable.

Limited liability companies and corporations both offer protection from personal liability. If you are an LLC or Inc. and someone sues your business, the liability remains with the business only and generally speaking, the person suing cannot go after your personal assets, though if there is fraud involved or all requirements for what is called "piercing the corporate veil" are met, then yes, there may still be personal liability. But assuming all conduct is ordinary, there will be no personal liability. This isn't a law book, so I'll end the oversimplified explanation there.

Between an LLC and Inc., for tarot practice an LLC is probably going to be the preferred form of business formation (unless your team of tarot practitioners has great ambitions to go public on the stock exchange someday). The owner or co-owners of an LLC are called members. One or several will be nominated as the managing member, who will manage the company operations. You will file the requisite LLC forms (an Articles of Organization, for example) with the Secretary of State and execute an Operating Agreement. Ownership interest in the company will be referred to as "units." There is some room for creativity in how you organize and run an LLC. The LLC offers the liability protection that the Inc. offers, but isn't as traditional in structure, which tends to appeal to those in the artistic and intuitive trades.

On the other hand, a corporation (Inc.) will require you to comply with rather rigid guidelines for operation, requiring a corporate minutes book, regular meetings, resolutions, and minutes recorded for all meetings, etc. The owner or co-owners of the corporation are called "shareholders." The ownership interest in the company are called "shares." You'll have a board of directors and also

officers to run the company and make business decisions. To register a corporation (Inc.), you'll file the requisite corporation forms (an Articles or Certificate of Incorporation, for example) with the secretary of state and execute bylaws.

For an individual tarot practitioner, forming and registering a company such as an LLC or Inc. is costly and will eat into your profits substantially. That said, if you believe there is a high risk of liability in your line of work, then definitely register an LLC or Inc. If you plan on partnering up with several other tarot practitioners to form a single tarot business, then an LLC or Inc. makes sense. You will all want to sit down with a lawyer and talk about how best to approach business formation. Like tarot card interpretation, there is no cookie cutter answer. An experienced lawyer will take into consideration all factors specific to you before formulating your business organization plan.

Whether you are an LLC or Inc., you will also need to register with the IRS as either an S-Corp or C-Corp. An S-Corp basically means pass-through taxation, and you will first need to file an election with the IRS to qualify as an S-Corp. Then, not only does the business file its own tax returns, but each member or shareholder also needs to file returns. This is how double taxation is avoided.

S-Corp: Tax Filing Guidelines

When Applicable	Use the Following Form(s)
To qualify as an S-Corp	Form 2553 (Election by a Small Business Corporation)
Income Tax	*S Corporation*: Form 1120S, 1120S, Schedule K-1 S Corporation Shareholder: Form 1040, Schedule E
Employment Taxes (Includes Social Security and Medicare Taxes; Income Tax Withholding; FUTA; Depositing Employment Taxes)	Forms 941 and 940
Estimated Taxes	*S Corporation*: Forms 1120-W (for corporations only) and 8109 S Corporation Shareholder: Form 1040-ES

A C-Corp, on the other hand, will tax the company and also, when dividends are issued to the shareholders, the shareholders are taxed again for the income they've earned from the dividends. You need to consult with your CPA before proceeding with either S-Corp or C-Corp election. The tables and information provided in this section are rudimentary and, depending on how long after publication you're reading this book, could even be outdated.

C-Corp: Tax Filing Guidelines

When Applicable	Use the Following Form(s)
Income Tax	Form 1120
Employment Taxes (Includes Social Security and Medicare Taxes; Income Tax Withholding; FUTA)	Form 941 (Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return) Form 940 (Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment Tax Return)
Estimated Taxes	Form 1120-W

The majority of small businesses file as S-Corps, but there are instances where it is more advisable to file as a C-Corp. So talk to a CPA about how you should file for your small business.

Also, don't forget to talk to your CPA about all avenues of business deductions available to you. Whether you are a sole proprietor, LLC, or corporation, you can expense the "fortune-telling" license costs, any insurance you buy, the cost of renting your place of business or a deduction for using parts of your home for a home office, business use of your car for when you travel to tarot fairs, conventions, conferences, or to clients' homes, the costs of buying tarot decks (they do get expensive, don't they) and tarot books, capital expenses, and more. You'll want to keep copious records, all receipts, and stay organized. That will make filing taxes for your business less of a hassle (and also could save your hide if you get audited).

Business Model

If you plan on turning tarot into an occupation, then you must think about your business model. A business model is a somewhat fancy way of labeling the way you plan on making money doing what you do.

- Will you be conducting your tarot readings online? Is that how you will get the majority of your clients?
- Will you be hanging out a shingle and renting real estate for your practice?
- Will you be carving out space in your home and welcoming clients to visit your hearth?
- Or will you travel to the homes of clients or meet them at some agreed-upon outside location?
- There are numerous fairs and conferences held across the country where tarot readers set up their tables and take walk-by clients. Will you be generating tarot business through such fairs and conferences?
- What about reading at corporate events or parties?

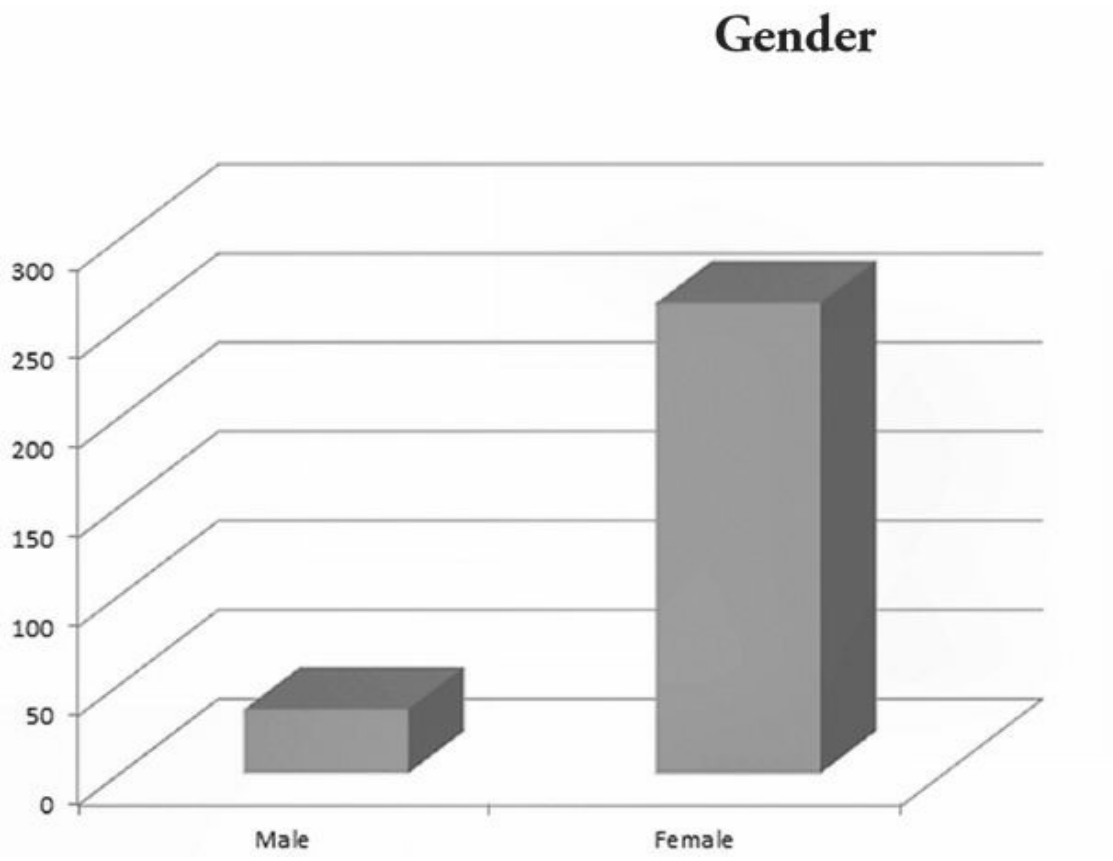
If you are doing all of the above, which a savvy business-minded professional tarot reader will do, then what estimated or projected percentage of each will make up your business? It is important to think about that because it will determine how you approach your marketing strategy. Yes, you need to have a marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy

Consumer Analysis

The first step to formulating your marketing strategy is to think about your client. Who is your client? Sure, you will want to say it's anyone who wants a tarot reading from you, young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, but think about the segment of the population that is most likely going to be your client and what that client will want from you.

Although I am by no means in a position to generalize with a sample size as small as 300, I *can* provide you statistics I've assembled based on charting 300 of my past clients. Over a period of two years, I tracked and logged my clientele to get a sense of their demographics. Repeat clients during the period were disregarded (and only counted once) for these findings.

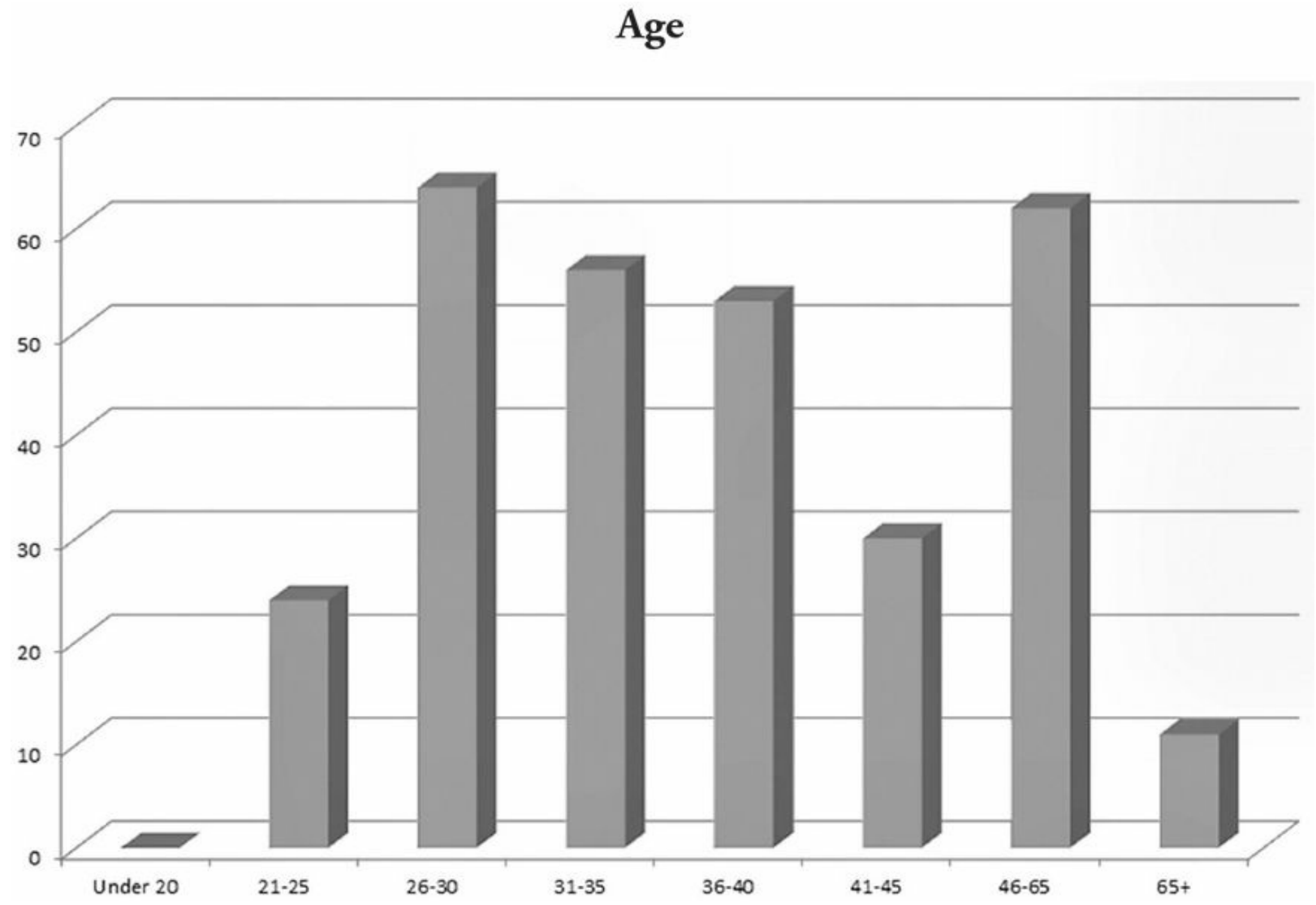


Male	36	**12%**
Female	264	**88%**

Out of 300 Seekers I read for, 88 percent identified as female. That's significant.

Age

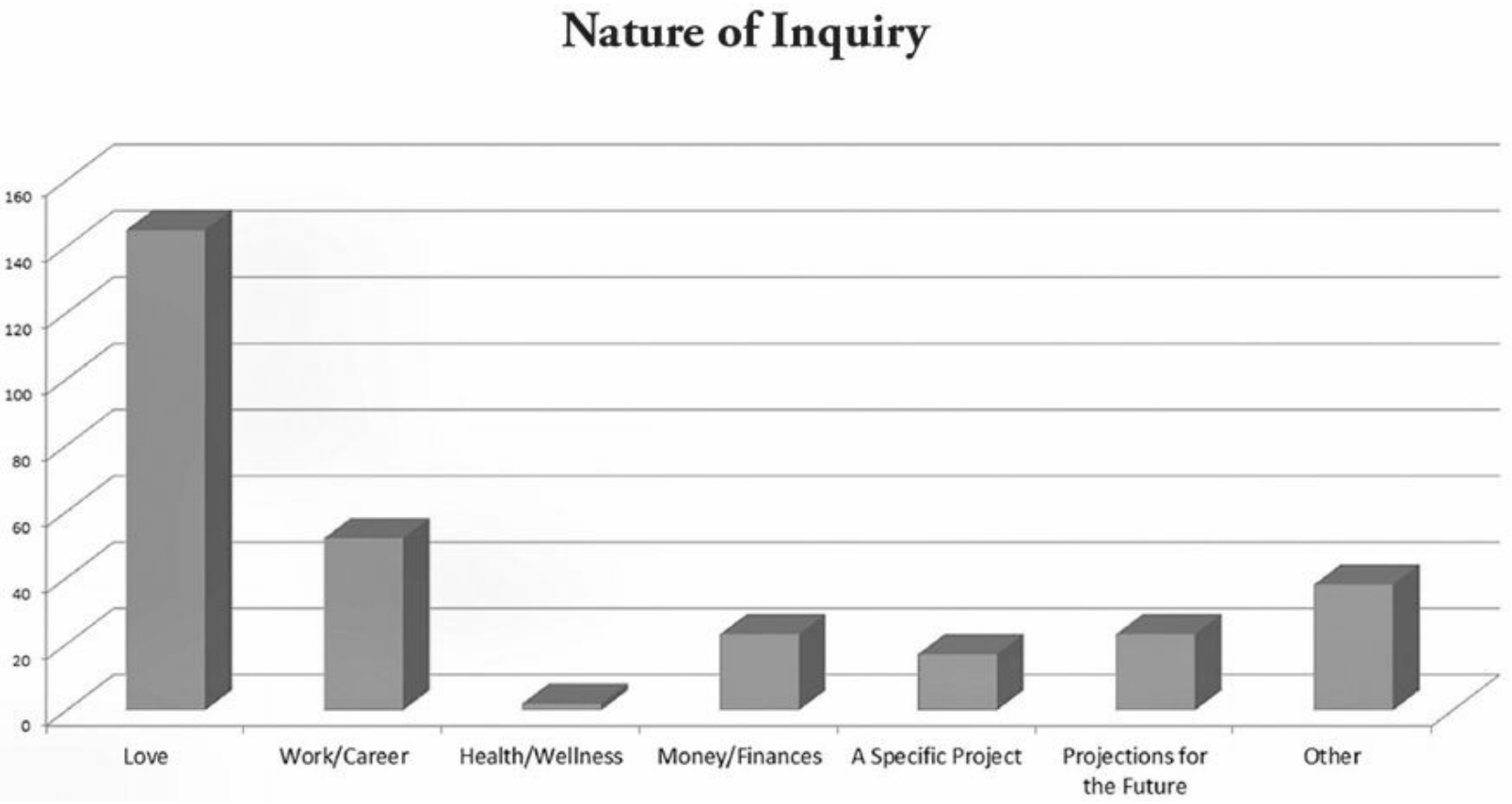
Age Group	*# of Clients*	*Est. Percentage*
Under 20	0	**0%**
Age 21–25	24	**8%**
Age 26–30	64	**21%**
Age 31–35	56	**19%**
Age 36–40	53	**18%**
Age 41–45	30	**10%**



If a client is under the age of eighteen, I would recommend *not* doing a reading for that client unless you have the consent of a parent or guardian. In my case, it didn't even matter, as of 300 clients none were under the age of twenty. Other than the extreme ends of the age range, my clientele was evenly distributed between the ages of twenty-six and sixty-five, though the fewest were between the ages of forty-one and forty-five, for some reason. Most were in the age group 26–30, but then 46–65—people at a very different stage in their lives compared to 26–30—weren't far behind.

What can probably be extrapolated from these numbers is this: young adults who have just

completed their formal education and are about to embark on their new professional lives are looking for answers; but then, too, those a bit more mature in years, who have accomplished most of what they've set out to accomplish in life, are now wondering what's next for them. Women, in greater frequency than men, will rely on their intuition to make decisions, so it makes sense that they'd be more likely to see a tarot practitioner. These are the individuals you'll hope your business appeals to. You need to think about how your tarot services can be of value to these clients.



Nature of Inquiry	*# of Clients*	*Est Percentage*
Love	145	**48%**
Work/Career	52	**17%**
Health/Wellness	2	**< 1%**
Money/Finances	23	**8%**
A Specific Project	17	**5%**
Projections for the Future	23	**8%**
Other	38	**13%**

So what do clients want? In your consumer analysis, it is important to consider what clients and prospective clients are consulting the tarot for. For me, out of 300 people, a whopping 48 percent wanted a reading about their love life. Anecdotally, based on my recollections, men and women in proportionate numbers came to me asking about love, so it is definitely *not* the lonely, single female crazies asking for tarot readings, which is the common stereotype. Love seems irrational and inscrutable to us all, so perhaps people are more likely to yield to intuitive methods rather than logic-based ones in their attempts to make sense of it.

Although the chart above shows 17 percent of clients asking about work/career, my categorization scheme wasn't perfect because there were often overlaps between work/career and money/finances or work/career and a specific project, especially for the entrepreneurs or those who make a living in the arts.

"Other" also made up a significant number of requests, which represents inquiries that I decided could not fit neatly under any of the other identified categories. For example, if a client wanted a general reading and had no particular inquiry in mind, I would categorize the reading as "other."

The purpose of the foregoing statistics is to give you a sense of who your client will most likely be and what he (or in most instances, statistically speaking, *she*) wants out of a tarot consultation. By knowing who your client is and what your client wants, you can better formulate your marketing strategy.

Competitor Analysis

Do a little research and get to know the other tarot practitioners in your city. These are your direct competitors. How much your consultations cost cannot be too different from what they're charging, unless you can substantiate the difference with cause, such as a reputation for attracting celebrity clientele or being recognized as an expert in tarot.

Identify at least three direct competitors and study how they operate their business in your locale. Note that "competitor" does not mean "adversary." These competitors could very well be your dear friends or allies. Here, competitor just means other people in your neighborhood who are working as a professional tarot reader. In strategizing for your own tarot practice, you will want to know how you measure up to others.

Also be sure to consider indirect competitors, such as astrologers or perhaps those in your area who are providing consultations under the label "psychic." What do the people who patronize

astrologers or so-called psychics want? Can you fulfill those desires through your tarot practice? If yes, think about your strategy for convincing these people to patronize you instead.

The Four Ps: Product, Pricing, Placement, Promotion

The classic textbook approach to marketing is to think of it as "the Four Ps," or Product, Pricing Placement, and Promotion. Your marketing strategy will encompass a set plan for each one of these areas.

The product component is straightforward here. However, you may want to think about whether you will concentrate entirely on tarot and strive to become an expert in that one area or offer a range of holistic services. Your practice approach will also be part of your product, to be discussed later in this chapter.

For pricing, first look to your direct competitors to gauge what the market rate is for tarot readings in your area. However, that only gives you a frame of reference. Many tarot readers charge based on the number of cards drawn in the spread or by the spread that the client selects; for example, $10 for a three-card reading, $25 for a simple cross, $40 for the Celtic Cross, etc. That does not mean you need to follow suit. Others charge by the length of the session, so clients can request a thirty-minute session, one hour, or two hours.

Charging by time makes more sense to me. One recommendation for the beginner tarot practitioner is to charge twice the current minimum wage in your jurisdiction. That fee is reasonable to most and will help attract your first clients. Then, the quality of your reading will determine whether they become repeat clients. As you establish your practice, you will be increasing your rate. Renowned tarot readers can charge up to $200 per hour for their sessions and people will pay it. But rarely do you become the kind of reader who can charge that overnight. Start modest and build your practice by letting the quality of your readings speak for itself.

Also consider placement. Placement refers to how clients can access your services. Who your client is will determine your placement strategy. If you have a physical location or storefront and most of your clients are working professionals, then chances are they won't come to see you during ordinary business hours. You'll want to offer weekend and evening appointments to attract and keep these clients. If a high percentage of your clients are college students who are looking for insight, then you'll want to think about how you can ensure that you're easily accessible to the local universities. If you project that you'll get most of your clients via the Web, then think about what sites these prospective clients will visit and how clients might find you on the Internet, and make sure you have a strong online presence.

In promoting your business, the fourth prong of your marketing strategy, be sure to comply with all applicable laws to avoid liability or criminal penalty. In some jurisdictions like New York, you need to clearly convey to the client that tarot readings should be "for entertainment purposes only." In most jurisdictions, guaranteeing future predictions or representing yourself as being able to see the future with certainty will get you into a heap of trouble. Plus, tarot readers who do that are exactly why tarot has gotten such a bad rep. A tarot practitioner's role is not to tell anyone what will happen in the future or what the answer is. A tarot practitioner's role is to empower the client or Seeker to make better decisions. Better futures come from making better decisions, and that is all that a tarot practitioner should try to do: help the client channel intuition to make better decisions.

I recommend that all professional tarot readers have business cards and keep the design simple and discreet. They should fit perfectly inside any wallet. Many clients will end up carrying them around, whether knowingly or inadvertently, and be more likely to call you again for readings. Be friendly to the proprietors of independent bookstores, curio or gift shops, and cafés. You could probably arrange to do tarot readings at these places for a mutually beneficial relationship. See if these small businesses would also be willing to let you post flyers or business cards on their message boards to advertise your practice. Encourage existing clients to help you generate new clientele by offering incentives, such as discounts or even free readings.

Practice Approach

Since there is no formal standardization of the tarot practice, it is imperative for the individual tarot practitioner to define his or her own practice approach and to adequately convey that approach and philosophy to clients. That includes but is not limited to the practitioner's code of ethics. Before you accept your first client, you should define your personal code of ethics. Chapters 24 and 25 offer starting points for thinking about ethical issues.

What is your practice approach?

It includes your code of ethics. If you are a member of the American Tarot Association (ATA), which is definitely recommended to tarot professionals, then you're committed to adhering to ATA's code of ethics, in addition to your own.

Which tarot decks do you use for professional readings? If you select a deck based on the question at hand, then what is your rationale for the selection process?

Which spreads do you use for professional readings? If you work with several, what is your selection process, or do you leave it up to the client to select a spread?

What is your theory for the efficacy of tarot readings? In your own words, how and why does tarot work?

In your practice, do you integrate any other areas of study, such as psychology, astrology, elemental dignities, the Kabbalah, the I Ching, or another field? How do you reconcile tarot with these other areas of study you've adopted, into a comprehensive practice approach?

By thinking critically about these prompts, you're defining a unique practice approach that will naturally attract your ideal clientele. It is uncanny how true that is. If you act like a charlatan, you'll attract a bunch of riffraff. Respect yourself, respect the practice, and you'll attract sophisticated repeat clients who, what's more, won't hesitate to refer you to their friends.

Ensuring a Safe Environment

Tarot readings get very personal very quickly. As a professional tarot reader, it is your responsibility to ensure a safe environment for Seekers. For readings in person, dimmer lighting creates a sense of safety and comfort. Lights that are too bright can be jarring. I would avoid incense, because sensitivities can differ. A soft, neutral scented candle may be beneficial, however. Opt for calming scents, such as chamomile, juniper, myrrh, or lavender. Frankincense or sandalwood scents are empowering. There should also be a sense of privacy offered to the Seeker during the reading. While keeping track of time is important to the professional reader, avoid alarms.

There are times when the professional will have minimal control over the environment, such as at a

tarot reading event, a party or large gathering, or when the reading is taking place at someone's home other than the practitioner's. In these instances, set out a reading cloth so that the cards stay on a clean surface, and at the very least, try to find a location that is somewhat secluded or separated from the group.

Ensuring a safe environment is also accomplished through the professional reader's demeanor. Be open, warm, and compassionate. Listen attentively when the Seeker speaks. If a Seeker becomes emotional, stay calm and show empathy.

Most professional tarot readers today may find that a significant number of their clients request readings online, whether by streaming video communication or email. When readings are done online, especially after a client has sent to the tarot reader personal information, the professional tarot reader must make sure that clients are fully aware of the privacy levels of the readings. A simple privacy statement appearing on your website is helpful. A short privacy disclaimer in the footer of every electronic communication the tarot practitioner sends out is also good practice.

Pro Bono Publico Readings

"Pro bono publico" refers to professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment for a public good. It is a common ethical guideline for specialized professions such as law, medicine, architecture, etc. The professional tarot practitioner should uphold a personal vow to devote 10 percent of his or her readings free of charge to Seekers who are coping with severe crises. If tarot practitioners want to be treated with the respect and dignity of professionals, then they first must act like professionals. Thus, every tarot professional should dedicate a tenth of his or her reading services to those who could benefit greatly from the tarot practitioner's specific skills but who are unable to afford them. Consider the pro bono publico duty to be a professional responsibility.

Chapter 33

A Personal Essay: How I Started

IN THIRD GRADE I acquired a deck of playing cards from Taiwan that depicted the characters of the sixteenth-century Chinese novel *Journey to the West* (西遊記) on each card. With no learned knowledge of cartomancy, I would shuffle the deck, draw out a few cards into a spread, and imagine that the particular characters represented me in some way. Tripitaka—Sun Wukong, the Monkey King—Princess Iron Fan. Eventually I did learn cartomancy. In my youth I used to hide out for hours alone at the public library, burrowed away in the occult and metaphysics section, reading through yellowed hardcover books.

My introduction to tarot was a gift from a friend, the Tarot Nova. Around that time, globalization hit my small hometown and in came the mega-bookstores like Barnes and Noble. Barnes and Noble became my weekly mecca. I finally got myself the Rider Waite deck and began learning the Rider-Waite-Smith system. The first tarot book I ever purchased was Eden Gray's *Mastering the Tarot*. That was when my serious pursuit of the practice commenced. As I read more books, I realized that an old secondhand deck of cards I had bought years ago from a garage sale was in fact the Tarot de Marseille, so I began learning the Marseille system as well. Eventually I also picked up on the Thoth though the Thoth never did quite resonate with me. In college, I started reading for others.

My first reading for a stranger caused quite a stir. I was in my early twenties. Several friends made plans to get together for dinner. A good friend of mine had just started a new relationship and wanted to introduce him to our circle of friends. She and I were to meet at her place before dinner. When I arrived at her apartment, she was still getting ready. Her new boyfriend was waiting in the living room. "Sorry, I'm not ready yet," she told both of us. Then she asked me, "Can you please entertain him here while I get ready?" Then she disappeared.

I am about as social as a doormat. The first five minutes went by with the two of us sitting quietly and awkwardly across a coffee table in dead space. At this time, all I knew about him was his first name. His relationship with my friend was possibly a few days old, and she and I had yet to talk about him. Then I remembered I had my tarot cards with me in my purse. *That will kill about fifteen minutes*, I thought. *That girl better be ready in fifteen minutes*. So I offered, "Hey, want me to read your tarot cards?" Perhaps equally bored, he accepted.

The only parts of the reading I recall are the parts that caused the stir. I had told him that he had a really rocky childhood, perhaps a broken family or just a significant amount of strife and tension among family members. His mother was a powerful ally in his life, and yet his relationship with her was also tense. In many ways, she had a negative impact on him. I said these strained family ties continued to haunt him; although he'd convinced himself that he had overcome the negativity, they continued to affect his present outlook and attitudes.

By then the cards had absorbed my focus and I stopped thinking subjectively, or rationally. My academic-inclined mind was concentrated on drawing patterns and recounting to him what I saw in the spread. I didn't observe his facial expressions, and in my state of concentration I forgot that he had just started a new relationship with one of my best friends and everybody was still supposed to

be politically correct to one another.

I blurted, "You recently started a new relationship. She's one of your peers. Page of Pentacles. Pentacles, Pentacles … let's see … what was that? Ah. She's one of your peers and she's either a Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn. Or, I mean, I know that's real specific. I could be wrong. She could just be someone who is, like, with a strong work ethic, very disciplined, probably has a head for business on her shoulders, financially savvy, probably also kind of privileged and materialistic.… Anyway, it's going to end. The relationship won't last. See that? Three of Swords. You two are *totally* different and have different ideologies. That's what will break you two up. Which is fine. It's not that serious of a relationship anyway and you're going to find better." (My friend is a Taurus. The Page of Pentacles is unequivocally the best card in the whole deck to signify her.)

By now any reader of this book with an iota of intuition might have guessed what happened next. He thought the tarot reading was an elaborately orchestrated scheme by my friend and me so that she could break up with him. He thought that she no longer had any interest in dating him but didn't have the guts to say it to his face. He thought that *we* thought that he was such an idiot that he would actually fall for such a scheme. Worst of all, he believed my friend betrayed his trust and revealed truly intimate snippets of his family life to me to make my reading seem more realistic.

To the contrary, my friend had told me nothing about him other than his name. Yet the reading was so accurate that he could not believe that a deck of cards could yield that kind of result. With nothing to prove, I attested that there was no scheming. In fact, my friend and I had to apologize profusely to him to convince him of our sincerity. I told him I had no idea what I was doing and any similarities between the reading and his life were a complete fluke. He did finally believe us. I hope he saw that my friend and I were not the scheming types. She later said to me, half-kidding, "Please don't read the tarot for any of my boyfriends again, okay?"

When that friend or I tell the story of that reading of her ex-boyfriend, skeptics will say that "I sense tension with family members" could apply to anyone. Fifty percent of kids in America are from "broken families." That's not accurate tarot analytics, they say, that's favorable statistics. Also, tarot analytics was not a necessary diagnostics tool to see that the relationship between my friend and that guy was never going to get serious. People could say that I had simply picked up on that vibe the same way *every*one who knew the two could have picked up on it, and I was just using the tarot to express personal opinion.

Those points are all valid, but the ex-boyfriend's emotional reaction to the reading is what is significant here. When your finger presses on healthy skin, your response is neutral, if you respond at all. When your finger presses on bruised or injured skin, you flinch. Likewise, tarot is an infallible detector of what pains us. Tarot readings can force us to confront those unresolved issues in our lives and finally make peace. Thus, it's a form of psychoanalysis. For that purpose alone, tarot is invaluable to me.

That incident (which also taught me the importance of how truths are packaged; just because something is so, it does not mean you need to blurt it out) and many more convinced me of the edifying power that the tarot can facilitate between practitioner and Seeker. For a person who did not ordinarily connect with other people, I enjoyed that aspect of the practice. Basically, it became my form of socializing. I connected better with people through the tarot.

Also, I want to take a pause here to point out a mistake I made in that first reading. I should not have said to my friend's boyfriend, "It's going to end. You two have *totally* different ideologies.

That's what will break you two up. You're better suited for someone else." Instead, I should have said that he had just started a new relationship and would have to work pretty hard at it because the two of them were fundamentally different, coming from different backgrounds, and that's never easy. The going might get rough, but he should take heart that what may feel like loss or pain in the moment is actually for the better. It would give way to better romantic opportunities, ones that are better suited for him. The alternative I proposed is still telling the truth and accurately reading the cards to the Seeker, but rather than taking power away from him with a statement like "It's going to end," I am giving the power back to him. I learned many important tarot lessons that day.

When I started law school, I took a long hiatus from tarot. Then I became a corporate lawyer and stopped thinking about tarot completely. Let's also say that I stopped believing in anything I could not document and, in many ways, lost my spirituality.

Many years later, a dear old friend of mine endured a personal tragedy. When she approached me, I was sure she needed legal advice and was prepared to give it. However, what she asked for took me by surprise. She asked if I would do a tarot reading for her. She remembered that I used to be "pretty good at it." I confessed that my tarot reading days had long been over and I wasn't sure I could. Her only request was that I try. So I tried.

The result was a cathartic experience not just for her, but for me as well. That was when I revisited my tarot studies. Also, I had aged quite a bit by then, and the maturation provided me with a new dimension of appreciation for the tarot.

I liken the appreciation to this: In sixth grade I read Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and concluded that I did not like it. I could not appreciate the ending. Decades later, after a life weathered with disappointments and falling short of promise, potential, and ambitions, I reread it and found the story deeply enriching. Santiago's struggle was my struggle, and his final triumph, though all he had to show for it was the skeleton of his glory, now meant something to me.

The tarot, like *The Old Man and the Sea*, is a book that I could only read in a limited way as a child because my life was limited. When you are young, you are still The Fool. There is no discerning whether you will fall or fly off the edge of that cliff. Human curiosity compels us to try everything to find out. So we are drawn to the idea of fortune-telling; we are drawn to answering the question *what's next*.

With age (aging of the mind more so than aging of the body), one grows less and less interested in fortune-telling and more intrigued by understanding; we become drawn to the *why*. So it was only after sustaining the figurative (and sometimes not so figurative) bumps and bruises of life that the tarot took on a truly enriching dimension of meaning for me.

My objective for tarot study became understanding. The tarot is a tool that helps me understand the place of my personal qi in relation to the greater cosmic qi. Also, since I know that I often use denial as my defense mechanism (and that is clearly unhealthy), the tarot is an indispensable and effective tool that compels me to confront my personal maladies.

Even if the cards are reduced to material object only, the tarot is an incredible work of art. The tarot tells a narrative, but it is not a plot-driven story, nor is it a character sketch. It is a story about why. When you can understand why, you are better prepared to accept yourself and the Hanged Man, Death, the Devil, and the Tower if and when they come your way. You will no longer fear them. That is the wisdom of the Fool's journey into the World. That is why you study tarot. That is why you pass the wisdom on—to assuage people's fears and provide them with tools to better handle the turns of

the Wheel.

ΓΝΩΘΙ

ΣΑΥΤΟΝ

The ancient Greek aphorism "know thyself" was said to have been inscribed in the front courtyard to the entrance of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. That aphorism succinctly conveys the purpose of tarot: to know thyself.

Tarot analytics can help us dive deep beneath the surface of our consciousness to understand our own unconscious, our motivations, and our impulses. It is not a tool for channeling otherworldly beings. Tarot analytics does not tell us anything we do not already know. It only helps us to access our latent knowledge.

Tarot analytics is not about concretizing the future that does not yet exist. It is only a truth mirror that reflects back possibilities. It only predicts the future when we ourselves behave predictably. When we use the power of our will to transcend predictable behavior, our futures are thrown wide open. I hope that with the help of this book, that is the lesson the tarot teaches you. Tarot does not have anything to do with our religious faiths, though it can work in harmony with our faiths on our journey to become closer to divinity, to that sense of Oneness and ultimate belonging. The Fool's journey is our journey toward God and all that is God.

Know yourself. Know that you are connected to the infinite and therefore, you are the infinite. Apply tarot in a way that empowers you to recognize your infinity.

APPENDIX A:
Tarot Spreads Quick Reference

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PRESENT the most popular spreads mentioned in the book in a quick reference format. Be sure to read Chapter 14: The Fundamentals of Reading Spreads before relying on the following references. Also keep the checklist from the end of Chapter 15 on hand to help with the beginner's reading process.

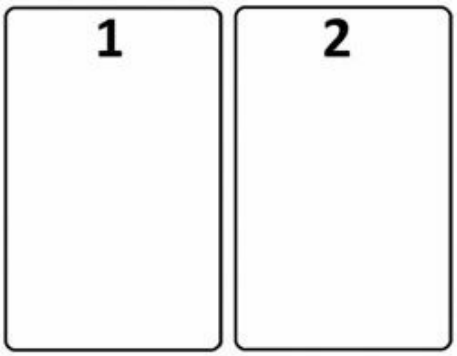
One-Card Draw

For Specific Questions. No Signifier Card needed.

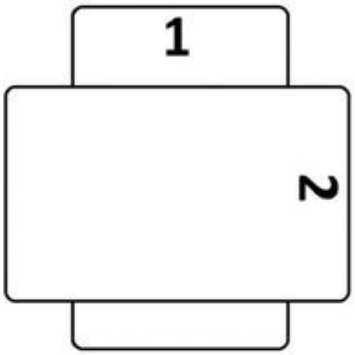
Card #	Position Meaning
1	Outcome

Optional: Combine reading with First Operation technique. Use signifier and locate among the four piles, IHVH. Once the signifier is located, interpret the significance of the pile. Then look at the card immediately following the signifier card. Read that card as the answer to the specific question. If the signifier is the last card in the pile, read the card immediately preceding it.

Two-Card Spreads



Method A

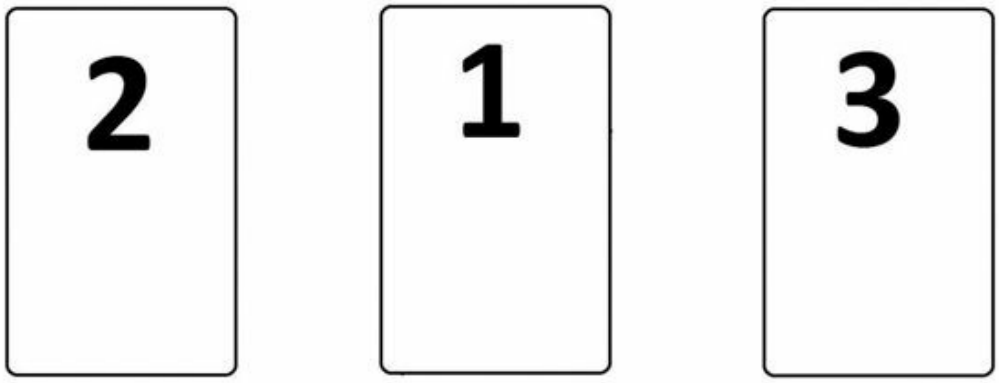


Method B

For Specific Questions. No Signifier Card needed.

	METHOD A	METHOD B
Card #	**Position Meaning**	**Position Meaning**
1	Analyze elemental dignities. What is dominant? What is recessive? Any synchronicities?	Heart of the Matter
2		Challenges/ Obstacles

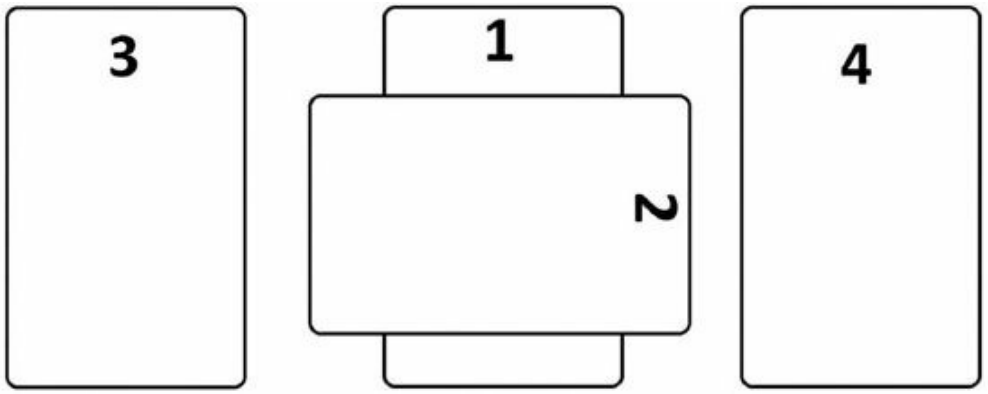
Three-Card Spread



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning	Detailed Explanation
1	Present Influence	What presently covers the Seeker
2	Past Influence	Past influences affecting Seeker's present state
3	Probable Outcome	Seeker's aspirations, hopes, fears, and/or most probable outcome for the immediate future

Four-Card Spread

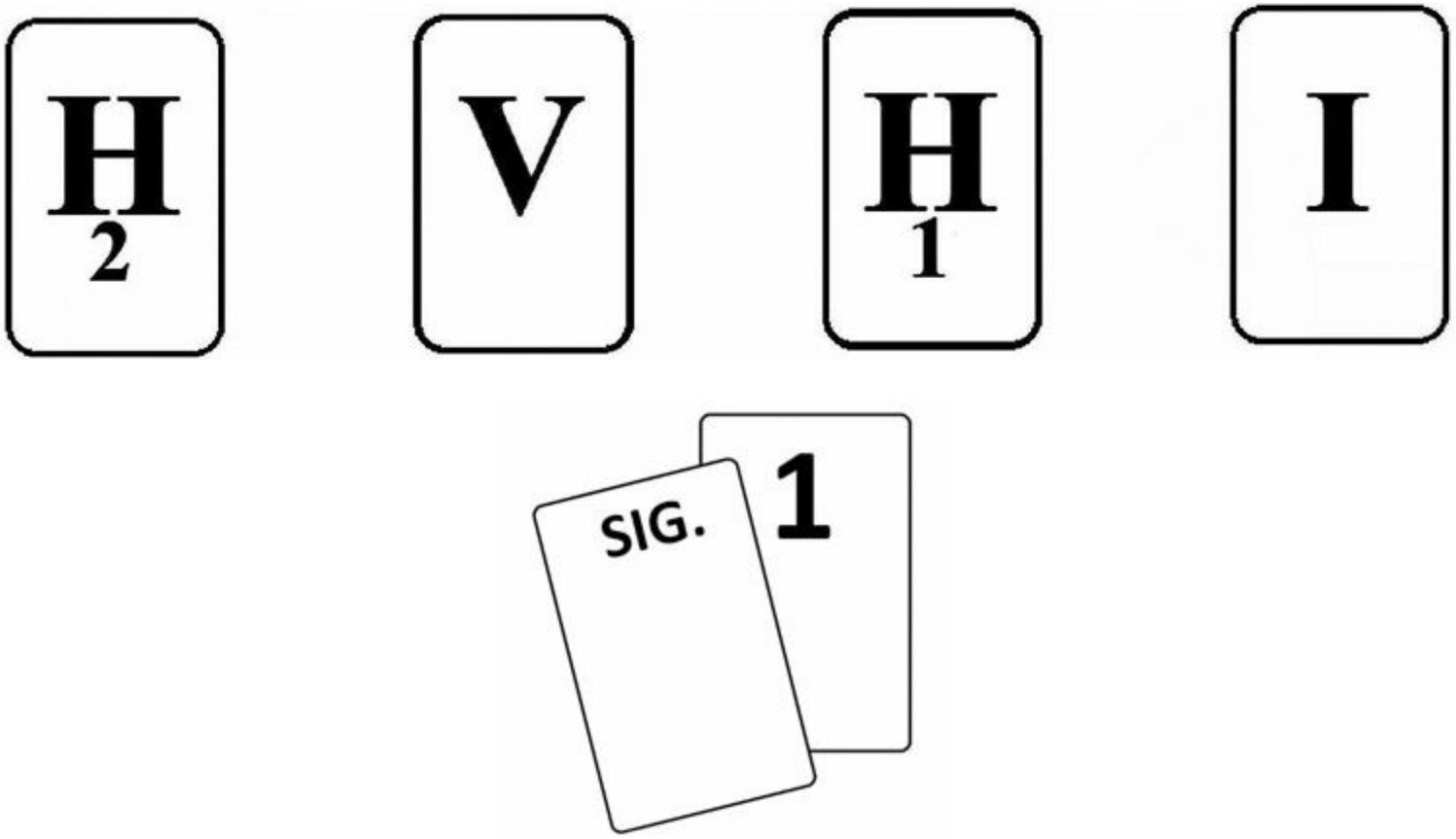


For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	**Position Meaning**
1	Present Influence; Heart of the Matter
2	Challenges/Obstacles
3	Past Influences
4	Probable Outcome

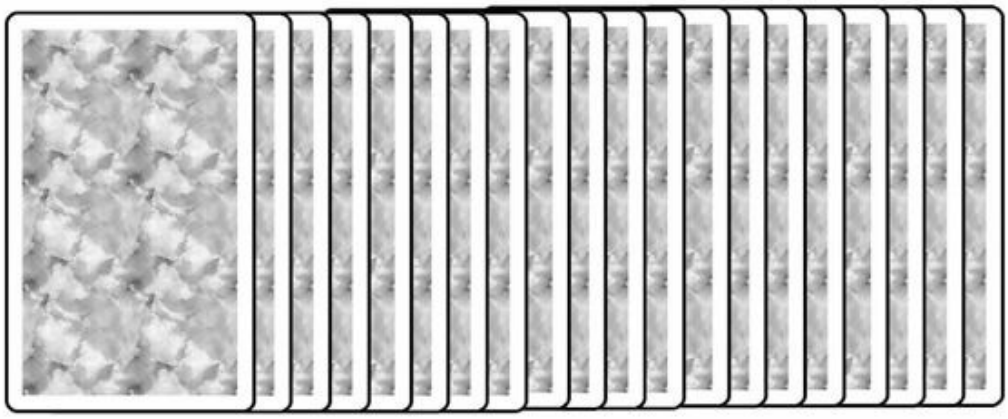
Alternative Three-Card Spread

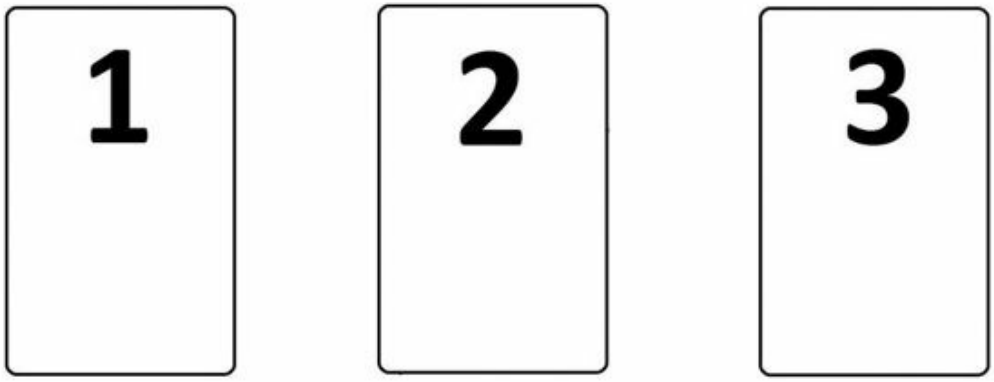
For General or Specific Questions. Requires a Signifier Card. Start by performing the Firs Operation. The result of the First Operation will also provide insight as to any sub-issues pertinent to the situation.



When the Signifier Card is located, the card immediately following the Signifier is identified as Card 1. The cards in the pile that had preceded the Signifier are placed to the back of the pile, so that the Signifier is the topmost card. The Signifier and Card 1 are set aside.

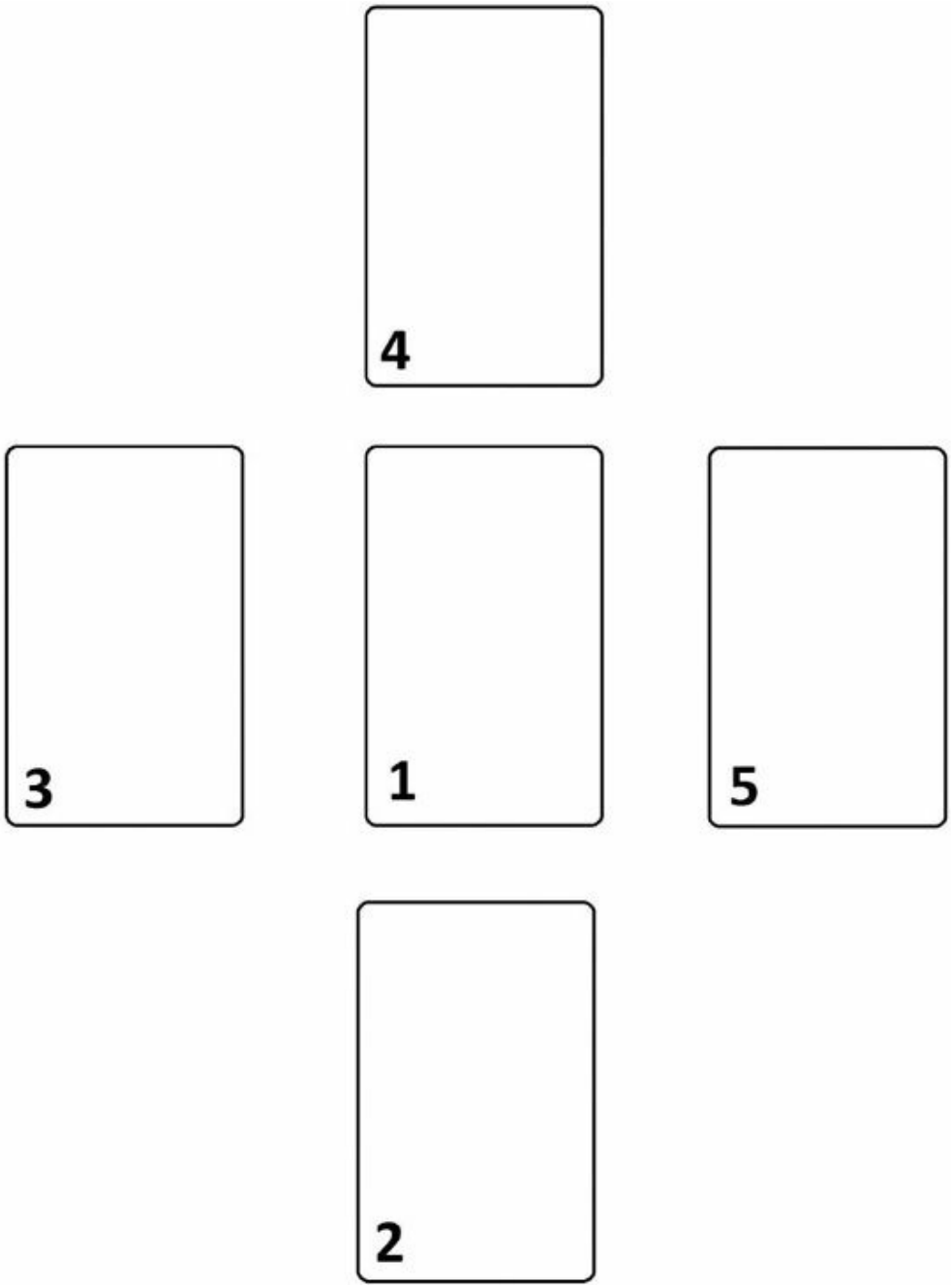
In the First Operation pile that the Signifier was located in only, fan the remaining pile out and select two more cards. These two cards are Cards 2 and 3. Set aside the signifier and examine the three cards drawn.





Card #	Position Meaning
1	The heart of the matter; the thesis statement that answers the Seeker's question
2	First factor or energy that will affect the issue
3	Second factor or energy that will affect the issue

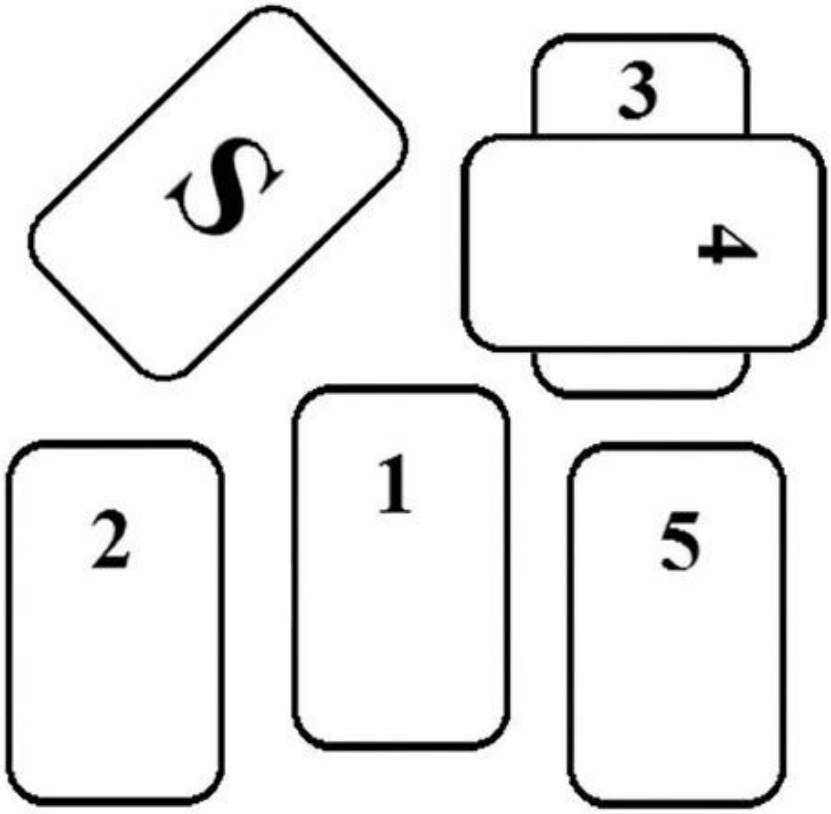
The Simple Cross



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	**Position Meaning**
1	Current State
2	Roots/Foundation
3	Past Influences
4	Aspirations/Speculations
5	Probable Outcome

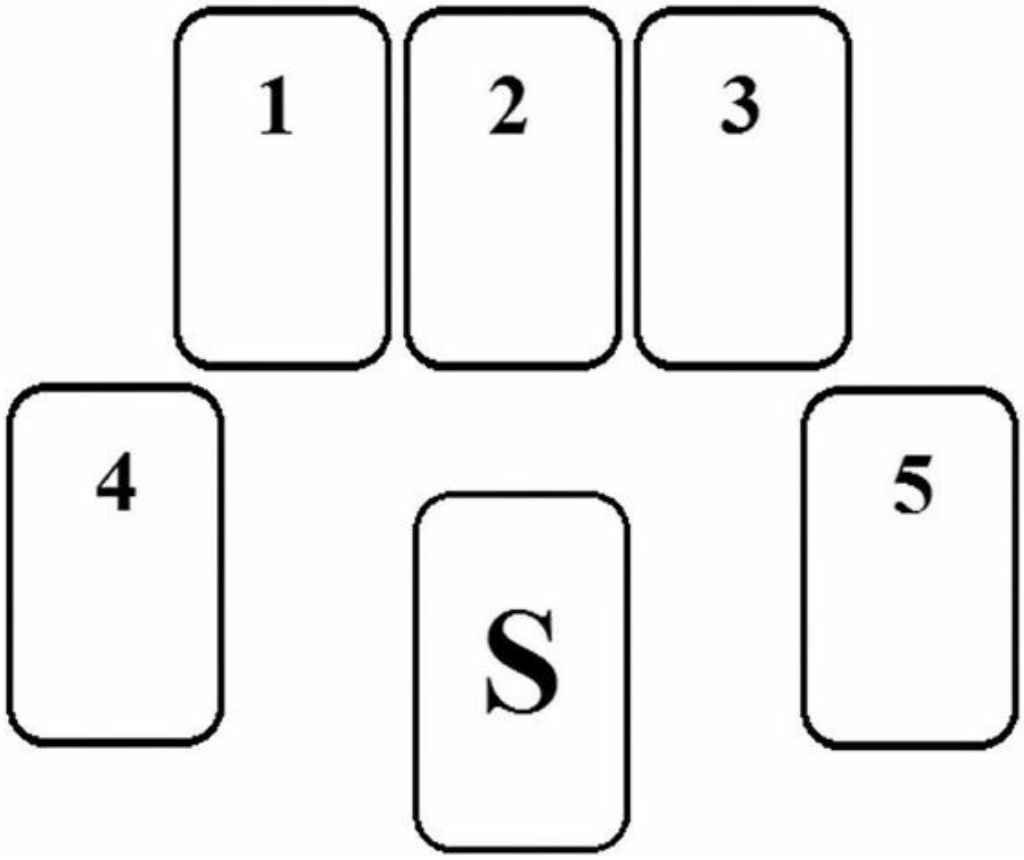
The Essential Keys



For quick, general readings. Well-suited for party settings.

Card #	Position Meaning
S	Signifier Card. *Optional*. If used, review innate characteristics of Seeker based on the elemental association
1	The present. The Self
2	The past. Where the Seeker comes from
3	Seeker's skills, education, knowledge acquired, experiences, or abilities
4	Seeker's passions, loves, interests; Seeker's desired life path
5	Most probable outcome. Where Seeker is headed based on current trajectory

Fixed-Term Analysis

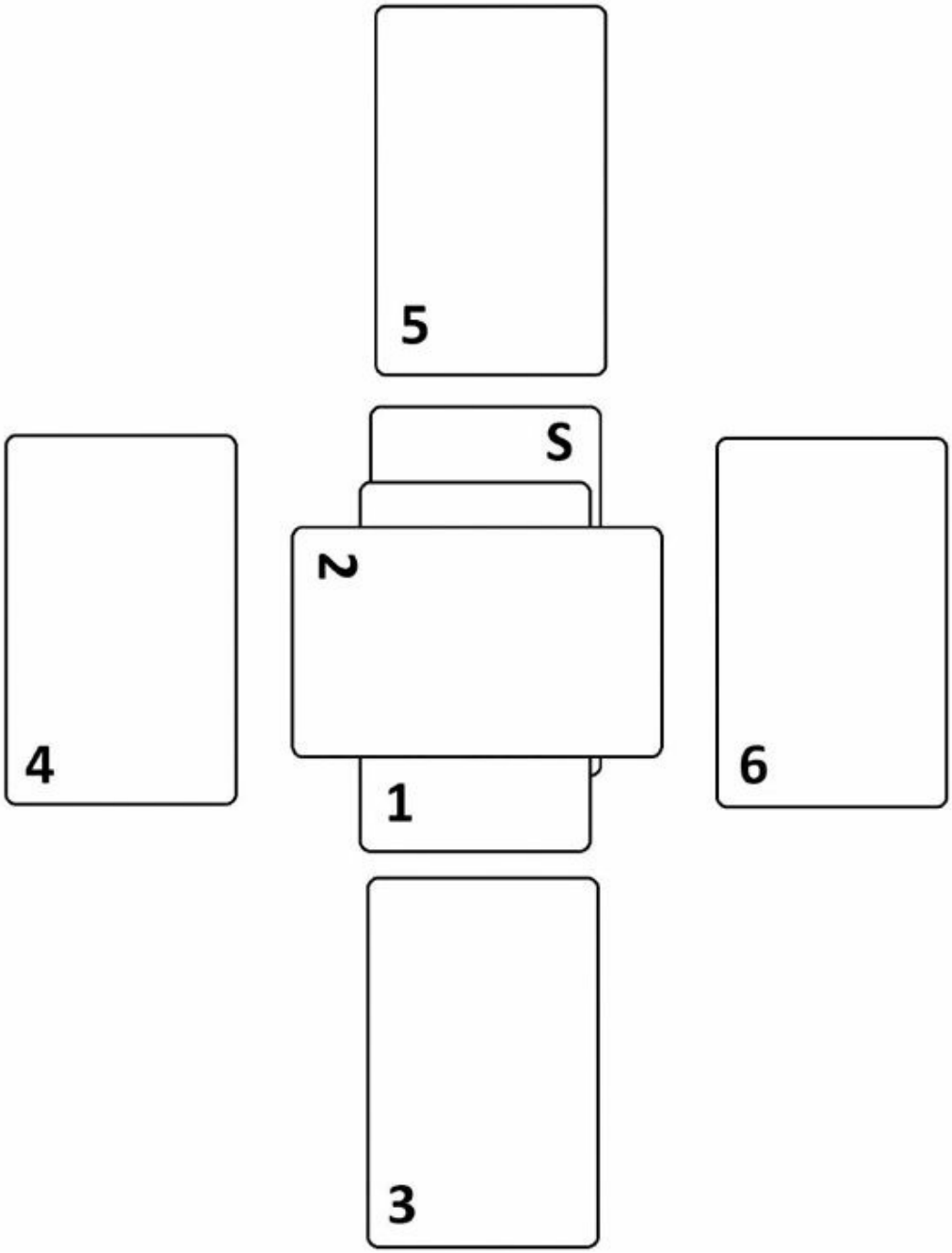


For general inquiries about a specific period of time. While shuffling the cards, focus on the period of time that the Seeker is asking about. Signifier card optional.

Card #	Position Meaning	Detailed Explanation
S	Signifier Card	Optional, depending on whether practitioner's approach is to use signifier cards or not
1	Matters of the Mind	Issues that occupy the intellectual and mental spheres of the Seeker. These are the issues that the Seeker must reason through during the given period of time
2	Matters of the Heart	Issues that occupy the emotional sphere of the Seeker. These are the issues that will have the most emotional impact on the Seeker
3	Matters of the Body	Issues that occupy the physical sphere of the Seeker. This card could indicate actual events, matters related to work or Seeker's professional development, or Seeker's finances or property
4	Past Influences	Unresolved matters from before that will be ongoing issues in this coming period of time
5	Matters Going	Matters that will continue to linger that Seeker must resolve beyond the given period of time

Forward

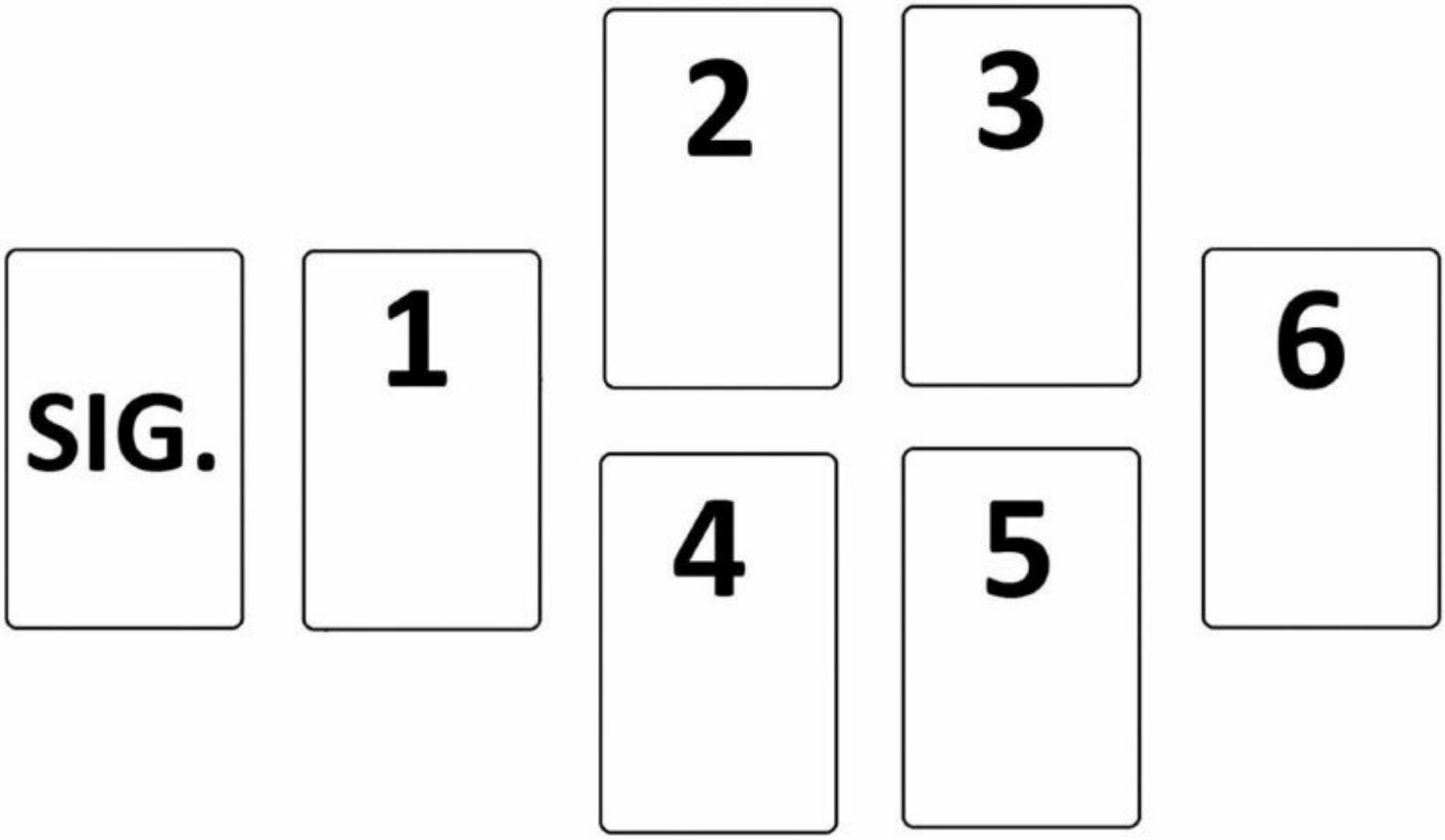
The Dyadic Cross



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Present Influence; Heart of the Matter; Present State of Mind
2	Challenges/Obstacles; What Crosses the Seeker's Path Immediately Up Ahead
3	Foundation/Roots; At the Bottom of the Issue or Matter at Hand
4	Past Influences Still Present
5	Aspirations/Speculation; Alternative Future Outcome
6	Immediate Future; Most Probable Future Outcome

Six Points (or Six Controversies) Spread

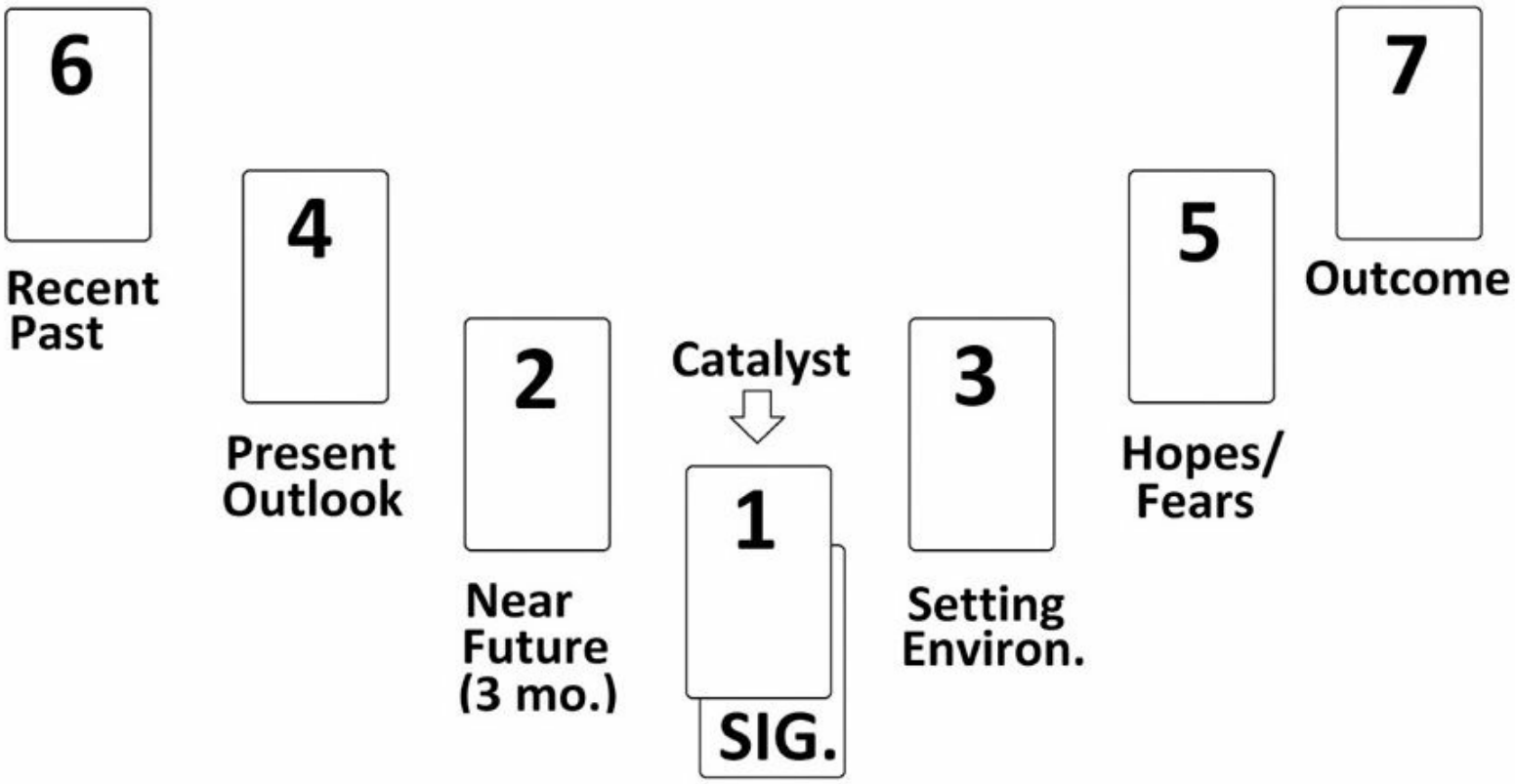


For specific inquiries, use the Six Points (also referred to as the Six Controversies) spread to diagnose the six areas of conflict that the Seeker must overcome to move toward the desired outcome or to advance forward out of a present plateau. The six cards can also be interpreted as the six energies that the Seeker needs to be most concerned about with regard to the specific inquiry.

Practice Recommendation

Preface the reading session with the First Operation. The results of the First Operation will then guide the practitioner's interpretation of the Six Points spread. If the Seeker is interested in projections or forecasts, after the Six Points spread, draw three cards and place them left to right next to the signifier. These three cards are monthly projections for the next three months.

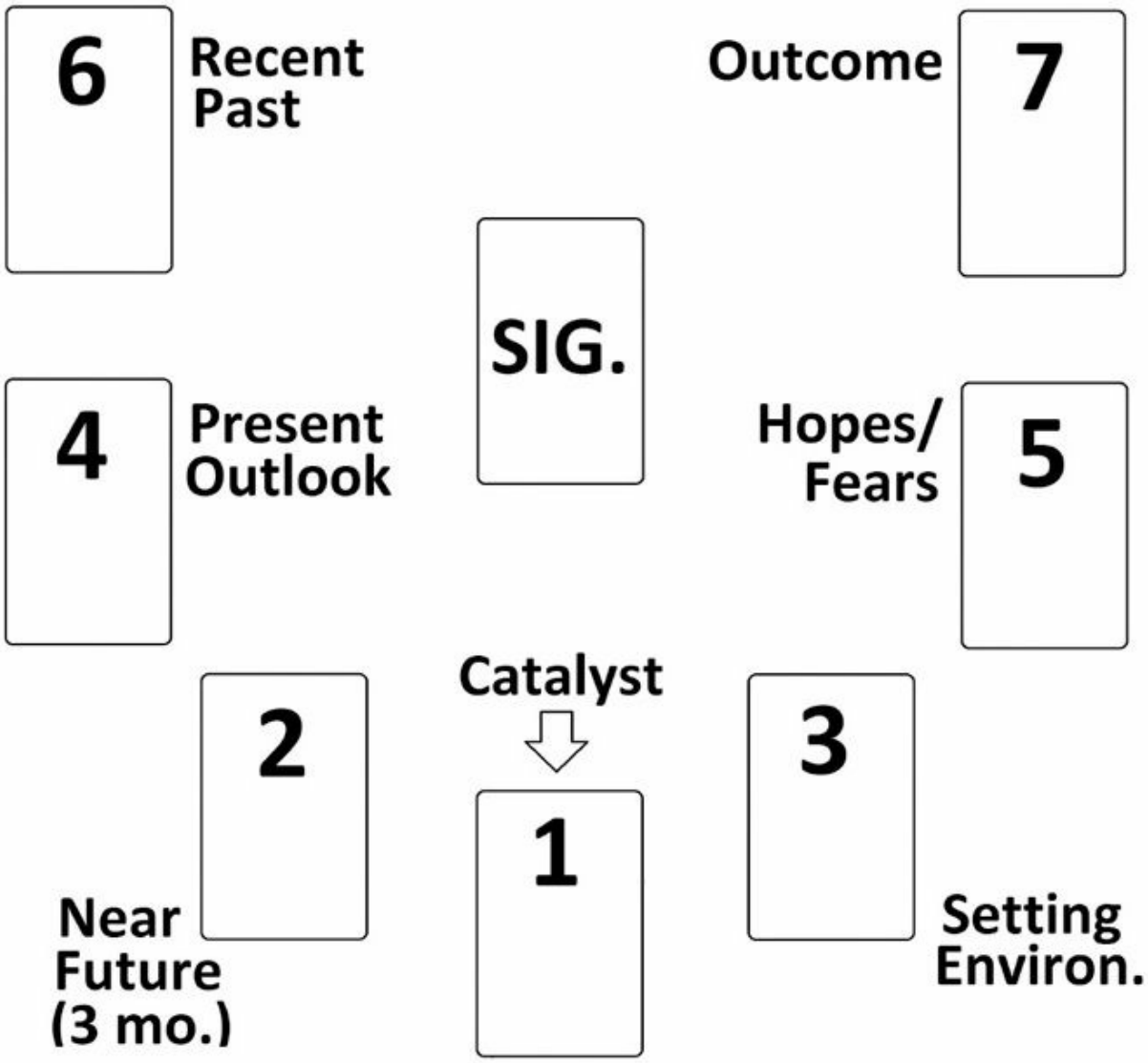
V Formation Spread



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card. Place the cards down in the order numbered above. However, read the cards tc the Seeker in the order listed in the table below, 6 to 4 to 2, skip 1, 3 to 5 to 7, then back to 1.

Card #	Position Meaning
6	Recent Past (Last Three Years)
4	Present Outlook
2	Near Future (Next Three Months)
3	Seeker in Environment
5	Hopes and Fears
7	Probable Outcome Overall
1	Most Important Point Seeker Must Keep in Mind

V Formation or Horseshoe Spread

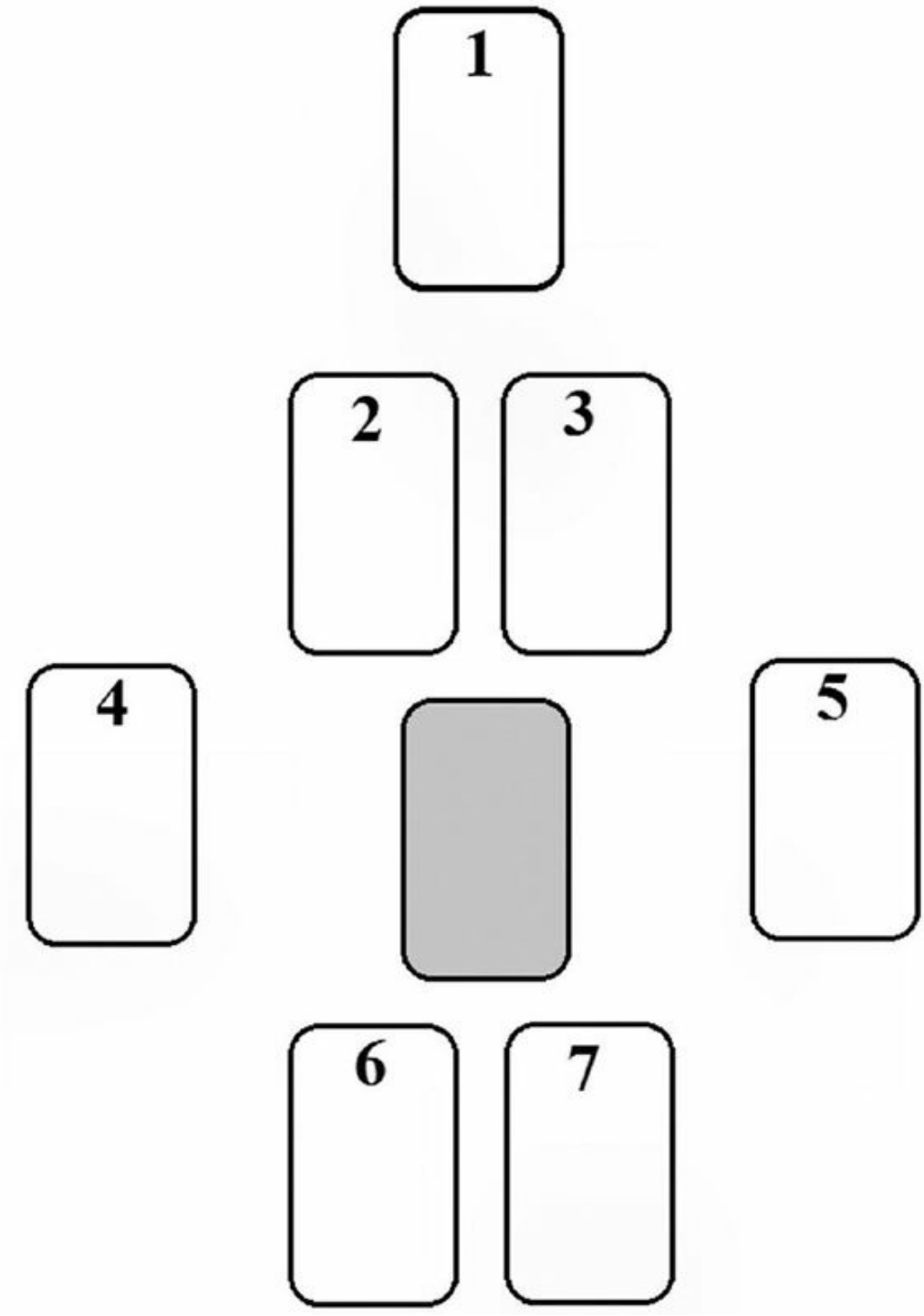


The Seven Chakras: Seven-Card Spread

For General Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly on top o Signifier Card.

Card #	**Position Meaning**
1	Foundation; Stability of Seeker's Present Life
2	Sex, Sexuality, Emotions, Creativity
3	Work/Career; Growth and Development
4	Love and Relationships
5	Expression, Community; Status in Society
6	Spirituality, Faith Matters
7	Higher Self

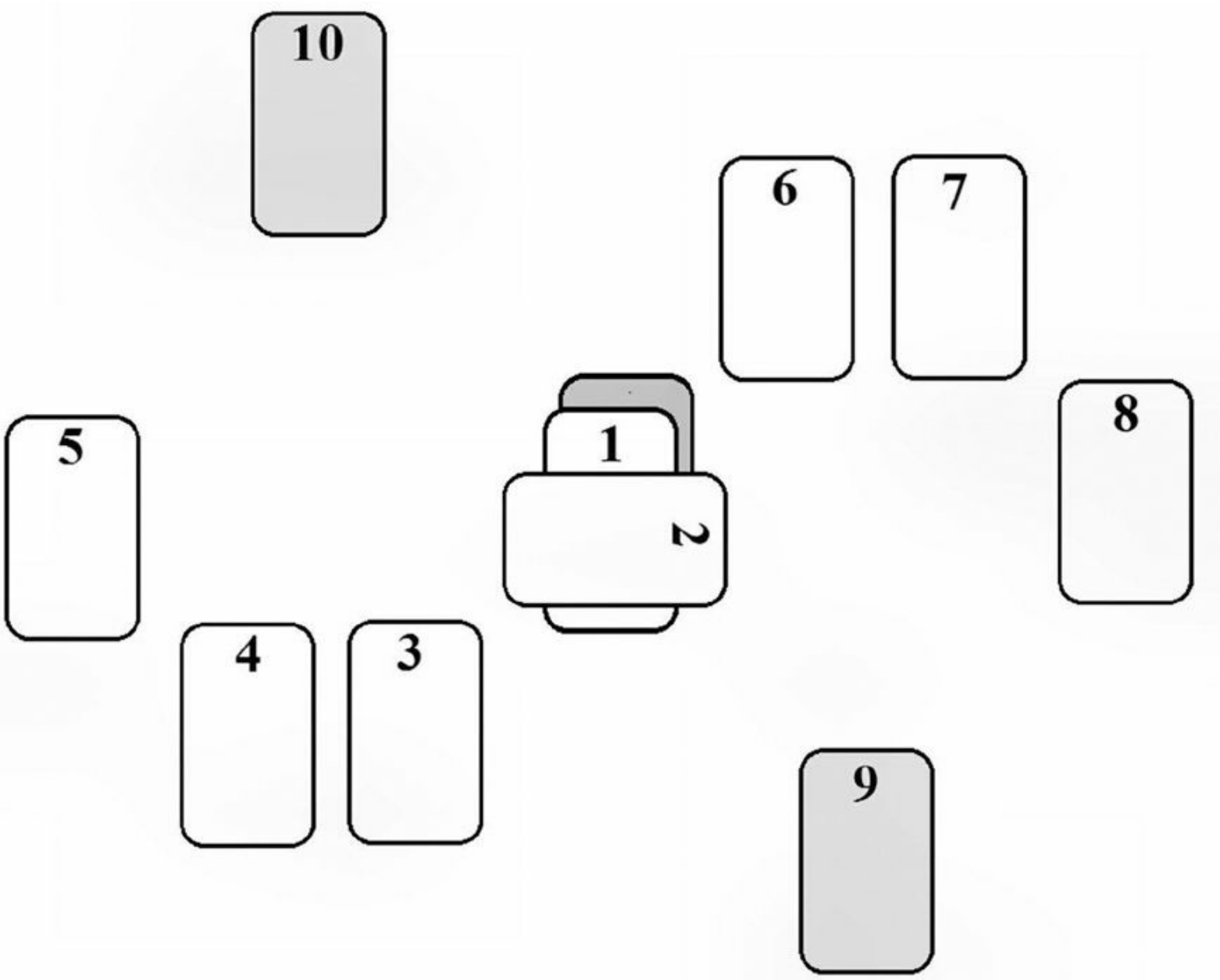
Personality Tree



For General Personality Assessment. Signifier Card is optional. If using a Signifier Card, place i
down first where the Shadow Card would go. Then proceed with the spread, Cards 1 through 7, and
at the end, place the Shadow Card on top of the Signifier.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Attitude/Intellectual Influences
2	Spirituality/Philosophy
3	Emotional Outlook
4	Past Influences
5	Present Influences
6	Roots/Foundation/Soul 1
7	Roots/Foundation/Soul 2
Shadow Card	Latent Forces

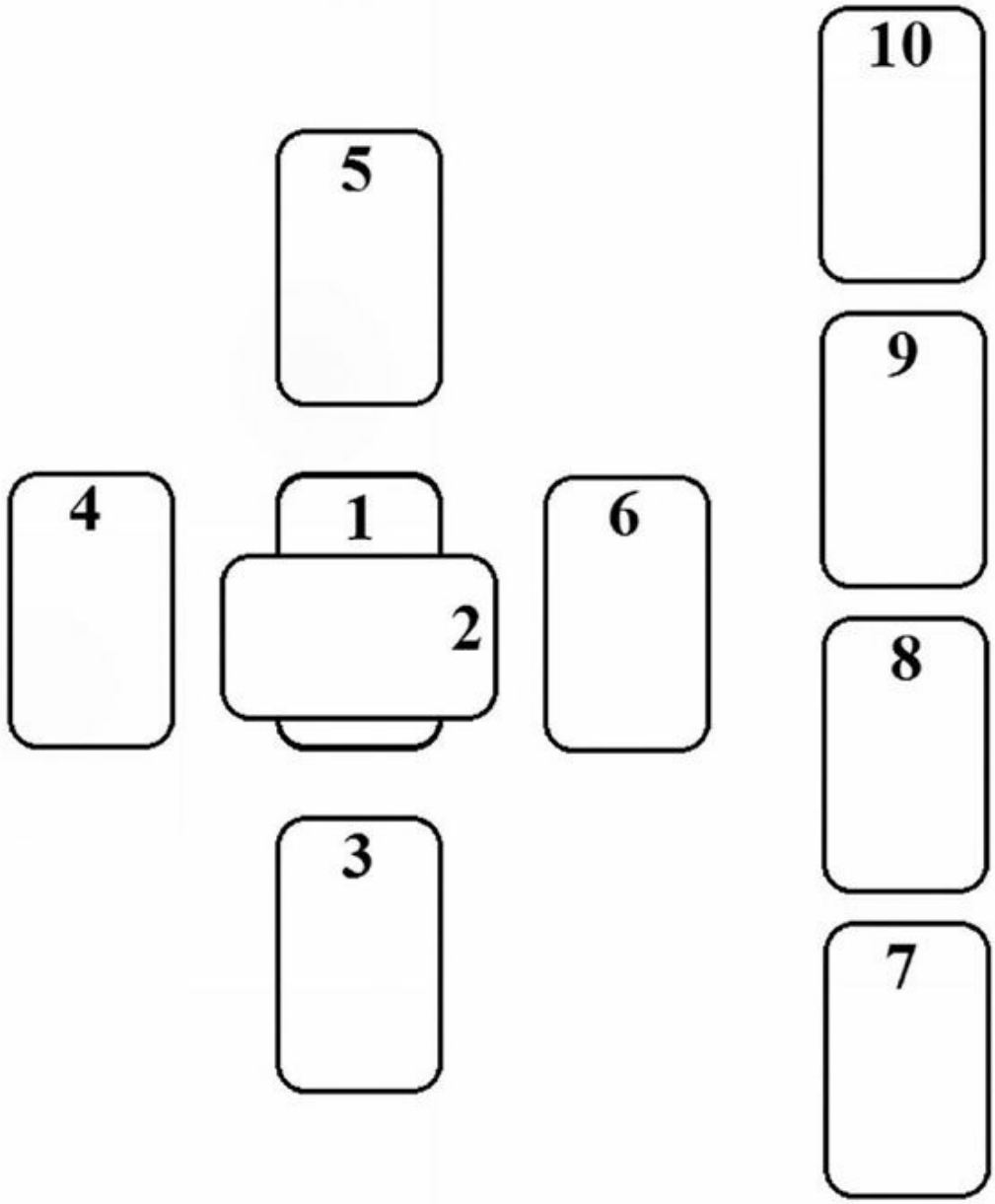
The Insight Spread



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Heart of the Matter; What Covers Seeker in the Present
2	Challenges/Obstacles; What Blocks Seeker or What Will Come to Cross Seeker's Path
3	Past Influences
4	Past Influences
5	Lessons Not Yet Learned; Recurring Theme in Seeker's Life of Spiritual Significance
6	Most Probable Outcome/What Else May Hinder or Support Seeker
7	Most Probable Outcome/What Else May Hinder or Support Seeker
8	Seeker's Future Self
9	Shadow Card
10	If Positive, Hopes and Aspirations; If Negative, Seeker's Fears

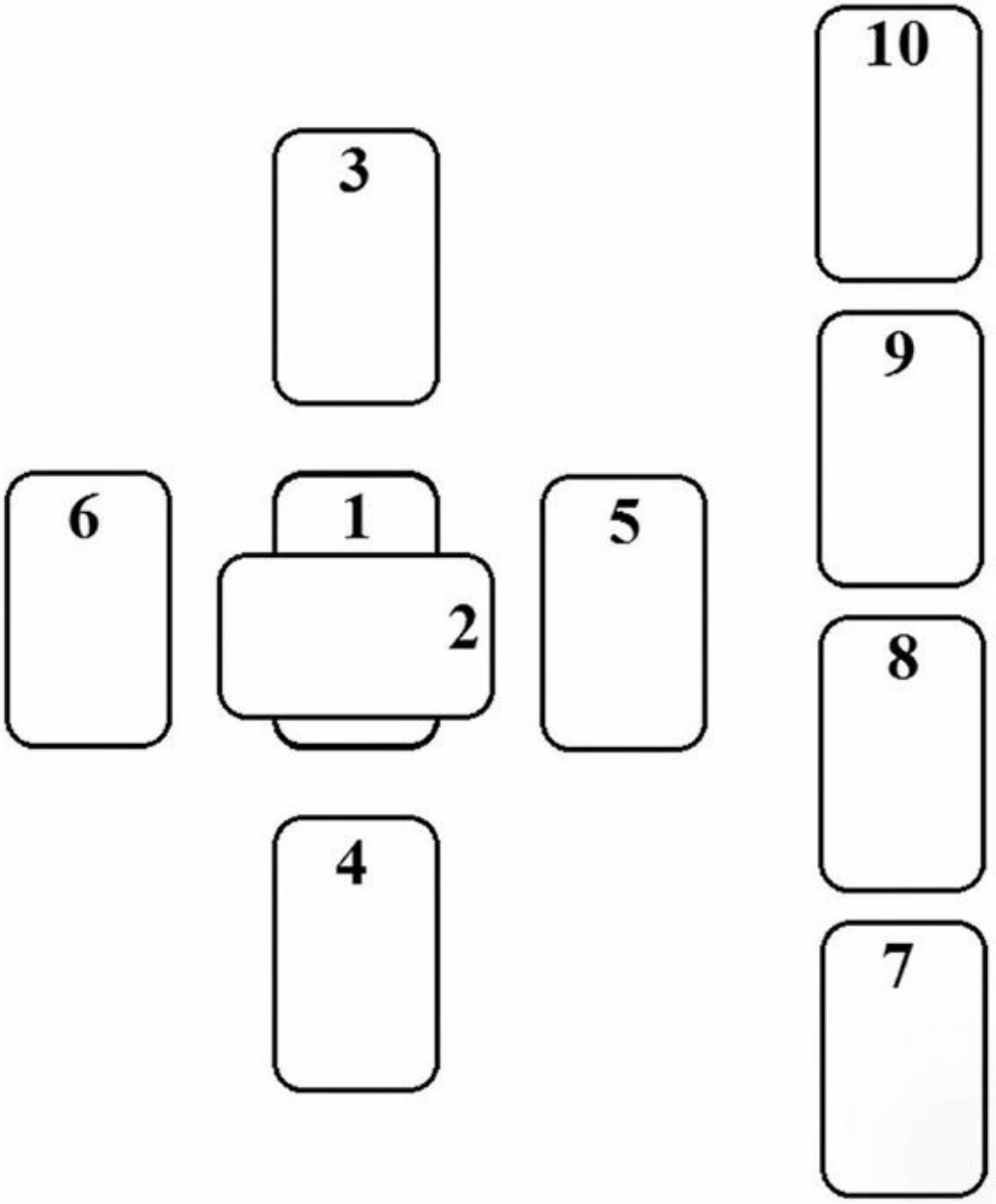
The Celtic Cross (Gray)



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Heart of the Matter
2	Challenges/Obstacles
3	Foundation/Roots
4	Past Influences
5	Aspirations/Speculation
6	Immediate Future
7	Seeker’s View of Self
8	Seeker in Environment
9	Hopes and Fears
10	Probable Outcome

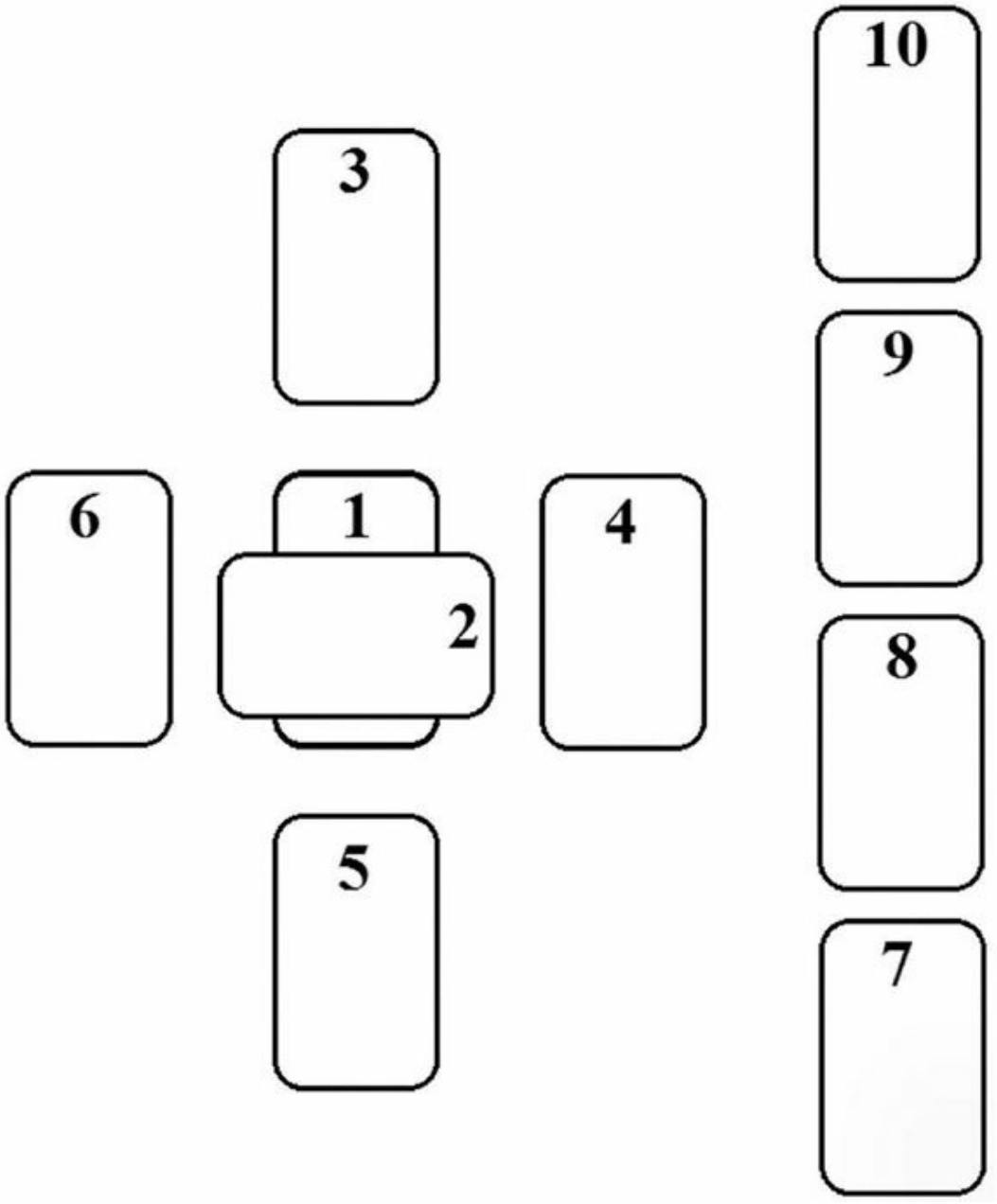
The Celtic Cross (Waite)



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	**Position Meaning**
1	Heart of the Matter
2	Challenges/Obstacles
3	Aspirations/Speculation
4	Foundation/Roots
5	Immediate Future
6	Past Influences
7	Seeker’s View of Self
8	Seeker in Environment
9	Hopes and Fears
10	Probable Outcome

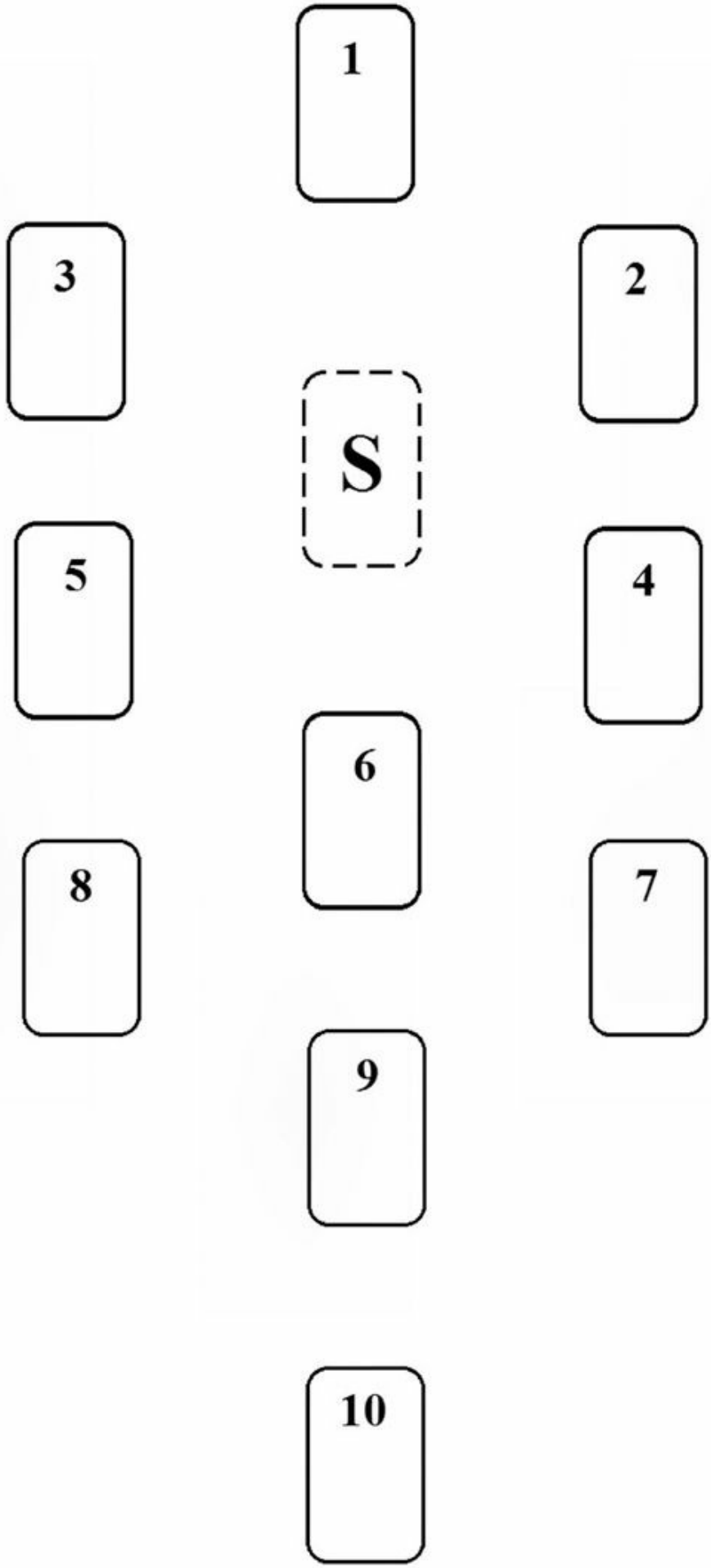
The Celtic Cross (Thoth)



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Heart of the Matter
2	Challenges/Obstacles
3	Destiny; Seeker's Higher Purpose
4	Immediate Future
5	Foundation/Roots
6	Past Influences
7	Seeker's View of Self
8	Seeker in Environment
9	Hopes and Fears
10	Probable Outcome

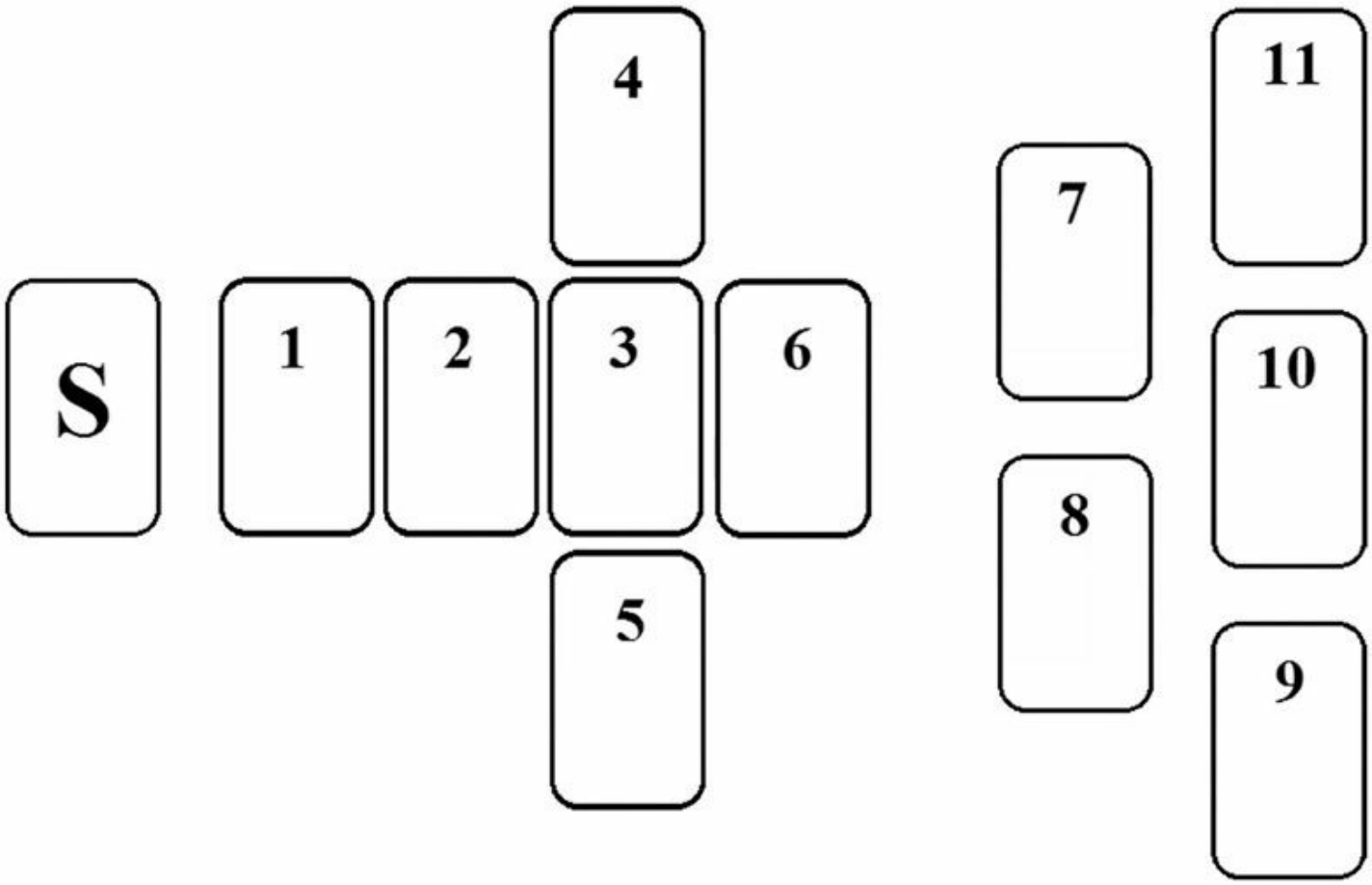
The Tree of Life



For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Goals/Aspirations
2	Choice Seeker can make that will yield positives *or* Seeker's obligations, duties
3	Choice Seeker can make that will yield negatives *or* Seeker's obstacles, challenges
4	Benefits and positive aspects of matter; the pros.
5	Drawbacks and negative aspects of matter; the cons.
6	Probable Future
7	Emotions; Emotional Influences
8	Logical; Analytical Influences
9	Seeker's attitude/outlook; how Seeker views him- or herself
10	Opinion of others; how others view Seeker and Seeker's situation

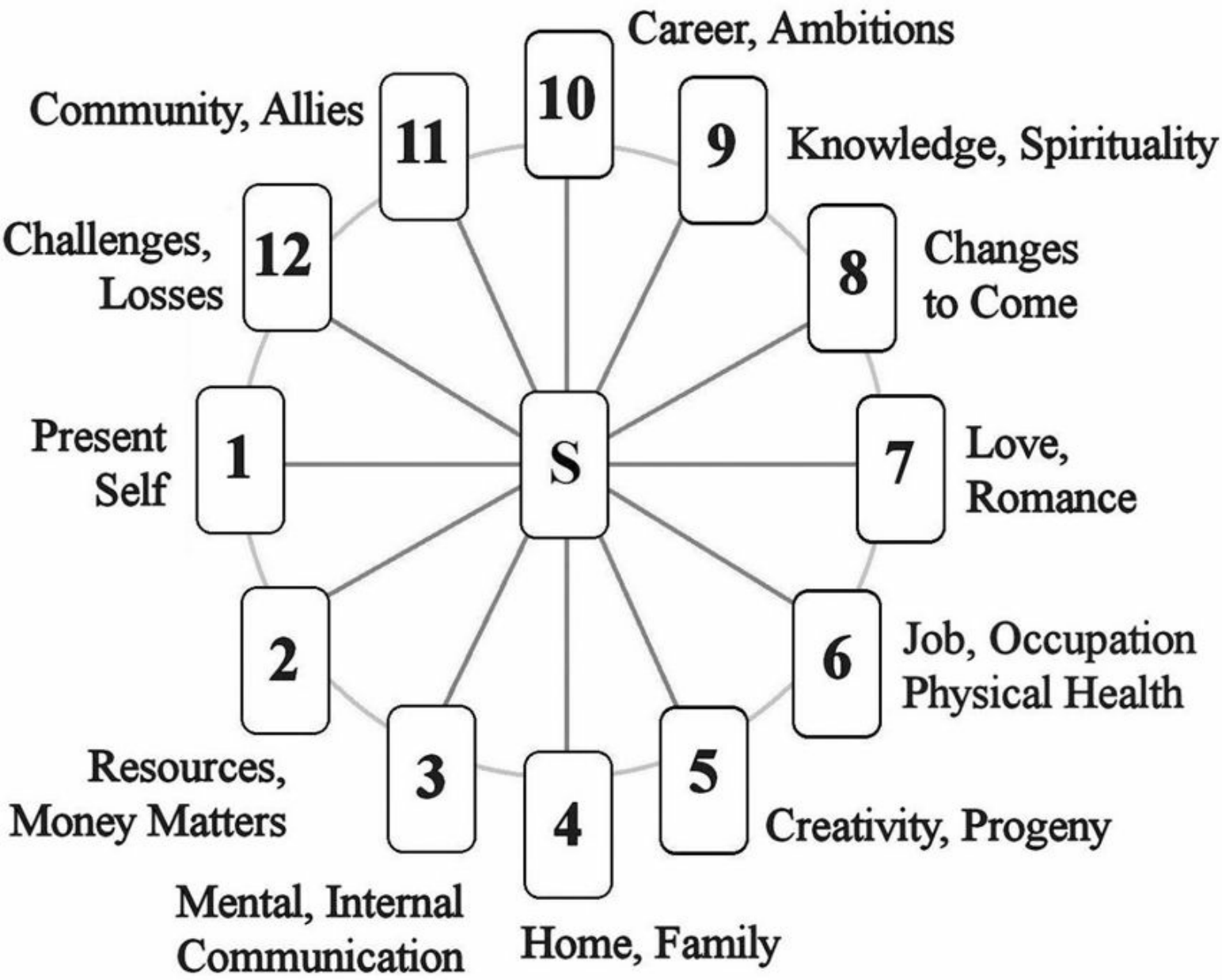
The Pneuma Crossing



For General or Specific Questions. Signifier card optional.

Card #	Position Meaning	Detailed Explanation
S	Signifier Card	Optional, depending on whether practitioner's approach is to use signifier cards or not
1	The Far Past	Relevant aspects of Seeker's history or legacy; childhood matters; matters from a distant memory
2	The Recent Past	Recent past events or issues that are still influencing the present and that have the potential to significantly affect the future
3	Present Situation	The matter at hand; what presently covers the consciousness of the Seeker; what concerns occupy the Seeker
4	Conscious Influence	Factors affecting the Seeker's situation that Seeker most likely knows about but has not adequately dealt with
5	Unconscious Influence	Factors affecting the Seeker's situation that Seeker is unaware of; subconscious or unconscious issues at hand
6	Probable Outcome	Based on current trajectory Seeker is taking, what is most likely to happen in the near future
7	Force Majeure	Matters that may be outside of Seeker's control that bear relevance to the matter at hand
8	Karma	Cause and effect: the effects caused by Seeker's own action (or inaction) that bear relevance to the matter at hand
9	Disposition	Relevant aspects of Seeker's personality or character
10	Education	Knowledge or experience Seeker needs to advance on to the next phase, to progress, or to achieve Seeker's objectives
11	Action	Acts or conduct Seeker must engage in or pursue to advance on to the next phase, to progress, or to achieve Seeker's objectives

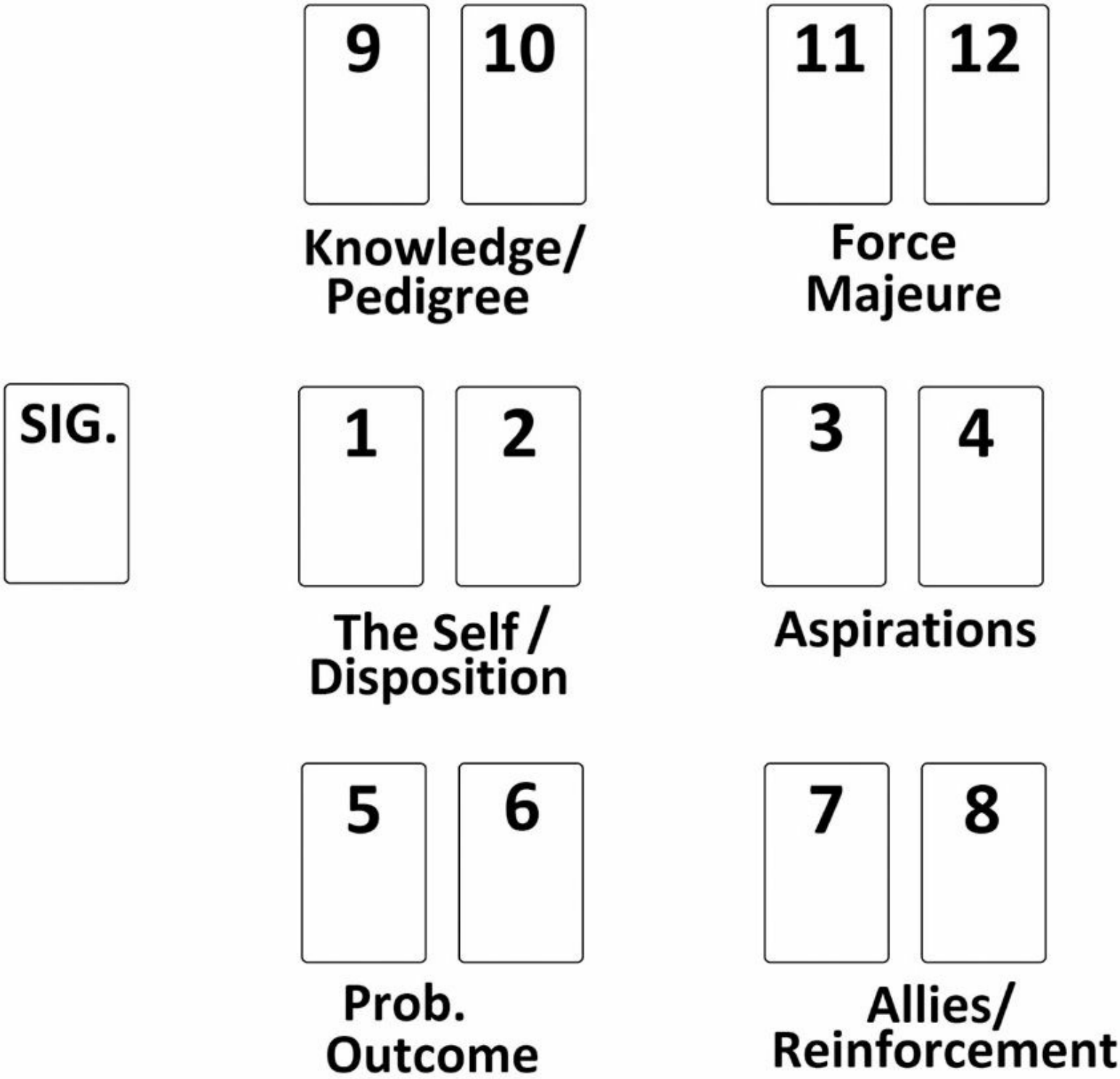
Zodiac Spread



For General Questions. Place Signifier Card down first as shown in spread illustration.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	External Character; Self, Identity; Disposition
2	Material/Financial Matters
3	Communications, Writing; Mental Development; Early Childhood
4	Home/Family Matters; Heritage, Hereditary Tendencies; Past Life Influence
5	Love, Love Affairs; Procreation; Creative Projects; Hobbies, Leisure; Pursuit of Happiness
6	Everyday Life; Day-to-Day Work; Physical Health; Occupation
7	Marriage, Union, Alliances; Institutional Commitments
8	Passion, Sexuality; Transformations, Changes
9	Spiritual Outlook; Faith Matters; Voyages; Exploration; Higher Education
10	Ambitions; Social Status; Seeker’s Greatest Career Potential; Seeker’s Pursuit of Glory
11	Aspirations/Speculations; Hopes; Friendships; Community; Involvement in the Collective; Relationship to Group
12	Latent Force Influencing Seeker; Losses, Difficulties, Hardships; Inner Crises; Hidden Self

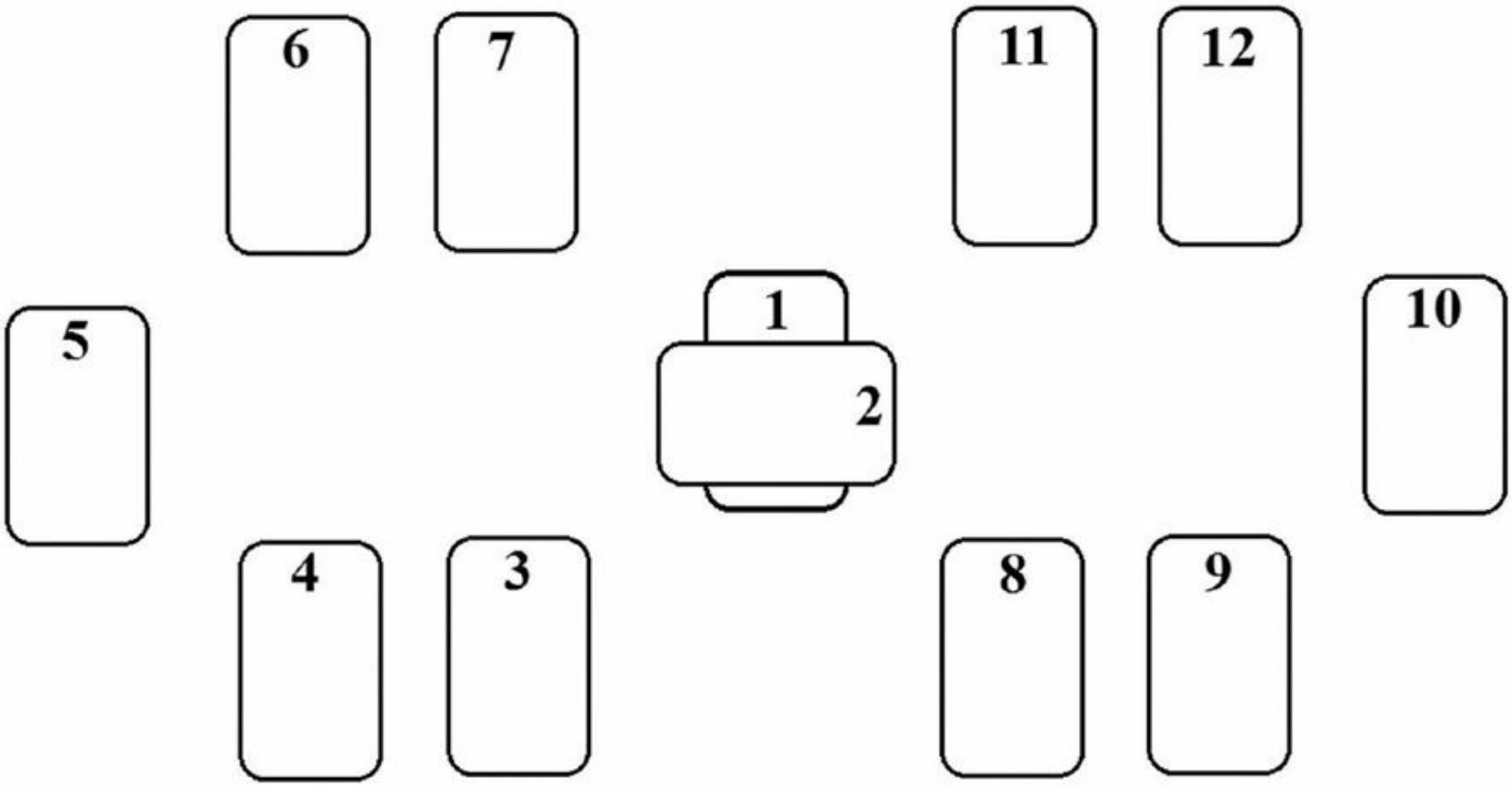
Twelve-Card Specific Question Spread



For Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first as shown in spread illustration.

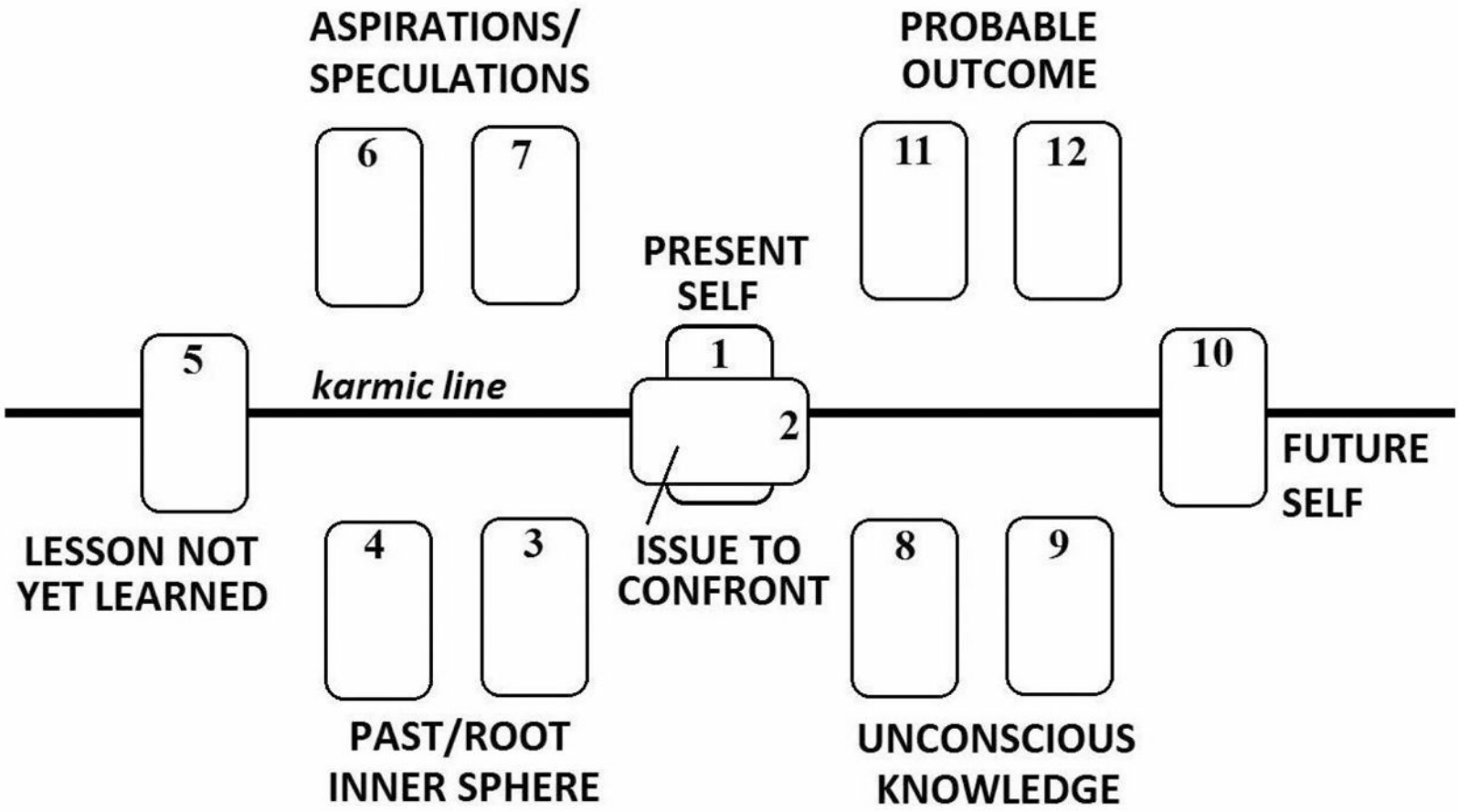
Card #	Position Meaning
1	Present Positive Influence 1
2	Present Positive Influence 2
3	Present Negative Influence 1
4	Present Negative Influence 2
5	Past Positive Influence 1
6	Past Positive Influence 2
7	Past Negative Influence 1
8	Past Negative Influence 2
9	Positive Effect of Future Outcome 1
10	Positive Effect of Future Outcome 2
11	Negative Effect of Future Outcome 1
12	Negative Effect of Future Outcome 2

The Lemniscate

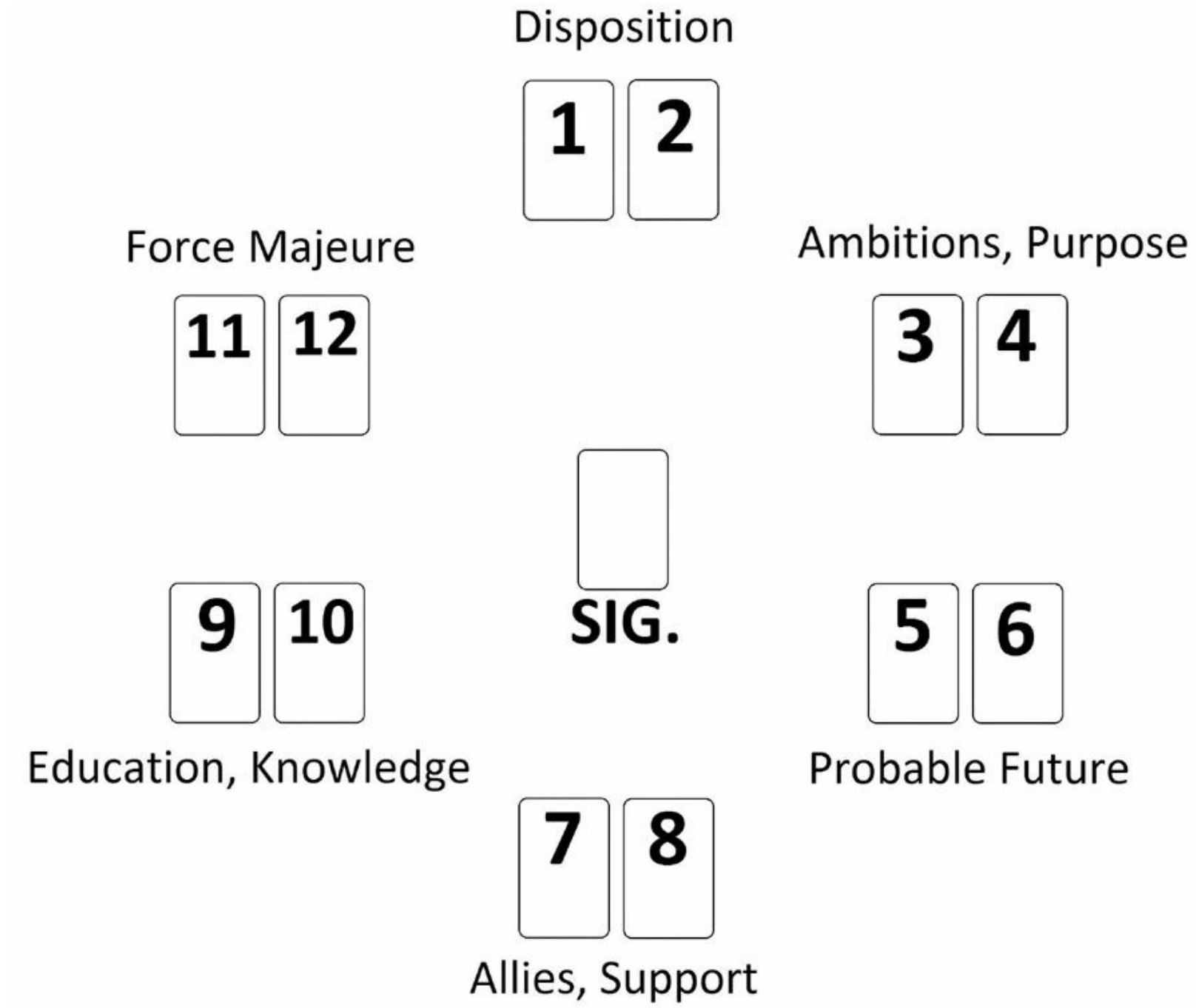


For General or Specific Questions. Place Signifier Card down first. Then place Card 1 directly o top of Signifier Card.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Heart of the Matter; What Covers Seeker in the Present
2	Challenges/Obstacles; What Blocks Seeker or What Will Come to Cross Seeker's Path
3	Past Influences/Foundation/Inner Sphere
4	Past Influences/Foundation/Inner Sphere
5	Lessons Not Yet Learned; Recurring Theme in Seeker's Life of Spiritual Significance; The Core of Seeker's Past; Past Life Influences
6	Past Hopes, Aspirations, or Fears; Speculative Future
7	Past Hopes, Aspirations, or Fears; Speculative Future
8	Latent Forces/Future Inner Sphere
9	Latent Forces/Future Inner Sphere
10	Seeker's Future Self; Who Seeker Is to Become
11	Most Probable Outcome/Future Outer Sphere
12	Most Probable Outcome/Future Outer Sphere



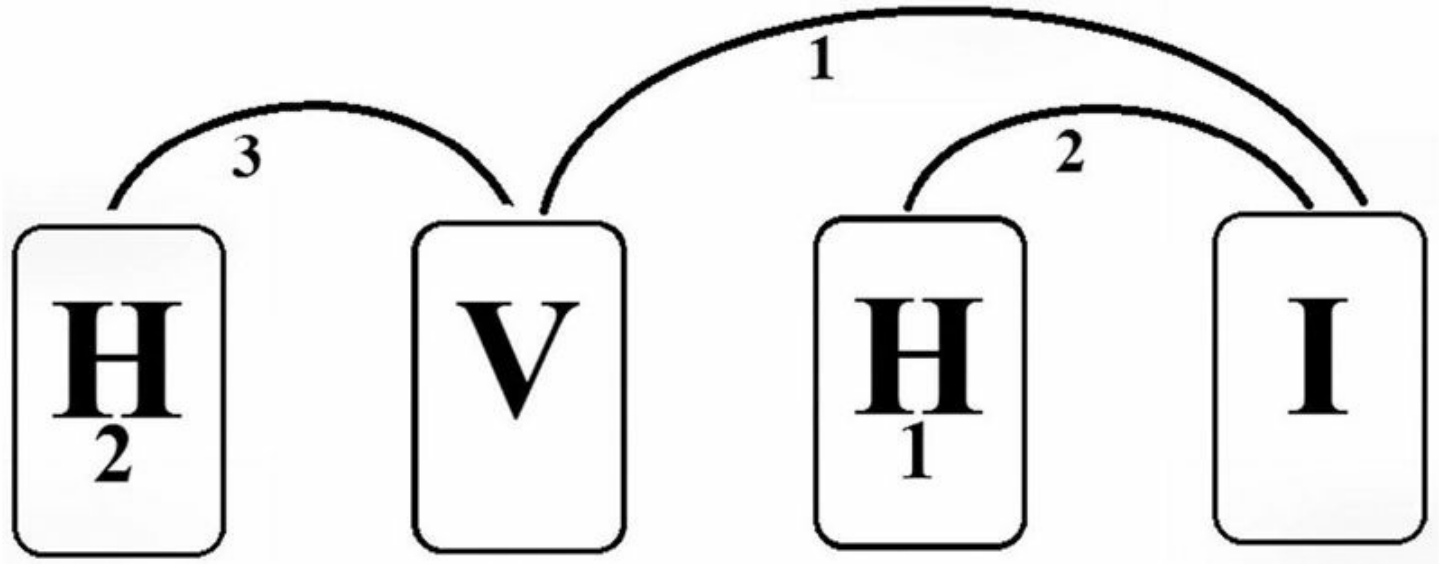
Six Faiths Spread



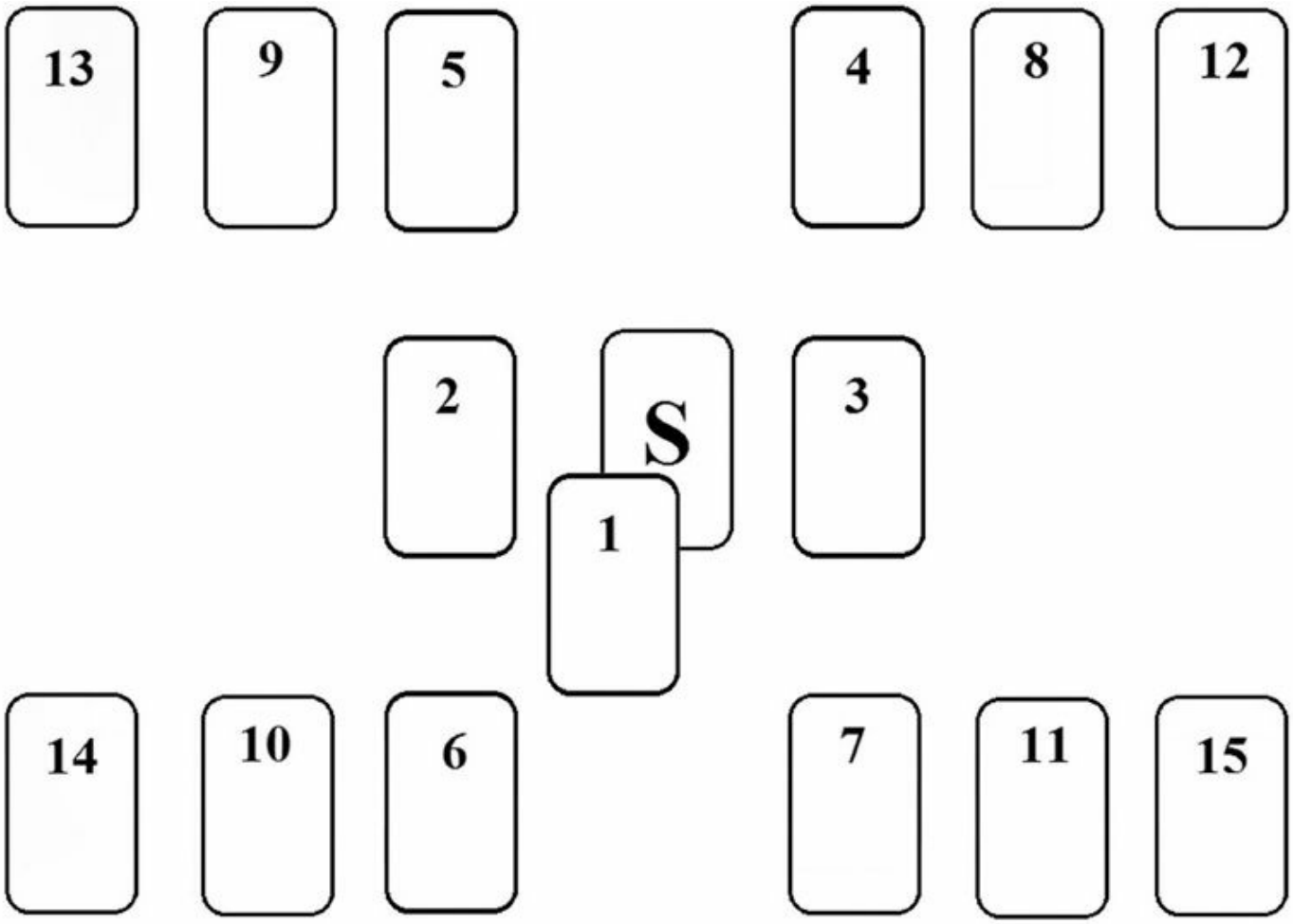
Place Signifier Card down first as shown in spread illustration.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	How Seeker Views the Self, Yin
2	How Seeker Views the Self, Yang
3	Goals and Ambitions, Yin
4	Goals and Ambitions, Yang
5	Most Probable Future, Yin
6	Most Probable Future, Yang
7	Seeker’s Support and Allies, Yin
8	Seeker’s Support and Allies, Yang
9	Knowledge and Experiences, Yin
10	Knowledge and Experiences, Yang
11	Environment; External Forces, Yin
12	Environment; External Forces, Yang

Grand Profile: Life Assessment Spread

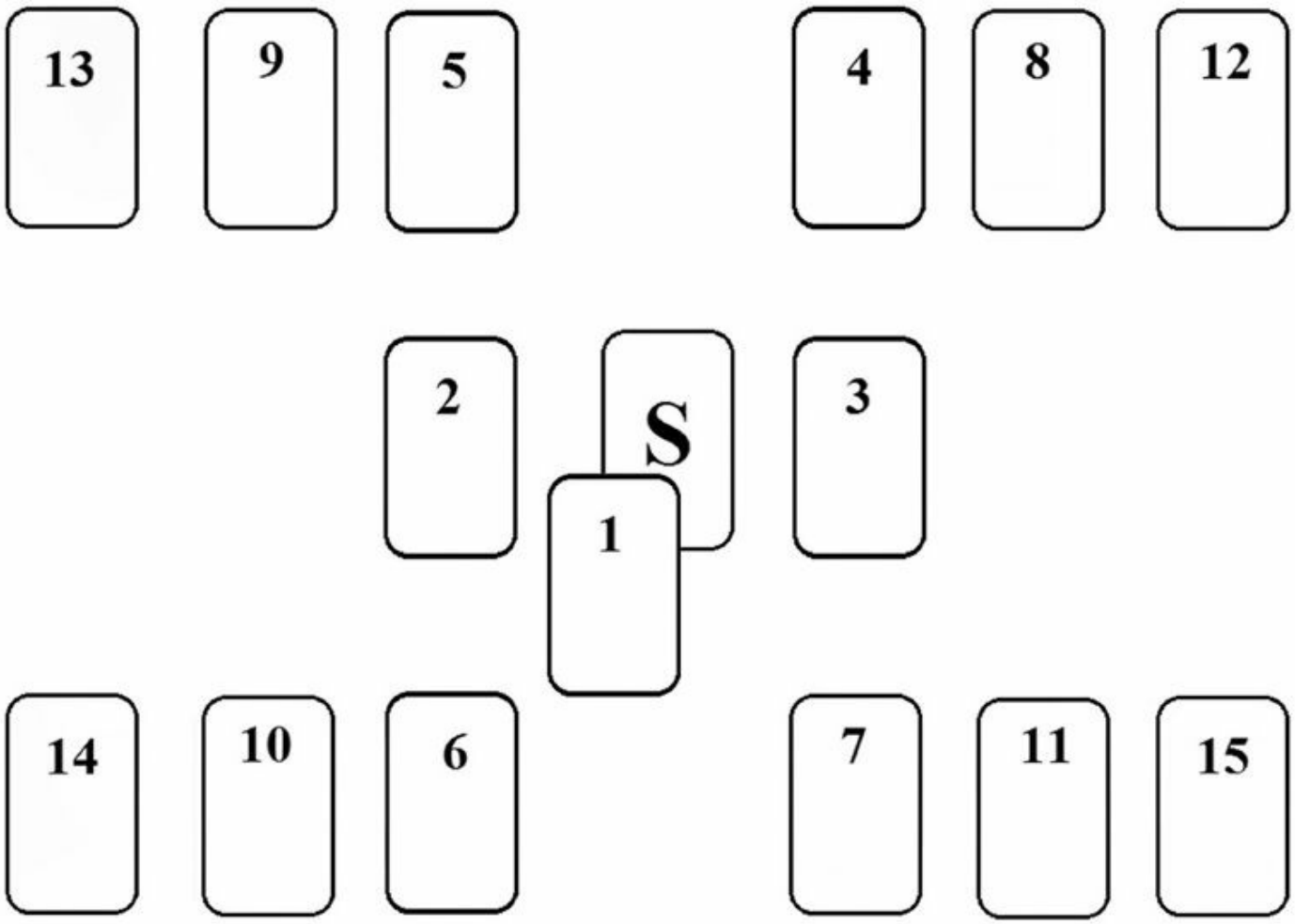


No signifier is required for this reading technique. Cut deck into four piles, following the methodology of the First Operation.



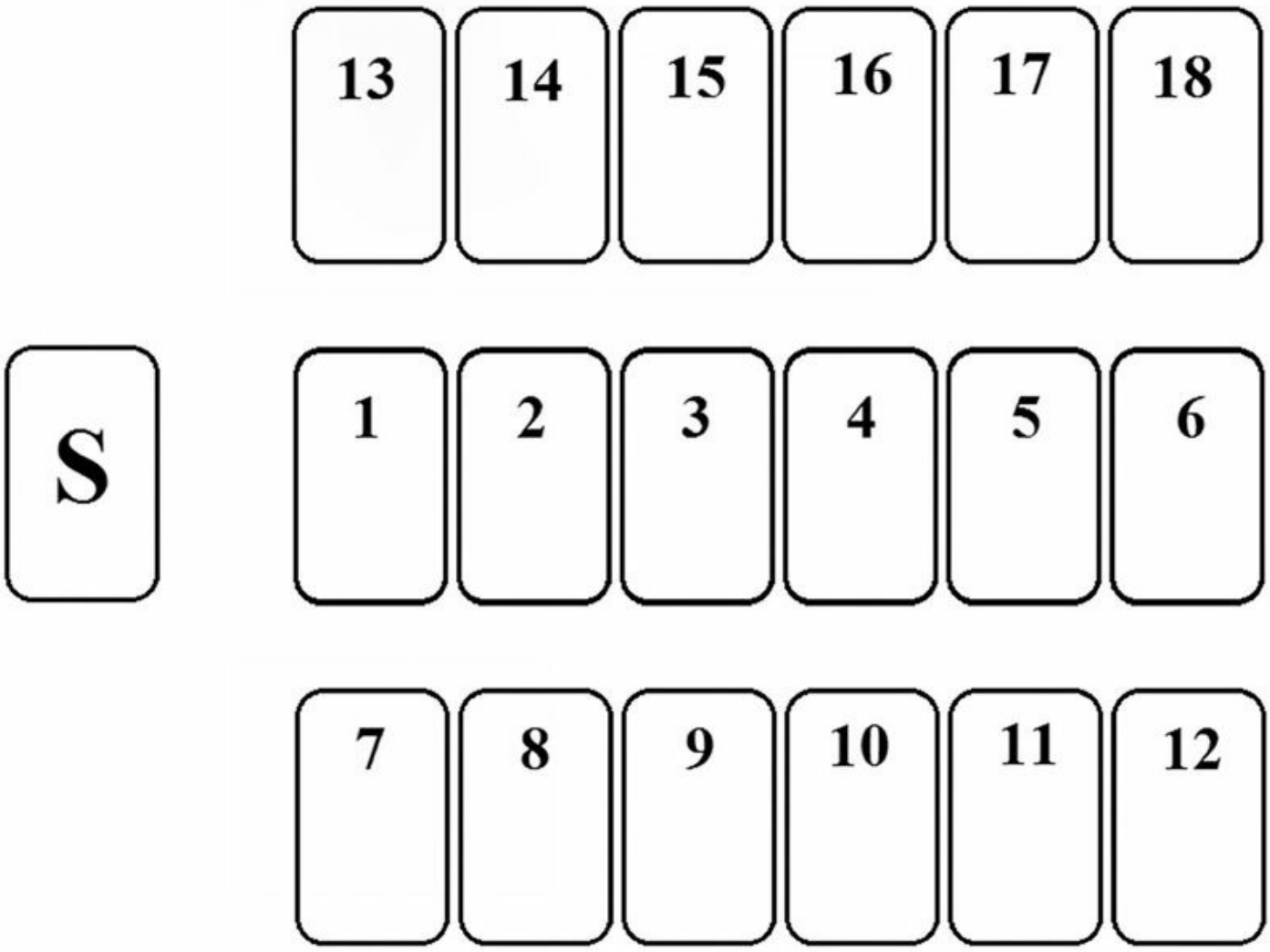
	Step 1	Step 2
I	Pick up the "I" pile and ask the Seeker to select a number 1 through 10. If there are less cards than the number Seeker selected, go with the total number of cards in the pile.	Lay out the number of cards Seeker selected (or the number of cards in the pile) into a spread and read the cards in totality to assess the outlook of Seeker's WORK/CAREER.
H_1	Pick up the "H_1" pile and ask the Seeker to select a number 1 through 10. If there are less cards than the number Seeker selected, go with the total number of cards in the pile.	Lay out the number of cards Seeker selected (or the number of cards in the pile) into a spread and read the cards in totality to assess the outlook of Seeker's LOVE/RELATIONSHIPS/FAMILY.
V	Pick up the "V" pile and ask the Seeker to select a number 1 through 10. If there are less cards than the number Seeker selected, go with the total number of cards in the pile.	Lay out the number of cards Seeker selected (or the number of cards in the pile) into a spread and read the cards in totality to assess the outlook of Seeker's AREAS OF TENSION; AMBITIONS; ROLE IN SOCIETY/GREATER PURPOSE.
H_2	Pick up the "H_2" pile and ask the Seeker to select a number 1 through 10. If there are less cards than the number Seeker selected, go with the total number of cards in the pile.	Lay out the number of cards Seeker selected (or the number of cards in the pile) into a spread and read the cards in totality to assess the outlook of Seeker's FINANCIAL/PROPERTY MATTERS.

The Traditional Fifteen-Card Spread



Card #	Position Meaning
1	Present mental state; current problem
2	Key issue from past about problem
3	Key issue going forward about problem
4	Most likely outcome, 1 (see cards 8 and 12)
5	Possible alternative outcome, 1 (see cards 9 and 13)
6	Necessary factor to assist Seeker positively, 1 (see cards 10 and 14)
7	Greater external forces to mitigate, 1 (see cards 11 and 15)
8	Most likely outcome, 2 (see cards 4 and 12)
9	Possible alternative outcome, 1 (see cards 5 and 13)
10	Necessary factor to assist Seeker positively, 2 (see cards 6 and 14)
11	Greater external forces to mitigate, 2 (see cards 7 and 15)
12	Most likely outcome, 3 (see cards 4 and 8)
13	Possible alternative outcome, 1 (see cards 5 and 9)
14	Necessary factor to assist Seeker positively, 3 (see cards 10 and 6)
15	Greater external forces to mitigate, 3 (see cards 7 and 11)

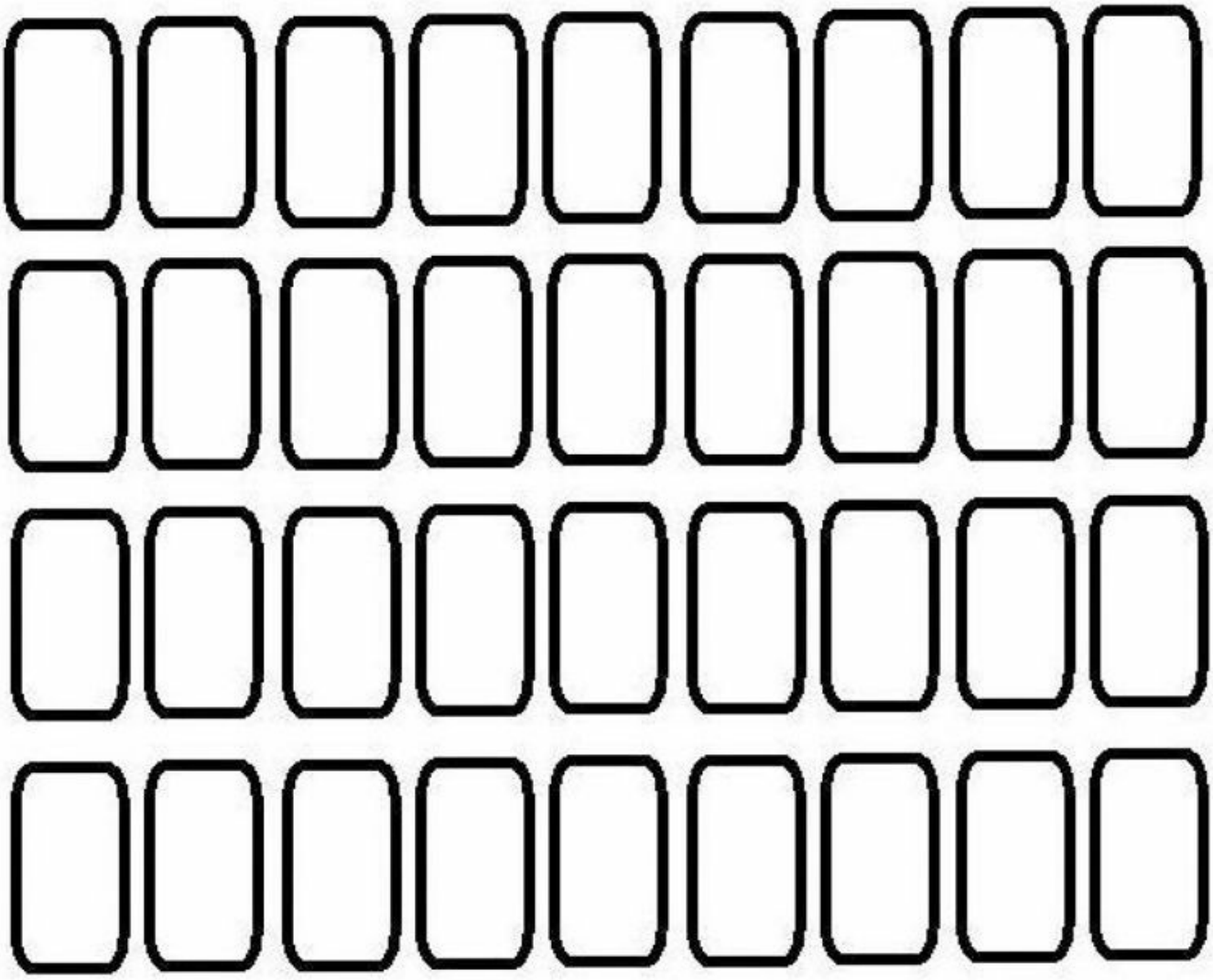
The Chai Eighteen-Card Spread



Row	Position Meaning
1–6	Most pertinent energies surrounding the PRESENT
7–12	PAST INFLUENCES that still affect Seeker's present
13–18	Based on current trajectory, the most likely FUTURE OUTCOME for Seeker

Column	Position Meaning
13 14 1 2 7 8	The source; causation; the foundation or root of Seeker's knowledge and experiences; where Seeker is coming from. Cards 1 and 2 are the cards that Seeker seems to be focusing primarily on and that occupy Seeker's attention the most. Cards 7 and 8 are the energies that set the past events into motion. Cards 13 and 14 are the immediate future.
15 16 3 4 9 10	The complication; effects of causation; areas of ongoing conflict or tension. These cards indicate how Seeker can advance out of present situation and toward a more favorable future outcome. Cards 3, 4, 9, and 10 represent what Seeker had little control over. Cards 15 and 16 represent what Seeker can still change.
17 18 5 6 11 12	These columns represent the most important energies that must be harnessed for Seeker to find equilibrium. Cards 5 and 6 suggest where Seeker is headed in the immediate future. Cards 11 and 12 represent past influences that have the strongest hold over 5 and 6. Cards 17 and 18 represent what Seeker has the most power and control over.

The Grand Tableau Tarot Spread



Signifier Selection

Select the signifier and set aside. The Seeker shuffles the entire deck thoroughly and draws out thirty-five cards. Shuffle the thirty-five cards with the signifier (thirty-six total), and lay out in the Grand Tableau spread.

Row and Column Interpretation

Cards in the *same column as the signifier* represent the Seeker's present moment and what is occupying the Seeker's mind and circumstances right now.

Cards in the *same row to the left of the signifier* represent past events that still have a hold over the Seeker.

Cards in the same row to the right of the signifier represent what is most likely to come, given Seeker's present actions and state of mind; the most probable future outcome.

Quadrant Interpretation

Cards to the top left represent the conscious or external plane. These cards are speculative thoughts that correspond with past events.

Cards to the top right represent aspirations, what could have been, and the what-ifs. These cards also represent possible alternative future outcomes if the Seeker chooses a different trajectory from the one he or she is on now.

Cards to the bottom right denote the unconscious internal plane. They also represent what the Seeker has control over. If Seeker wants a different outcome then the one forecasted, then Seeker must control these factors.

Cards to the bottom left denote the Seeker's physical world, what has come to pass, or what is part of Seeker's legacy, history, or emotional baggage.

Knighting

Knight cards are the cards that are either: two cards over left or right and one card up or down, which are positioned in an "L" shape relative to the signifier. Knight cards represent imminent action in the Seeker's life.

A knighted card to the signifier's right represents the elements that will directly help the Seeker advance onward to the next stage of his or her life or toward the Seeker's objectives.

A knighted card to the signifier's left represents past actions or energies that threaten to challenge Seeker from obtaining his or her objectives.

A knighted card on a row *above the signifier* represents opportunities that the Seeker must seize.

A knighted card on a row *below the signifier* represents personal energies, outlook, or traits that Seeker must learn to control.

Mirroring

A card that is a symmetrical reflection of the signifier over the vertical axis to the signifier's *left* represents who the Seeker used to be and will indicate a Seeker who has made substantial changes or has gone through a major makeover of him- or herself to become who the Seeker is today.

A card that is a symmetrical reflection of the signifier over the vertical axis to the signifier's *right* represents who the Seeker is going to become someday or indicates a coming makeover that will change the way the Seeker sees him- or herself.

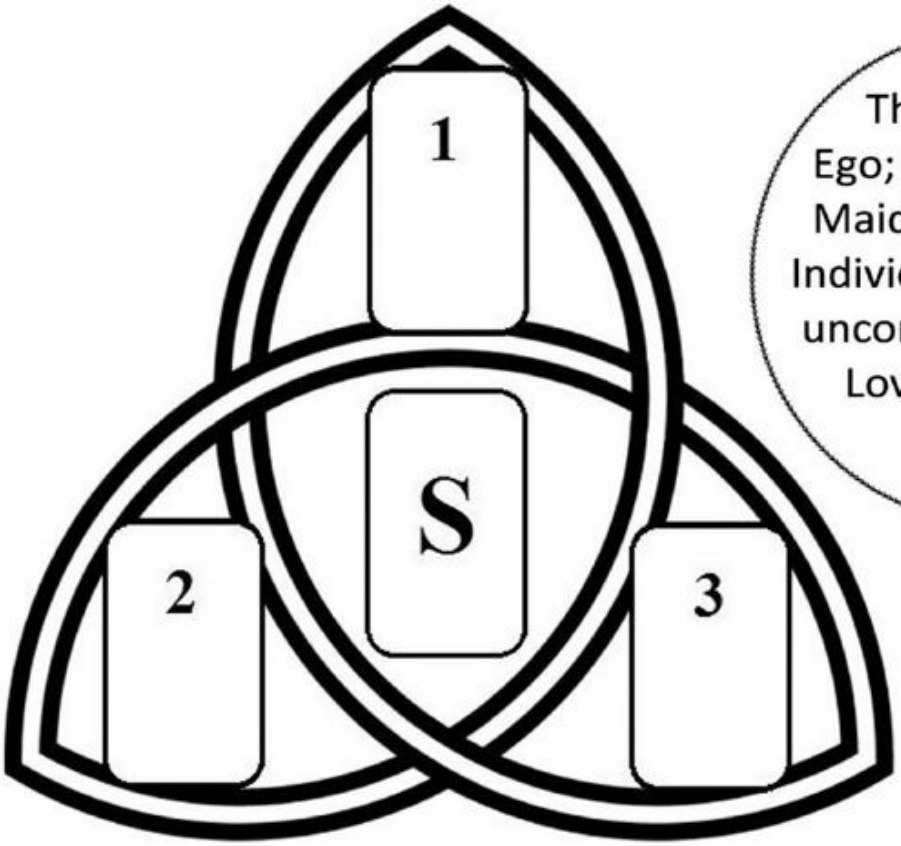
A card that is a symmetrical reflection of the signifier over the horizontal axis *above* the signifier represents the image or likeness of the Seeker that the Seeker wants to be. The card is speculative and has not yet come to materialize as the Seeker's reality.

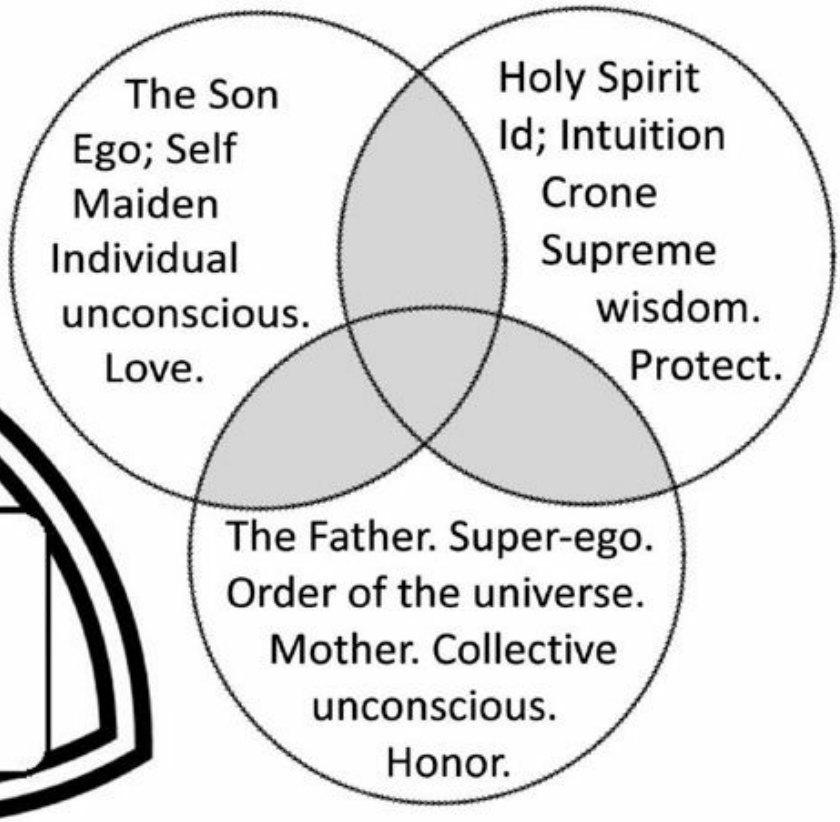
A card that is a symmetrical reflection of the signifier over the horizontal axis *below* the signifier represents the Seeker's shadow. This represents the Seeker's true image that he or she tries hard to conceal from the external world. This represents a Seeker with many secrets, perhaps also many insecurities, and a Seeker who still needs to learn how to come to terms with his or her identity.

The Triquetra Outcome Management Spread

To be performed following a tarot reading if and only if the Seeker is going through a time of crisis. Only the Major Arcana or, in the alternative, an oracle deck, should be used. The Triquetra will draw out the trinitarian force that the Seeker needs specifically to overcome the crisis. The Triquetra also

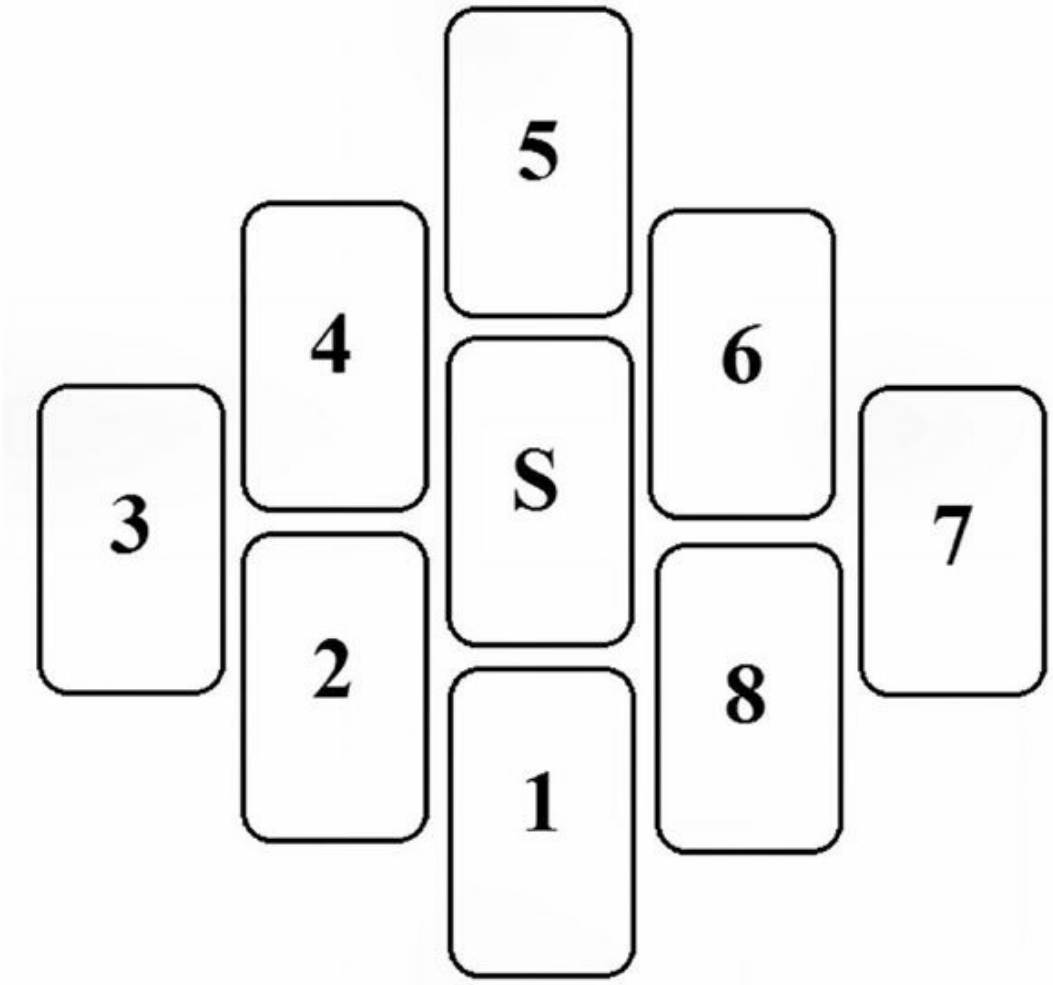
blesses and empowers the Seeker with these forces so that the Seeker can be stronger and thus change his or her own fate. If blessing incantations are in line with the practitioner's subscribed faith, then one may be performed here to seal the trinity to the Seeker.





Card #	Position Meaning
1	First power to master. This is Seeker's initial focus. The self. Ego. Individual subconscious. Self-awareness.
2	Power mastered with support of others. The Seeker must ask for help. Do not try to overcome the hardship alone. Aspiration of the superego. Nurturing from others. How the collective unconscious can come to the Seeker's aid.
3	Final power needed. May be most elusive to Seeker. Work the hardest at harnessing this power. Supreme wisdom. How the Seeker's individual subconscious can become one with the collective unconscious.

The Ba Gua Spread

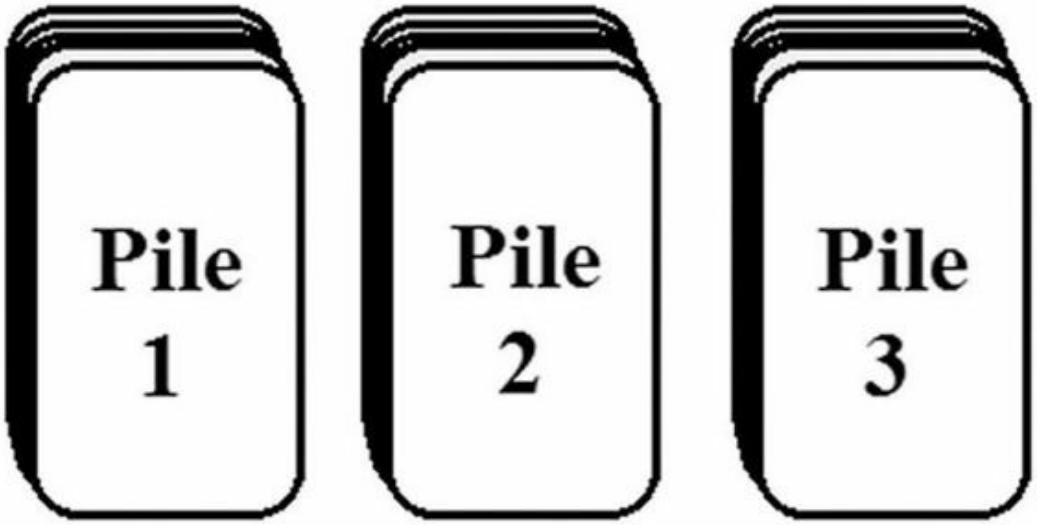


For General Questions. Place Signifier Card down first as shown in spread illustration.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Career/Work Influences (or Personal Development Influences)
2	Knowledge/Experience Influences
3	Past Influences
4	Financial/Material
5	How the World Sees Seeker
6	Love/Relationships (or Emotional Influences)
7	Probable Future
8	Seeker’s Allies/Support

Eden Gray's Three Aces Spread

For Yes or No Questions. No Signifier Card Needed.



Step One	After shuffling the deck thoroughly, begin turning the cards face up onto **Pile 1**. Count the cards and identify Ace cards. If an Ace card appears, stop and move on to Pile 2. If no Ace card appears, stop at thirteen cards.
Step Two	Begin turning the cards face up onto **Pile 2**, to the immediate right of Pile 1. Count the cards and identify Ace cards. If an Ace card appears, stop and move on to Pile 3. If no Ace card appears, stop at thirteen cards.
Step Three	Begin turning the cards face up onto **Pile 3**, to the immediate right of Pile 2. Count the cards and identify Ace cards. If an Ace card appears, stop. If no Ace card appears, stop at thirteen cards.

Spread Outcome	Meaning	
No Aces	Seeker's question cannot be answered at this time.	
One Ace Only	Ace is Upright	The answer is "Yes."
	Ace is Reversed	The answer is "No."
Two Aces	Gray's Approach	Right pile reveals immediate outcome. Left pile reveals final outcome. Reversed Aces indicate setbacks/delays
	Author's Approach	Left pile reveals immediate outcome. Right pile reveals final outcome.
Three Aces		The answer is "Yes." Reversed Aces indicate setbacks/delays/warnings.

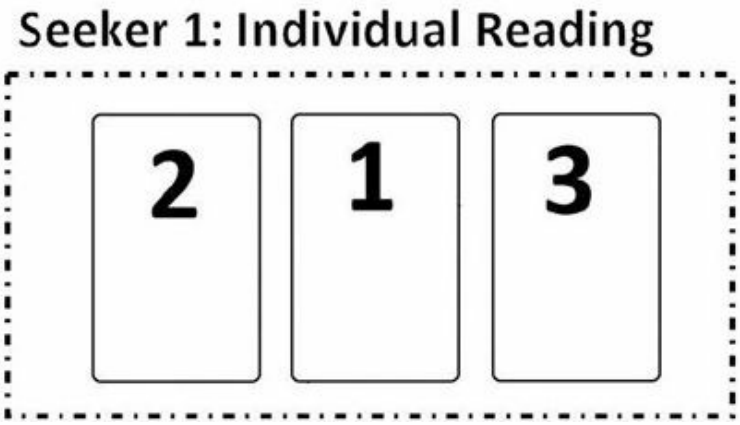
Note: The suit of the Ace card will provide further detail to the answer. Non-Ace cards in the spread indicate why the answer is "No" and what the Seeker can do to improve the matter at hand for a more favorable outcome.

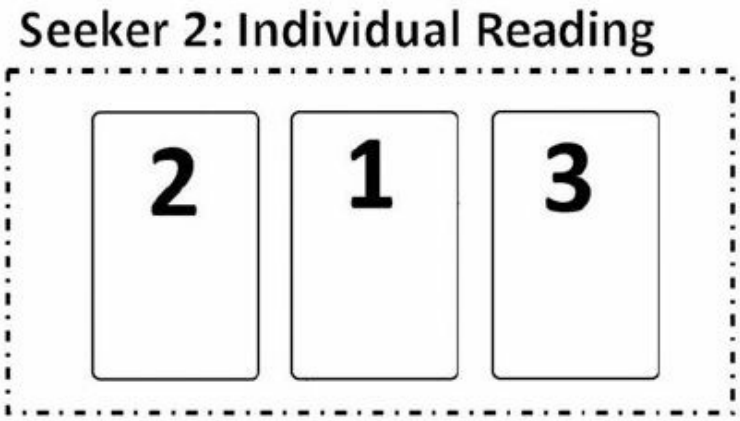
Two-Seeker Love and Relationship Spread

This is the spread for lovers, to offer insight into their relationship.

Separate Readings for Each Seeker:

First select a Signifier Card for each Seeker. Splay out all cards on the table and have each Seeker draw into a pile thirty-nine cards total, or half the deck. After each Seeker shuffles his or her pile, take the half-deck from each Seeker for two three-card spreads.

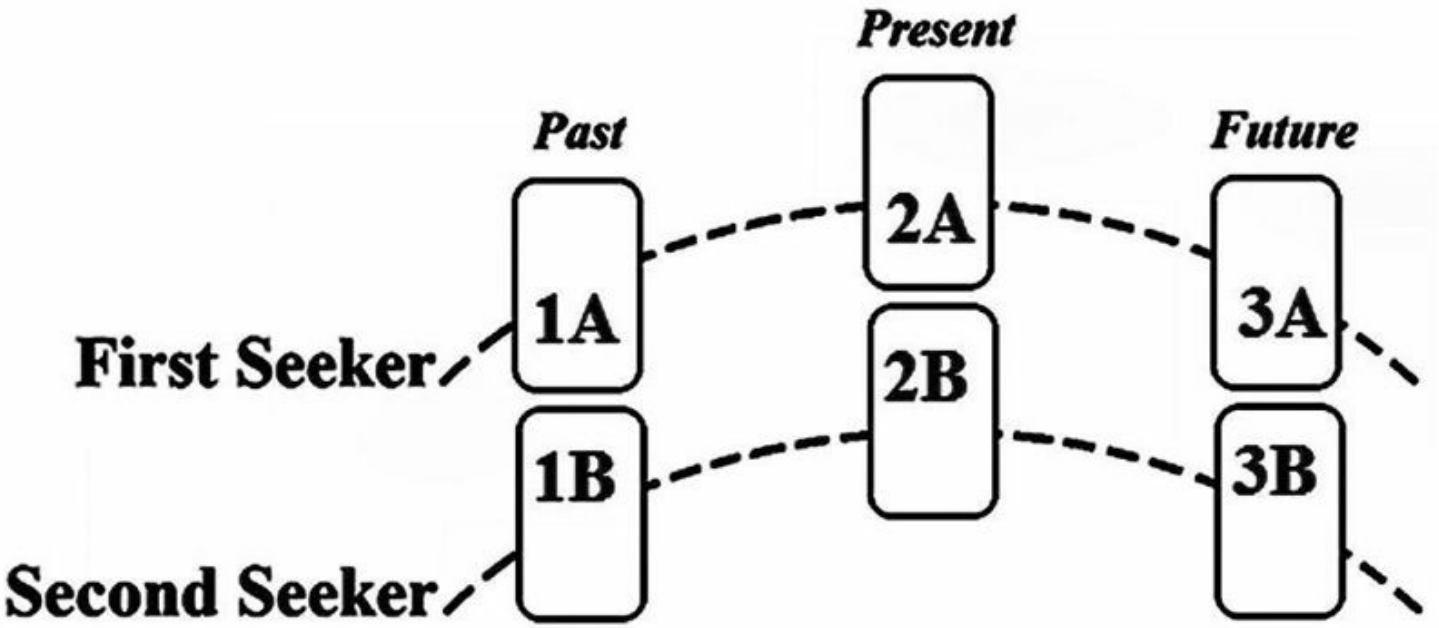




Card #	Position Meaning
1	Seeker's present situation, present mental state
2	Past influences affecting Seeker's present state
3	Seeker's aspirations, hopes, fears, and/or most probable outcome for the immediate future

Perform an independent and separate reading for each Seeker using a three-card spread. After the separate readings, reshuffle the cards and perform the following combined reading.

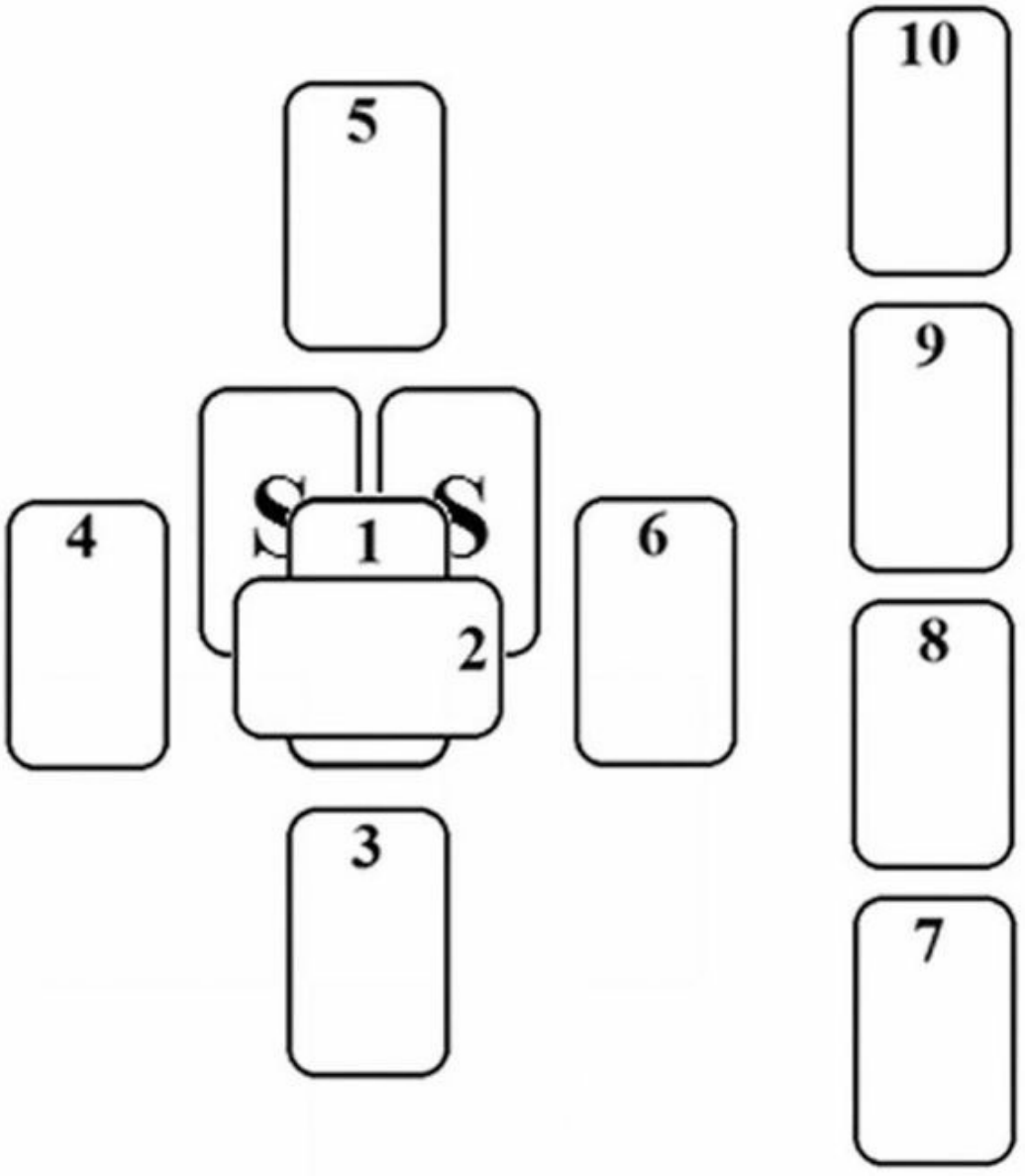
COMBINED READING FOR THE COUPLE:



Card #	Position Meaning	Card #	Position Meaning
1A	First Seeker's past influences that affect the relationship	1B	Second Seeker's past influences that affect the relationship
2A	First Seeker's present state of mind	2B	Second Seeker's present state of mind
3A	First Seeker's aspirations and expectations of the relationship	3B	Second Seeker's aspirations and expectations of the relationship

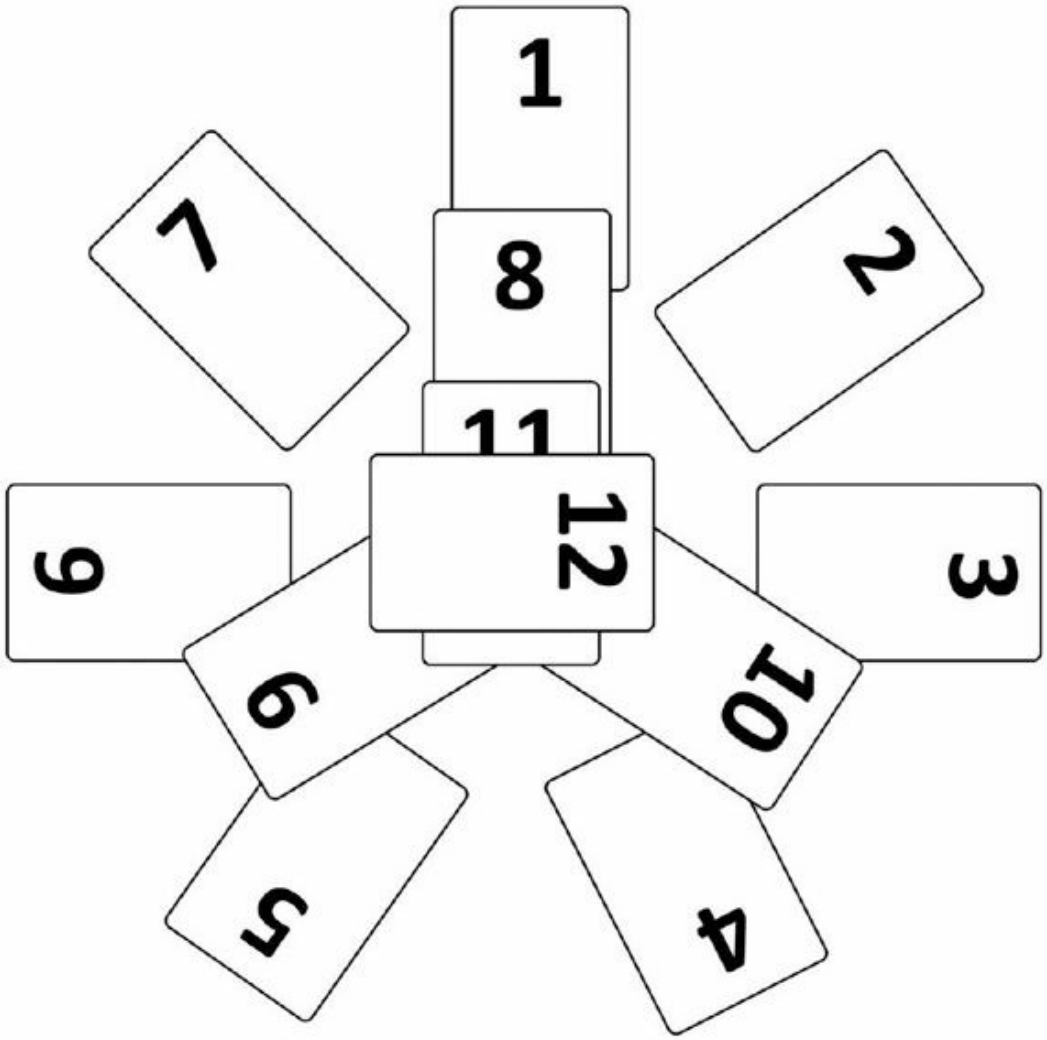
For an in-depth examination of the couple's relationship, a third spread can be used. Place the two Signifier Cards side by side and proceed using any multicard tarot spread of your choosing.

Optional Final Spread:



The Celtic Cross is optimal, as it can support either a specific question the couple might have abou their relationship or just a more general detailed reading.

The Rose



The Rose spread is suited for specific inquiries or, if a general inquiry, then use in conjunction with the First Operation.

If the Signifier appears in the I pile, then separate out the suit of Wands from the Minor Arcana. I the Signifier appears in the H_1 pile, then the Cups; the V pile, then the Swords; the H_2 pile, then the suit of Pentacles. If the First Operation was not performed, then select the suit corresponding with the Seeker's specific inquiry. Separate the corresponding suit cards (fourteen total) into one pile (Suit Pile). The remaining three suits make up another pile (Remaining Minor Arcana).

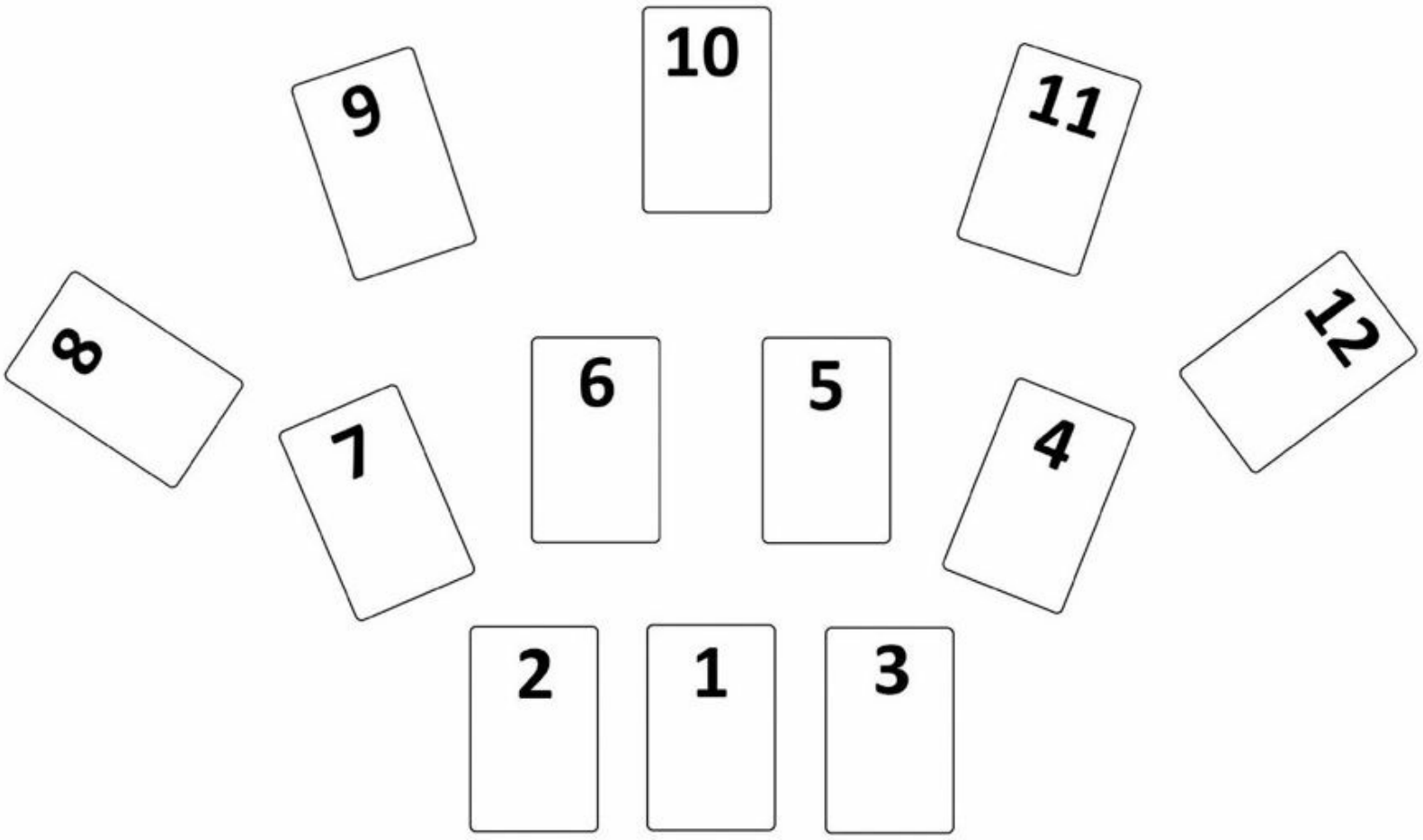
Also separate out the Major Arcana cards (twenty-two total for the Major Arcana).

Each tier of petals of The Rose spread will be drawn from a different pile of cards.

First Operation	Specific Inquiry	Corresponding Suit
I	Work/Career, a Creative Project	Wands
H_1	Love, Relationships, Family	Cups
V	Dispute, Legal Issue, Community, Greater Ambition	Swords
H_2	Money, Property, Wealth, Assets	Pentacles

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Shuffle and cut. Draw these cards from the Remaining Minor Arcana pile of cards. Cards 1 through 7, the outer petals of the rose, indicate the extenuating circumstances that enclose or heavily affect the matter at hand. Assess the overall landscape of the seven cards and interpret them as a cohesive narrative. Note any suit dominance, any patterns, repetitions, and other synchronicities. Apply the checklist of consideration points for a reading from Chapter 15.
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	Shuffle and cut. Draw these cards from the Suit Pile of cards. Cards 8 through 10 represent the trinitarian forces at play in the matter at hand, specifically how the matter will play out for the Seeker.
9	
10	
11	Draw these two cards from the Major Arcana. These are the force majeure that governs the matter at hand. These forces block and weaken each other, or they amplify and strengthen each other, depending on the elemental dignities.
12	

The Seashell



Best suited for general inquiries. A Signifier may be used, which is placed in the position beneath Card 1 before the commencement of the reading.

Card #	Position Meaning
1	Present Situation; Present Mental State; What Occupies Seeker
2	Past Influences on the Present
3	Most Probable Outcome or Trajectory Seeker Is On
4	Work/Career Issues; Creative Projects; Personal Development
5	Love/Relationships; Family; Seeker's Emotional Plane
6	Ambitions; Any Disputes; Seeker's External Social Plane
7	Money Issues; Assets; Property; Seeker's Material Plane
8	Force Majeure: Acts of God Beyond Seeker's Control
9	Karma: Seeker's Karmic Path; Why Things Happen to Seeker
10	Disposition: Seeker's Character as it Affects Seeker's Path
11	Education: What Knowledge Seeker Needs for Success
12	Action: What Seeker Must Do Going Forward to Succeed

Lo Shu Square Spread

For a Nature and Nurture Comparison.

Nature

Enter the digits of the Seeker's date of birth into the Lo Shu Square. SeeChapter 16 for review. Consult the subsequent charts for Vertical, Horizontal, and Diagonal Planes, to assess the fundamental disposition the Seeker was born with. The Nature Chart reveals the Seeker's innate strengths and weaknesses.

Date of Birth:						**Willpower.** (✓)
Finances	4	Ambitions/ Achievement	9	Relationships	2	**Metal Faculties.**
Family	3	Health	5	Offspring/ Innovation	7	**Emotional Faculties.**
Knowledge/ Education	8	Career	1	Allies/ Community	6	**Physical Faculties.**
Rationality.		**Tenacity.**		**Attitude/Outlook.**		**Spiritual Faculties.**

VERTICAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Rationality Quotient (“Rationality”) 4–3–8	A highly analytical and logical mind. Seeker deliberates on facts and merits and does not yield to emotion, personal relationships, or intuition.	Seeker makes decisions on instinct and intuition. Seeker does not require every situation in life to be explained rationally. Makes judgments on a case by case basis, always considering the human element.
Perseverance Quotient (“Tenacity”) 9–5–1	Incredible drive, determination, and focus. Stubborn. Does not give up easily, but Seeker also resistant to change. Seeker is the most hardworking of character archetypes.	Acquiescence; a softer personality. Seeker yields so that there may be peace and harmony. Dislikes confrontations. Gives up too easily. Need to be more perseverant in life to achieve goals.
Sensitivity Quotient (“Attitude/Outlook”) 2–7–6	Optimistic and positive outlook on life. Seeker is sensitive to others, empathic, compassionate, warmhearted, and benevolent. Seeker cares about other people’s problems and is always empathetic to their troubles.	A realist, and also someone who could be predisposed to melancholy and pensiveness. Can also forget to consider the feelings of others. May appear aloof or detached. Stiff, firm, and often unyielding. Often thinks others brought their problems on themselves.

HORIZONTAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Mental Faculties 4–9–2	An inclination to devote life path to ideas, big picture dreams, ambitions, and intellectualism. Seeker is a thinker and solves problems with his or her mind.	Does not devote enough to nurturing ideas, philosophy, and intellectualism. A master at interpersonal relationships, but may not be as self-aware as Seeker believes self to be. Devote more time to scholarly pursuits.
Emotional Faculties 3–5–7	An inclination to devote life path to persuading others, to understanding the emotional temperature of any setting. Seeker is a romantic at heart. Believes in love and compassion.	Does not devote enough to nurturing emotions and relationships. Seeker is more thoughts and ideas driven. Do not forget about E.Q. (emotional quotient).
Physical Faculties 8–1–6	An inclination to be hands-on and to devote life path to understanding Seeker's world as perceived through the five physical senses. Very practical, pragmatic, and possesses a great deal of strength and vitality.	Seeker may be physically fragile. Pay closer attention to health and body. May be prone to lethargy and fatigue. Seeker relies more heavily on intellect, mind, or the emotional plane, and not so much on the physical plane.

DIAGONAL PLANES		
	(+) All 3 sectors are covered.	(–) All 3 sectors are empty.
Line of Force (“Willpower”) 8–5–2	A leader, but perhaps one who is too forceful or aggressive. Temperance needed. It should not be “your way or the highway.” Find compromise. Seeker may be too pushy. Learn to yield.	An inclination for group identification. Seeker cares about how others perceive him or her and that causes Seeker to yield more often than he or she asserts the self. Learn to be more self-assured and decisive.
Line of Intuition (“Spiritual Faculties”) 4–5–6	Seeker devotes time to seeking the higher truths of the universe.	A born skeptic, someone who wants fact-based conclusions, and not intuition or emotion based. Seeker trusts what can be seen and proven. A primary lesson in Seeker’s karmic life path is to seek out spirituality and learn to respect and rely on intuition as much as Seeker does logical analysis.

Nurture

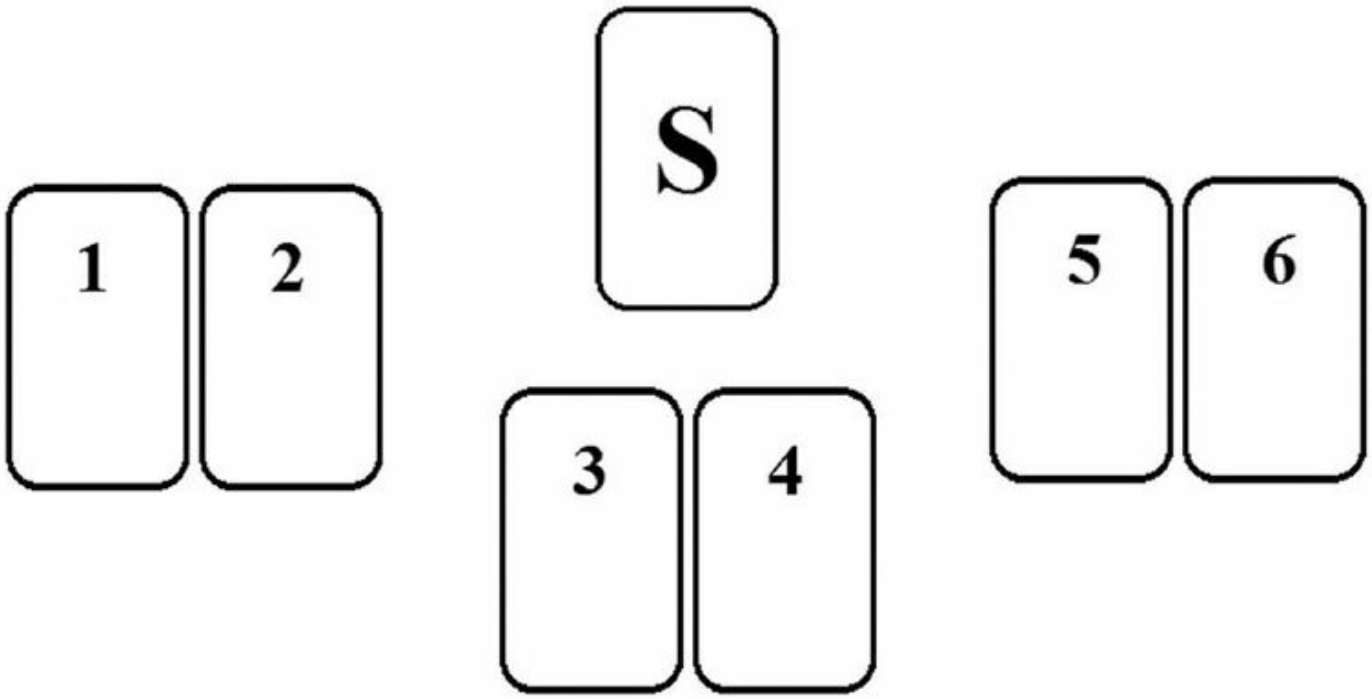
Shuffle and cut the tarot deck. Draw eight cards. Note, however: if there were zeros in the Seeker’s date of birth, deduct one card for every zero in the date of birth (e.g., a person born on 01/02/2001 would only draw four cards rather than eight). Note the corresponding numerological value of each card drawn and place it into its corresponding position in the below chart. Apply the chart’s correspondences to the cards drawn to assess the Seeker’s nurture influences.

Finances 4	Life Dreams 9	Relationships 2
Family 3	Health 5	Offspring 7
Knowledge 8	Career 1	Community 6

The Six-Card Past, Present, and Future Love Spread

This spread reads specifically about love and romance, either a general inquiry about the chronology of a Seeker's love life, past, present, and future, or a specific inquiry about a lover or prospective

lover. A Signifier Card is required.



Card #	Position Meaning
1	*For General Inquiry:* Past romantic involvements. If at least one of the two cards are of the same suit or elemental correspondence as one of the two cards in Cards 3 and 4, then the love is still part of Seeker's present. *For Specific Inquiry:* How Seeker and the lover (or prospective lover) came to know each other, why there is chemistry (or lack thereof).
2	
3	*For General Inquiry:* Present state of romantic affairs. If at least one of the two cards are of the same suit or elemental correspondence as one of the two cards in Cards 5 and 6, then the love will endure into Seeker's future. *For Specific Inquiry:* The present state of the relationship or the current potential for such a relationship to yield positive fruition for the Seeker.
4	
5	*For General or Specific Inquiry:* Most probable future outcome of current romantic affairs. Swords or more severe cards could suggest single status. Two of Cups suggests strong relationship. Four of Wands, Ten of Cups, or The Empress suggest marriage, family.
6	

Appendix B:
Astrological Symbols and Elemental Associations

Western astrology, which is based on constellations, is an integral part of the tarot decks from the eighteenth century. According to the traditions of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, astrology is considered one of the three wisdoms of the universe. Not surprisingly, A. E. Waite, a purported member of the Golden Dawn, drew extensively from astrology in creating the Rider-Waite deck. Subsequent decks associated with the Golden Dawn, such as the Hermetic Tarot, are also rich with astrological symbolism. Thus, basic knowledge of the symbols and their attributions are helpful in tarot practice.

Please further note that the following astrological and astronomical associations are based on the majority approach, adapted from the Golden Dawn interpretive system.[1] Other interpretations differ greatly. For example, A. E. Thierens outlines another approach to astrological attributions in the tarot in his book *General Book of the Tarot* (1930).[2]

B1. Solar System Symbols

Symbol	*Planet*	*Element*	*Attribution*
	Sun	Fire	**Key 19 The Sun** Represents: Self-awareness; Vitality Corresponding Number: 1
	Moon	Water	**Key 2 The High Priestess** Represents: Intuition; Latent Influences Corresponding Number: 2
	Mercury	Earth Air	**Key 1 The Magician** Represents: Understanding; A Messenger Corresponding Number: 4
	Venus	Earth	**Key 3 The Empress** Represents: Love; Attraction; Fertility Corresponding Number: 6
	Mars	Fire	**Key 16 The Tower** Represents: Aggression; Ambition; Drive Corresponding Number: 3
	Jupiter	Fire	**Key 10 The Wheel of Fortune** Represents: Wisdom; Expansion Corresponding Number: 5
	Saturn	Earth	**Key 21 The World** Represents: Control; Cultivation Corresponding Number: 7
	Uranus	Air	**Key 0 The Fool** Represents: Change; Revolution Corresponding Number: 8
	Neptune	Water	**Key 12 The Hanged Man** Represents: Deep Unconscious; Dreams Corresponding Number: 9
	Pluto	Water Fire	**Key 20 Judgement** Represents: Transformation; Rebirth

B2. Zodiac Constellations

Symbol	*Zodiac*	*Sun Sign Dates*	*Keyword Attribution*	*Ruling Planet*	*Element*	*Golden Dawn Attributions*
	Aries Ram	March 21 - April 19	Life / The Self	Mars	Fire	Key 4 The Emperor
	Taurus Bull	April 20 - May 20	Wealth	Venus	Earth	Key 5 The Hierophant
	Gemini Twins	May 21 - June 20	Siblings / Communication	Mercury	Air	Key 6 The Lovers
	Cancer Crab	June 21 - July 22	Heritage	Moon	Water	Key 7 The Chariot
	Leo Lion	July 23 - August 22	Enjoyment	Sun	Fire	Key 8 Strength
	Virgo Maiden	August 23 - September 22	Vitality	Mercury	Earth	Key 9 The Hermit
	Libra Scales	September 23 - October 22	Diplomacy	Venus	Air	Key 11 Justice
	Scorpio Scorpion	October 23 - November 21	Cycles / Transformation	See Table B3.	Water	Key 13 Death
	Sagittarius Archer	November 22 - December 21	Journey	Jupiter	Fire	Key 14 Temperance
	Capricorn Goat	December 22 - January 19	Status	Saturn	Earth	Key 15 The Devil
	Aquarius Water Bearer	January 20 - February 18	Community	See Table B3.	Air	Key 17 The Star
	Pisces Fish	February 19 - March 20	Seclusion	See Table B3.	Water	Key 18 The Moon

The keyword attributions above are based on the Babylonian interpretation of the twelve astrological houses. The Babylonian interpretation of the twelve houses precedes the Golden Dawn's interpretation, which is provided through the Major Arcana card associations. The correspondences set forth in this book represent one approach only. Note that there are many alternative and even contradicting approaches, based on different interpretive systems.

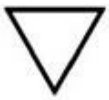
Note further that there is a distinction between traditional rulerships and modern rulerships:[3]

B3. Traditional vs. Modern Rulership Distinctions

	Traditional Rulership			*Modern Rulership*		
♏ **Scorpio**	♂ Mars	△ Fire		♇ Pluto	▽ Water	△ Fire
♒ **Aquarius**	♄ Saturn	▽ Earth		⊙ Uranus	⧋ Air	
♓ **Pisces**	♃ Jupiter	△ Fire	⧋ Air	♆ Neptune	▽ Water	

B4. Alchemical Symbols of the Elements and Associations

The following alchemical symbols are used in the Cyclopedia to aid the practitioner in interpreting elemental dignities:[4]

	Fire	Active. Associated with suit of Wands. Motivated, charismatic, individualist, strong. Tendency to be opinionated, headstrong, and intractable. *Complementary with Air. Clashes with Water.*
	Water	Passive. Associated with suit of Cups. Emotional, sensitive, compassionate, intuitive. May be impulsive and the expense of logic and pragmatism. *Complementary with Earth. Clashes with Fire.*
	Air	Active. Associated with suit of Swords. Tempered, balanced, detached, intellectual. Analytical from a philosophical standpoint. *Complementary with Fire. Clashes with Earth.*
	Earth	Passive. Associated with suit of Pentacles. Stable, pragmatic, methodical, analytical from a fiscal standpoint. Utilitarian. Exercises common sense. *Complementary with Water. Clashes with Air.*

Element Min. Arc.	*Character Attrib.*	*Astrol. Signs / Maj. Arc.*	*State*	*State Character Attrib.*
FIRE Wands	Motivated. Creative. Great executive potential. Stubborn. An intractable personality. Willful. Opportunistic. Opinionated.	ARIES / The Emperor	Cardinal	Leaders. Goal-oriented. Takes charge. Initiates order. Active.
		LEO / Strength	Fixed	Reactive. Nurturers. Builders. Seeks to maintain order.
		SAGITTARIUS / Temperance	Mutable	Proactive. Progressive. Seeks out change. Pioneers.
WATER Cups	Sensitive. Charismatic. Strong people skills. Empathetic. Intuitive. Intensely emotional. Tenderhearted and the kindest of the four elemental personas.	CANCER / Chariot	Cardinal	Leaders. Goal-oriented. Takes charge. Initiates order. Active.
		SCORPIO / Death	Fixed	Reactive. Nurturers. Builders. Seeks to maintain order.
		PISCES / The Moon	Mutable	Proactive. Progressive. Seeks out change. Pioneers.
AIR Swords	Analytical. Inquisitive. May appear detached or dispassionate to others. Can be cruel. Capricious. Intellectualizes emotions.	LIBRA / Justice	Cardinal	Leaders. Goal-oriented. Takes charge. Initiates order. Active.
		AQUARIUS / The Star	Fixed	Reactive. Nurturers. Builders. Seeks to maintain order.
		GEMINI / The Lovers	Mutable	Proactive. Progressive. Seeks out change. Pioneers.
EARTH Pentacles	Loyal, methodical, pragmatic. Down-to-earth and most reliable of the four elemental personas. Utilitarian, but tendency to be materialistic.	CAPRICORN / The Devil	Cardinal	Leaders. Goal-oriented. Takes charge. Initiates order. Active.
		TAURUS / The Hierophant	Fixed	Reactive. Nurturers. Builders. Seeks to maintain order.
		VIRGO / The Hermit	Mutable	Proactive. Progressive. Seeks out change. Pioneers.

B6. Astrological Complements

Any combination of the following Major Arcana cards in a spread represents complementary forces that strengthen one another. It suggests a very strong likelihood of success for the Seeker, attributable to **the inner strength and innate capabilities of the Seeker**.

Key 19
The Sun

☉

Sun

Vitality
Self-Awareness

Key 1
The Magician

☿

Mercury

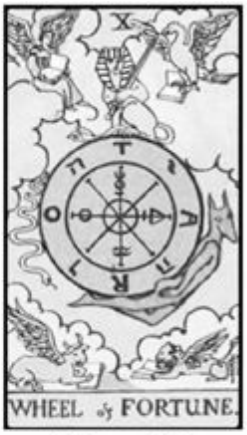
Control
Self-Mastery

Key 3
The Empress

♀

Venus

Creativity



Key 10
Wheel of Fortune

♃

Jupiter

Good Karma to be Rewarded

Key 12
The Hanged Man

♆

Neptune

Selflessness is Seeker's Strength

Any combination of the following Major Arcana cards in a spread represents complementary forces that strengthen one another. It suggests a very strong likelihood of success to Seeker attributable to **fortuitous circumstances that will align in the Seeker's favor**.

Key 2
High Priestess

☾

Moon

Secrets Revealed

Key 16
The Tower

♂

Mars

Opportunity to Rebuild

Key 21
The World

♄

Saturn

Complete Contentment

Key 0
The Fool

⊙

Uranus

Major Change

Key 20
Judgement

♇

Pluto

Epiphany Second Chance

B7. Fire Associations in the Major Arcana

When any of the below cards appear with a dominance of Wands, the element of Fire is strong. Motivation, individualism, and an active, conscious pursuit of personal development are the main driving forces of the Seeker. Major Arcana cards that appear in the below groupings may indicate important messages. If one of the cards in the groupings appears in reverse, it may indicate that the energies represented by that card are lesser or there may be delays in its manifestation.

Aries
Authority

Mars
Disruption

High ambitions to lead others, but the source of that ambition is ego. The Seeker must take caution or great downfall lies ahead. Too individualist; the Seeker is urged to think for the greater good over self. The Seeker's self-centeredness may cause self-destruction. The throne is a lonely place to sit.

Leo
Courage

Sun
Contentment

Success with integrity. The Seeker will overcome fears, use honesty and wisdom to achieve greatness in his or her profession. Great omen for those in fields of creativity or innovation. Ethical means toward achievement. Could be indicative of a spiritual leader, someone who inspires others.

Sagittarius
Adaptation

Jupiter
Change

Embrace of major changes about to come. Be open to adventure like the Archer, because Seeker's world is about to change dramatically; change related to personal development, work, or career.

Each Sign's Raison D'être

The astrological sign designated for each Major Arcanum is governed by a general raison d'être, a purpose that individuals under that sign generally strive to accomplish. The designation is based on the sign's ruling planet. For Aries, that raison d'être is often expressed in The Tower card. For Leo, The Sun. For Sagittarius, the Wheel of Fortune.

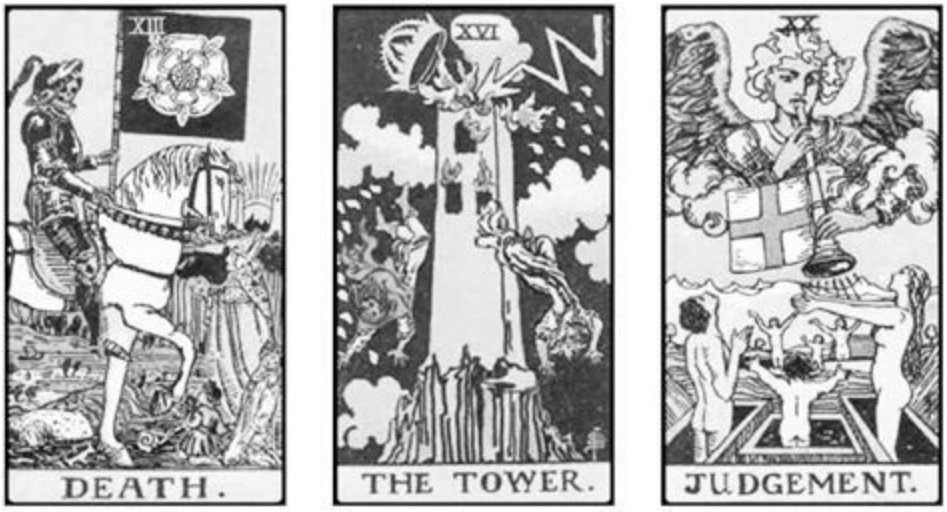
B8. Water Associations in the Major Arcana

When any of the below cards appear with a dominance of Cups, the element of Water is strong. Emotions, sensitivity, compassion, and intuition are the main driving forces of the Seeker. Major Arcana cards that appear in the below groupings may indicate important messages. If one of the cards in the groupings appears in reverse, it may indicate that the energies represented by that card are lesser or there may be delays in its manifestation.

Cancer
Glory

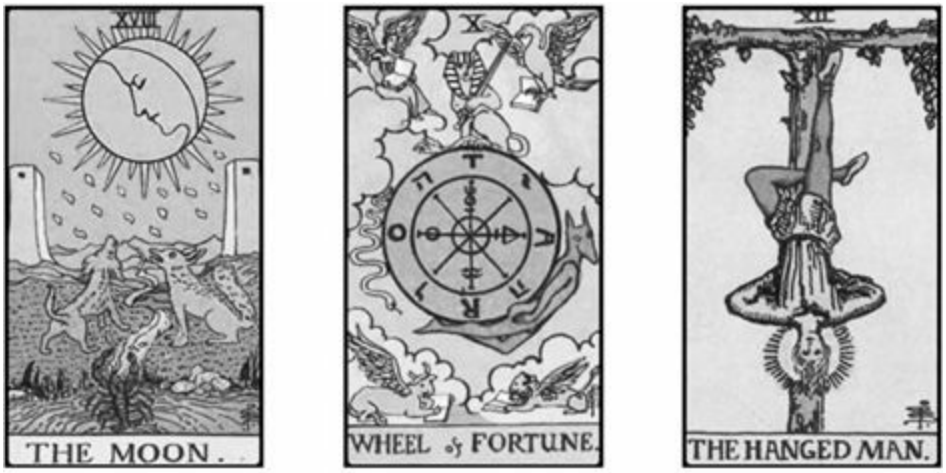
Moon
Hidden

Deep within the Seeker is great potential for self-mastery, but it is hidden right now. On the surface, the Seeker appears moody and overly sensitive, *not* in control over the self. Control over self and allowing that latent strength to surface is critical for the Seeker's success.



Scorpio	*Mars*	*Pluto*
Rebirth	Disruption	Revelation

When Death appears with The Tower *or* Judgement, the Seeker is acting stubbornly or jealously, which is causing the Seeker to resist the inevitable change/transformation that is coming. Indicative of major changes in the Seeker's life, most likely related to interpersonal relationships, loved ones, etc.



Pisces	*Jupiter*	*Neptune*
Unconscious	Change	Sacrifice

When The Moon appears with Wheel of Fortune*or* The Hanged Man, may suggest empathetic nature, tendency to sacrifice the self and put others first, passivity about insisting on one's own needs; hiding from others one's own troubles.

Each Sign's Raison D'être

The astrological sign designated for each Major Arcanum is governed by a general raison d'être, a purpose that individuals under that sign generally strive to accomplish. The designation is based on the sign's ruling planet. For Cancer, that raison d'être is often expressed in The High Priestess. For Scorpio, there are two: The Tower and Judgement. For Pisces, there are also two: The Wheel of Fortune and The Hanged Man.

B9. Air Associations in the Major Arcana

When any of the below cards appear with a dominance of Swords, the element of Air is strong. Intellectualism, fierce ambition, and politics are the main driving forces of the Seeker. Major Arcana cards that appear in the below groupings may indicate important messages. If one of the cards in the groupings appears in reverse, it may indicate that the energies represented by that card are lesser or there may be delays in its manifestation.

Gemini
Conflict

Mercury
Confidence

Complicated, contradictory, dualistic situation. Perhaps many vying for power simultaneously. Conflicting or competing ideologies. To prevail here, the Seeker must first understand and then be able to effectively communicate the opposing forces.

Libra
Balance

Venus
Creativity

The Seeker has an important decision to make and must overcome any difficulties in weighing the options objectively. Outcome will likely be fruitful. The correct judgment will be one that best allows creativity to flourish.

Aquarius
Psychic

Saturn
Completion

Uranus
Spirituality

When The Star appears with The World *or* The Fool, the Seeker is highly intellectual and prone tc eccentricities. Restoration or rejuvenation is critical to the Seeker right now. Take a step back, away from ambitions and politics. Need time to reflect on the Seeker's true goals.

Each Sign's raison d'être

The astrological sign designated for each Major Arcanum is governed by a general raison d'être, a purpose that individuals under that sign generally strive to accomplish. The designation is based on the sign's ruling planet. For Gemini, that raison d'être is often expressed in The Magician. For Libra The Empress card. For Aquarius, there are two: The World and The Fool.

B10. Earth Associations in the Major Arcana

When any of the below cards appear with a dominance of Pentacles, the element of Earth is strong. Stability, pragmatism, and material concerns or interests are the main driving forces of the Seeker. Major Arcana cards that appear in the below groupings may indicate important messages. If one of the cards in the groupings appears in reverse, it may indicate that the energies represented by that card are lesser or there may be delays in its manifestation.

Taurus *Venus*
Dogma Fruition

Seeker holds traditional values about material success. Tendency to resist change; strong dislike of uncertainty. The Seeker is fortunate with abundance and order in life. Takes the conservative path.

Virgo *Mercury*
Mentorship Mastery

Mentor or elder is offering good business or financial advice to the Seeker. The Seeker should accept that advice if he or she is to master the material issues that concern him or her.

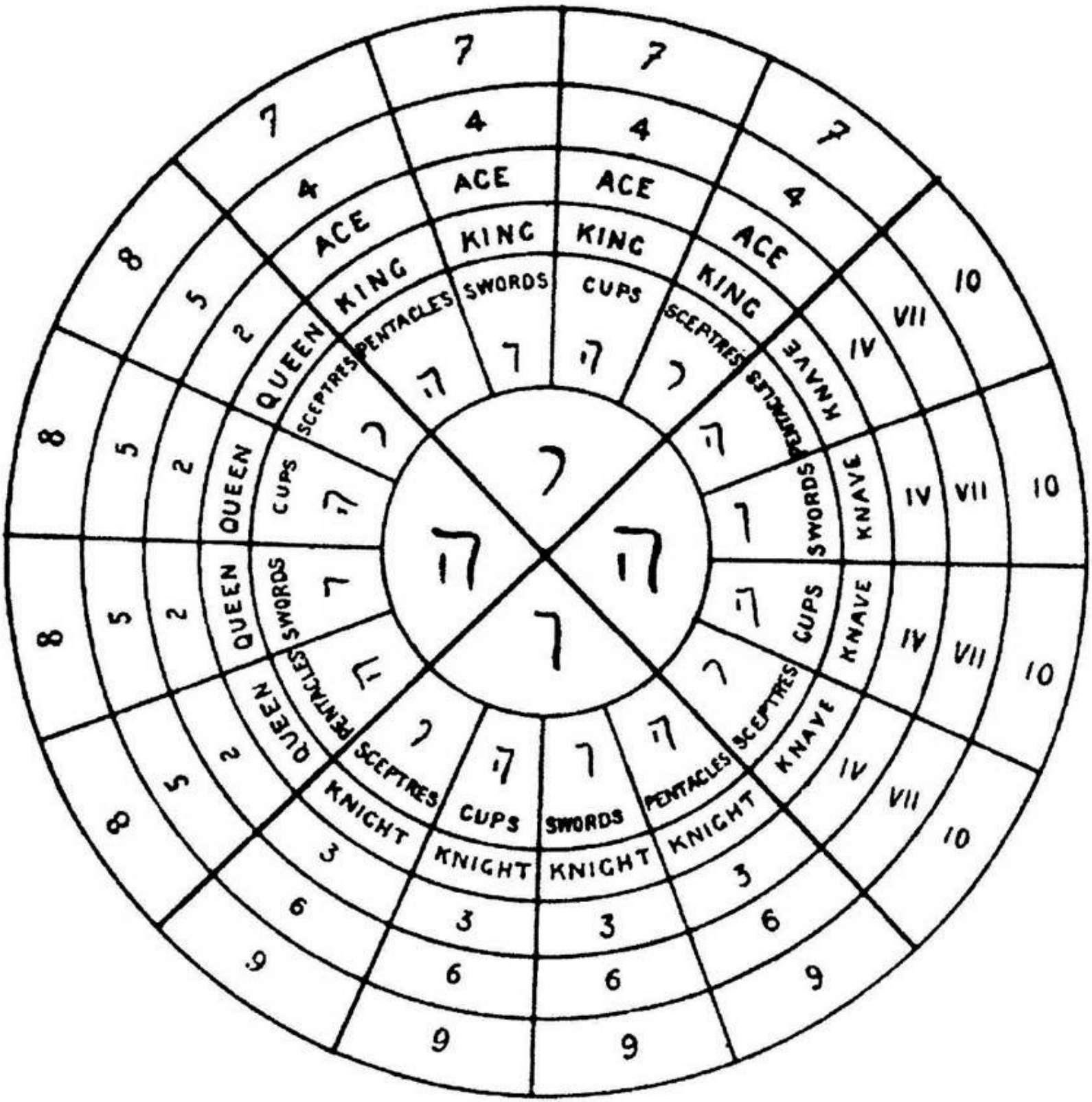
Capricorn *Saturn*
Bondage Completion

Malcontent even when all is well. Tendency to be overly critical. Too attached or fixated on material concerns. Great potential for financial success through nontraditional, unconventional methods. However, the Seeker's personality can be dull, and as a result it may be difficult to reach that potential. The Seeker must overcome the resistance to be so predictable and traditional.

Each Sign's Raison D'être

The astrological sign designated for each Major Arcanum is governed by a general raison d'être, a purpose that individuals under that sign generally strive to accomplish. The designation is based on the sign's ruling planet. For Taurus, that raison d'être is often expressed in The Empress. For Virgo, The Magician. For Capricorn, the World.

B11. Papus Mandala on the Elemental Affinities



The above mandala setting forth the elemental affinities of the Minor Arcana was first presented by Papus in Tarot of the Bohemians (1892).[5]

י	Yod	I	**Fire**
ה	He	H_1	**Water**
ו	Vau	V	**Air**
ה	He	H_2	**Earth**

Note: "Sceptres" as indicated in the mandala correspond with Wands.

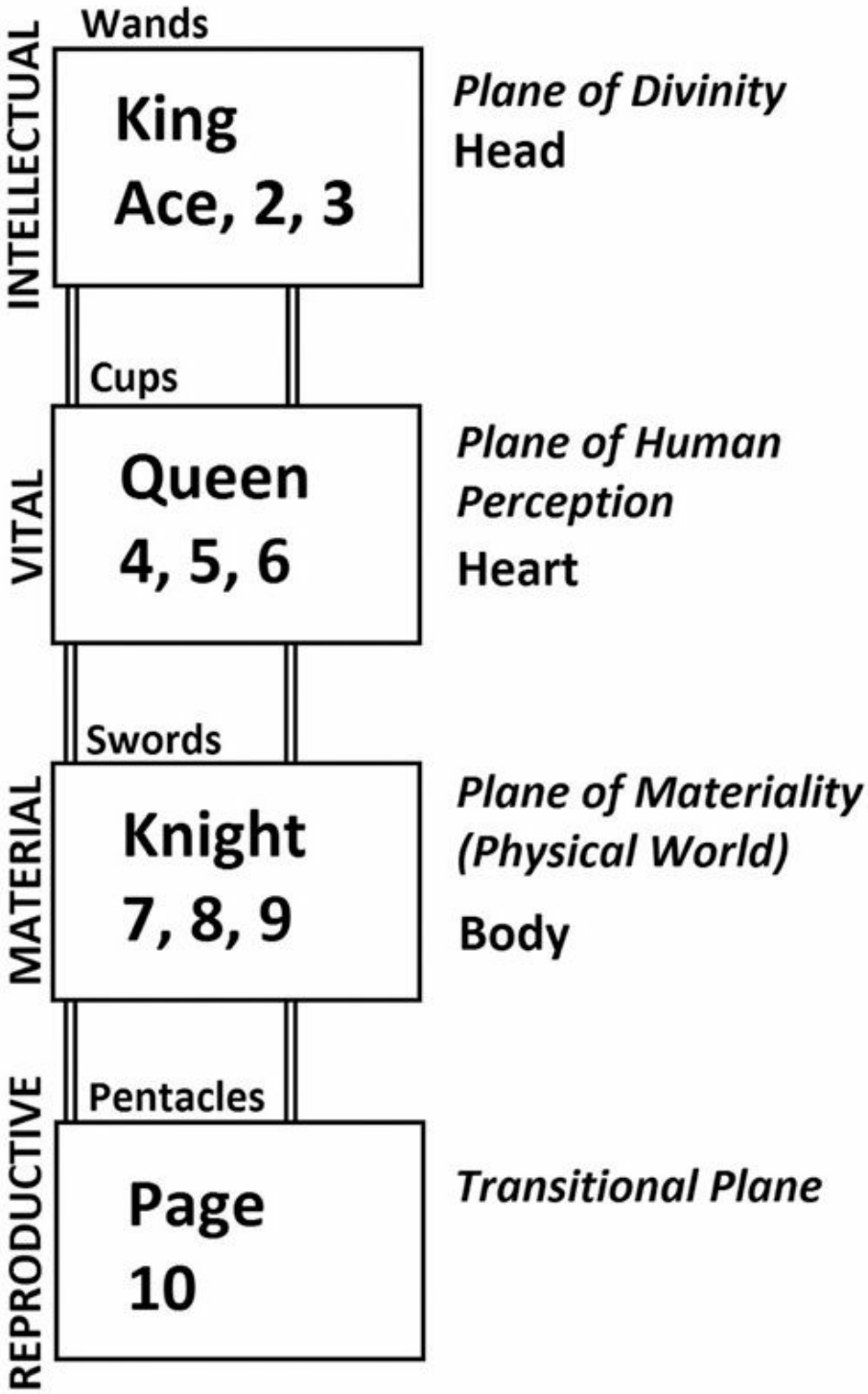
Table of Traditional Elemental Dignities and Affinities in the Minor Arcana

Minor Arcana	*Elemental Dignity*	*Elemental Affinity*	*Body Composition*
Wands – Ace	FIRE	FIRE	Intellectual
Wands – 2	FIRE	WATER	Intellectual
Wands – 3	FIRE	AIR	Intellectual
Wands – 4	FIRE	FIRE	Vital
Wands – 5	FIRE	WATER	Vital
Wands – 6	FIRE	AIR	Vital
Wands – 7	FIRE	FIRE	Material
Wands – 8	FIRE	WATER	Material
Wands – 9	FIRE	AIR	Material
Wands – 10	FIRE	EARTH	Reproductive
Wands – Page	FIRE	EARTH	Reproductive
Wands – Knight	FIRE	AIR	Material
Wands – Queen	FIRE	WATER	Vital
Wands – King	FIRE	FIRE	Intellectual
Cups – Ace	WATER	FIRE	Intellectual
Cups – 2	WATER	WATER	Intellectual
Cups – 3	WATER	AIR	Intellectual
Cups – 4	WATER	FIRE	Vital
Cups – 5	WATER	WATER	Vital
Cups – 6	WATER	AIR	Vital
Cups – 7	WATER	FIRE	Material
Cups – 8	WATER	WATER	Material
Cups – 9	WATER	AIR	Material
Cups – 10	WATER	EARTH	Reproductive
Cups – Page	WATER	EARTH	Reproductive
Cups – Knight	WATER	AIR	Material
Cups – Queen	WATER	WATER	Vital
Cups – King	WATER	FIRE	Intellectual
Swords – Ace	AIR	FIRE	Intellectual
Swords – 2	AIR	WATER	Intellectual
Swords – 3	AIR	AIR	Intellectual

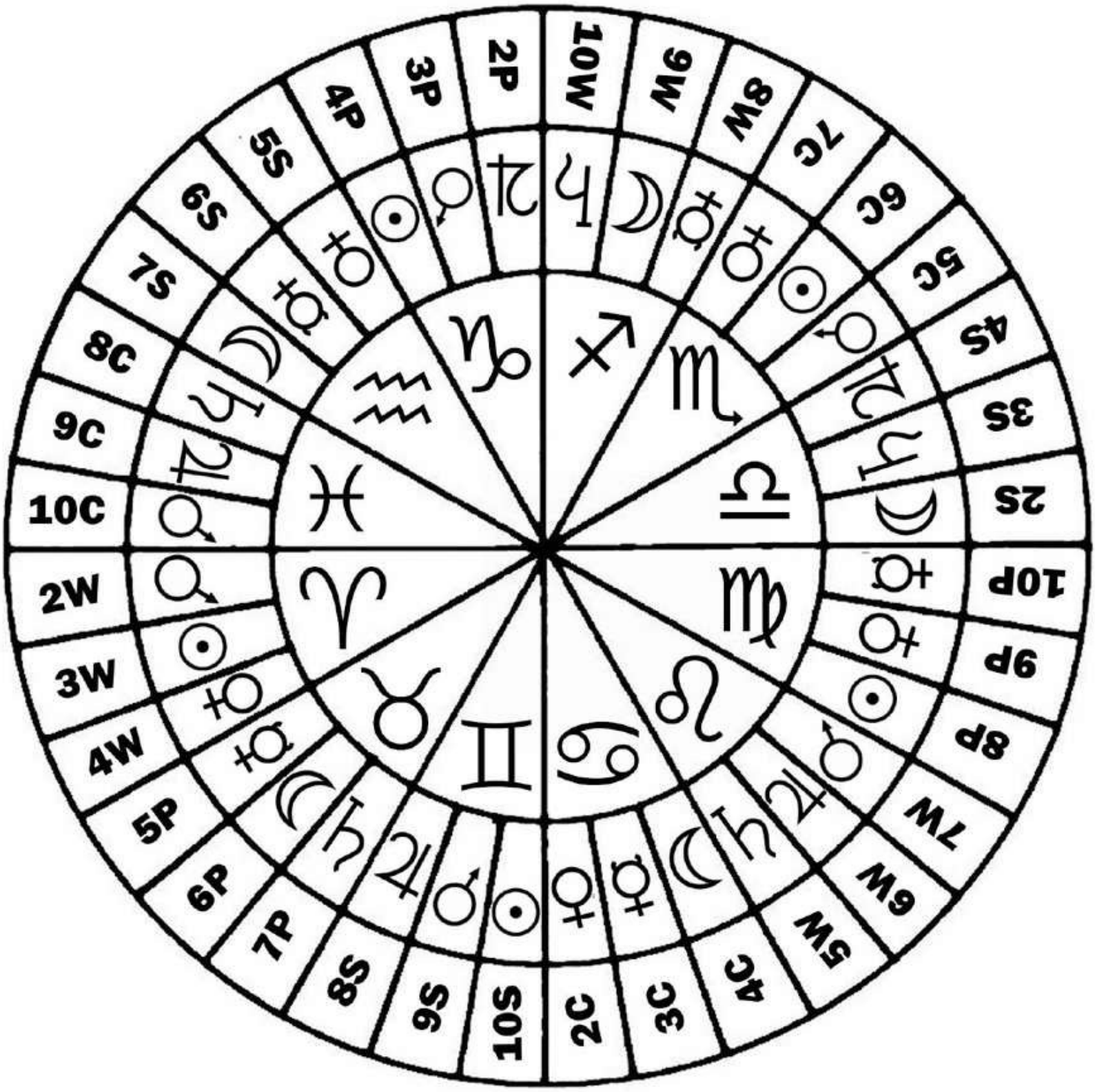
Swords – 4	AIR	FIRE	Vital
Swords – 5	AIR	WATER	Vital
Swords – 6	AIR	AIR	Vital
Swords – 7	AIR	FIRE	Material
Swords – 8	AIR	WATER	Material
Swords – 9	AIR	AIR	Material
Swords – 10	AIR	EARTH	Reproductive
Swords – Page	AIR	EARTH	Reproductive
Swords – Knight	AIR	AIR	Material
Swords – Queen	AIR	WATER	Vital
Swords – King	AIR	FIRE	Intellectual
Pentacles – Ace	EARTH	FIRE	Intellectual
Pentacles – 2	EARTH	WATER	Intellectual
Pentacles – 3	EARTH	AIR	Intellectual
Pentacles – 4	EARTH	FIRE	Vital
Pentacles – 5	EARTH	WATER	Vital
Pentacles – 6	EARTH	AIR	Vital
Pentacles – 7	EARTH	FIRE	Material
Pentacles – 8	EARTH	WATER	Material
Pentacles – 9	EARTH	AIR	Material
Pentacles – 10	EARTH	EARTH	Reproductive
Pentacles – Page	EARTH	EARTH	Reproductive
Pentacles – Knight	EARTH	AIR	Material
Pentacles – Queen	EARTH	WATER	Vital
Pentacles – King	EARTH	FIRE	Intellectual

Contemporary practitioners consider the methods and attributions espoused by Papus to be the Traditional Approach. In *The Tarot of the Bohemians* (1892), in addition to elemental dignities and elemental affinities, the Minor Arcana cards are further categorized by one of the four planes of existence they occupy, referred to as the "Body Composition" in the foregoing table.

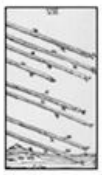
The Material body is the physical plane, pertaining to perceived reality. The Vital body is the spiritual plane, pertaining to what is perceived through intuition. The Intellectual body is the mental plane, pertaining to what takes place in the human mind. The tens and pages are associated with the Reproductive body, and are the transitional cards that facilitate movement between the other three planes.


Wands
INTELLECTUAL
King
Ace, 2, 3
Plane of Divinity
Head
Cups
VITAL
Queen
4, 5, 6
Plane of Human Perception
Heart
Swords
MATERIAL
Knight
7, 8, 9
Plane of Materiality (Physical World)
Body
Pentacles
REPRODUCTIVE
Page
10
Transitional Plane

B12. Astrological Correspondences of the Minor Arcana



The 36 Decans (groupings of small constellations that rise on the horizon through each of the earth's rotations) correspond with the **2***s through* **10***s in the four suits of the Minor Arcana. In the above diagram,* **W** *is for Wands;* **C** *is for Cups;* **S** *is for Swords; and* **P** *is for Pentacles. These attributions were prescribed by the Golden Dawn. The inner ring above shows the twelve signs of the zodiac. The center ring shows the planets. Thus, for example, Mars in Aries corresponds with* **2W**, *or the Two of Wands. The subsequent pages provide the 36 correspondences as set forth in the above wheel.*

Two of Wands	Mars in Aries	**Two of Cups**	Venus in Cancer
	♂ ♈		♀ ♋
Three of Wands	Sun in Aries	**Three of Cups**	Mercury in Cancer
	☉ ♈		☿ ♋
Four of Wands	Venus in Aries	**Four of Cups**	Moon in Cancer
	♀ ♈		☾ ♋
Five of Wands	Saturn in Leo	**Five of Cups**	Mars in Scorpio
	♄ ♌		♂ ♏
Six of Wands	Jupiter in Leo	**Six of Cups**	Sun in Scorpio
	♃ ♌		☉ ♏
Seven of Wands	Mars in Leo	**Seven of Cups**	Venus in Scorpio
	♂ ♌		♀ ♏
Eight of Wands	Mercury in Sagittarius	**Eight of Cups**	Saturn in Pisces
	☿ ♐		♄ ♓
Nine of Wands	Moon in Sagittarius	**Nine of Cups**	Jupiter in Pisces
	☾ ♐		♃ ♓
Ten of Wands	Saturn in Sagittarius	**Ten of Cups**	Mars in Pisces
	♄ ♐		♂ ♓

Two of Swords Moon in Libra

☾♎

Three of Swords Saturn in Libra

♄♎

Four of Swords Jupiter in Libra

♃♎

Five of Swords Venus in Aquarius

♀♒

Six of Swords Mercury in Aquarius

☿♒

Seven of Swords Moon in Aquarius

☾♒

Eight of Swords Jupiter in Gemini

♃♊

Nine of Swords Mars in Gemini

♂♊

Ten of Swords Sun in Gemini

☉♊

Two of Pentacles Jupiter in Capricorn

♃♑

Three of Pentacles Mars in Capricorn

♂♑

Four of Pentacles Sun in Capricorn

☉♑

Five of Pentacles Mercury in Taurus

☿♉

Six of Pentacles Moon in Taurus

☾♉

Seven of Pentacles Saturn in Taurus

♄♉

Eight of Pentacles Sun in Virgo

☉♍

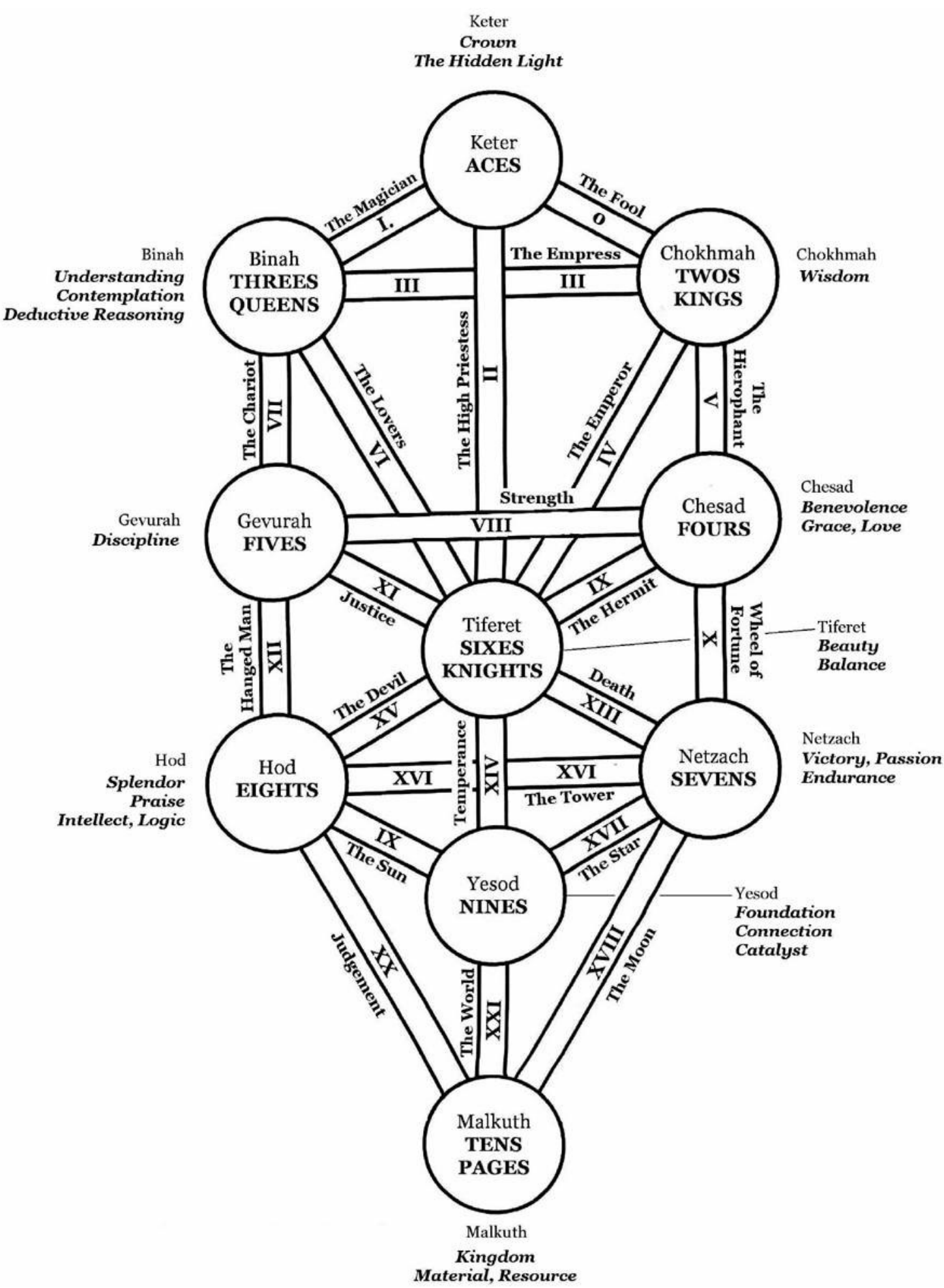
Nine of Pentacles Venus in Virgo

♀♍

Ten of Pentacles Mercury in Virgo

☿♍

B13. Tarot and the Tree of Life



Note: The Tarot and Tree of Life diagram illustrates the tarot paths along the Tree of Life, which

is a practical integration of tarot and the Kabbalah. The 10 sephiroth represent the objective paths of the Minor Arcana while the connections between the sephiroth are the 22 subjective paths of the Major Arcana.

Appendix C:
Ruminations on the Major Arcana

The Major Arcana represent the foundational archetypes of the collective unconscious and the personal subconscious. Thus, they're ideal for focused ruminations that will help the practitioner gain a deeper understanding of the cards' meanings and assist in future readings. The following original ruminations are written in second person, addressed to the archetype at hand, anthropomorphizing the force to better appreciate its connection to the human condition. These ruminations provide a sample to the reader of one approach to intermediate study of the Major Arcana. The reader is strongly urged to read it as a sample only and then write his or her own ruminations for study.

KEY 0: THE FOOL

Who is the fool to believe in the impossible and the beautiful? You keep onward, chin in the air, not knowing whether you fall or you fly. Either way, your grandeur will leave a legacy.

KEY 1: THE MAGICIAN

You harness the power of fire, of water, of air, and the earth. You are intense, yet you are formless. You change with the wind, yet you do not yield. You create. You destroy. What do you need to prove?

KEY 2: THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Your secrets are seductive. You glow with the beauty of the maiden, the potency of the mother, and the wisdom of the crone. You are the divine feminine. They will rise in your name. They will fall in your name.

KEY 3: THE EMPRESS

The earth will bear your fruit. The fruit is yours to reap. You nourish them with your love. Your Majesty, you are radiant with your crown of stars.

KEY 4: THE EMPEROR

You command and they will follow. You stand and they will bow. You are their father and they are your glory. For peace or for battle, the key of life turns by your fist only.

KEY 5: THE HIEROPHANT

You design the tradition that they will inherit. There is reason to your order, rhyme to your anthem. You swell with the dignity of conviction, but will you embrace or disgrace when they defy?

KEY 6: THE LOVERS

Light must have shadow; fire needs air; earth its water. That is duality. That is infinity. When do you push? And when do you yield? The answer is: who do you love?

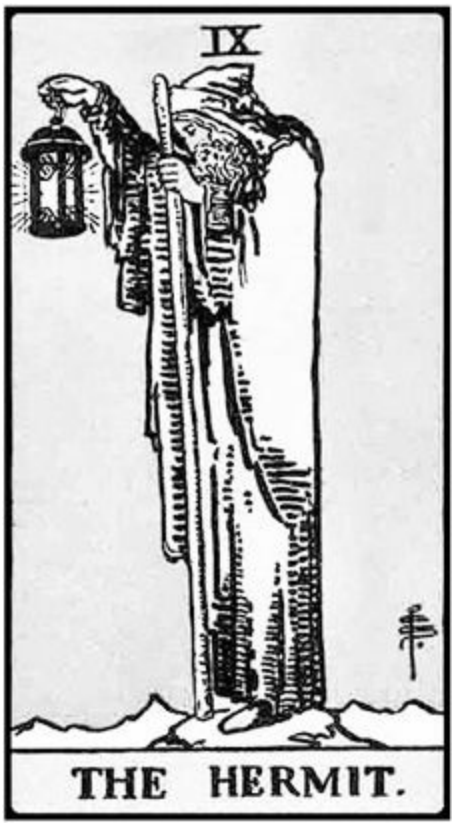
KEY 7: THE CHARIOT

You lead the charge to victory. Guided by your senses at the helm, between the pillars of knowledge and intuition, you are the chariot, master over mortal and mind.

KEY 8: STRENGTH

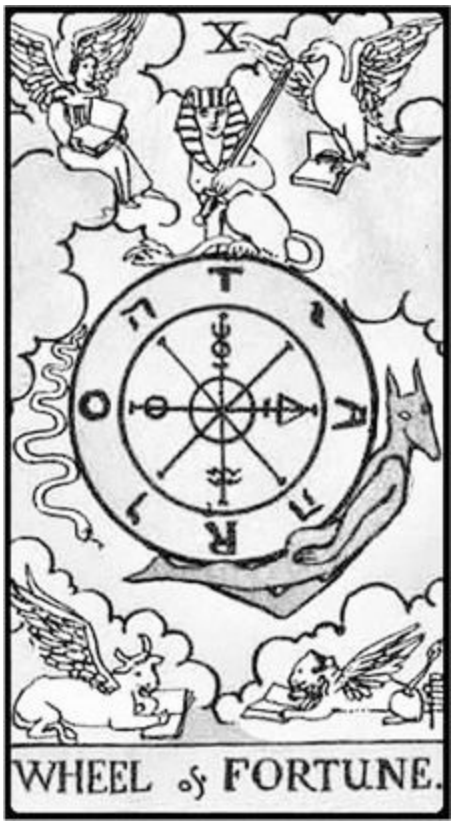
There is no fear when there is compassion. Gentle hands, tenacious heart. Is it subliminal fortitude or sublime resolution?

KEY 9: THE HERMIT



You light the way with your light within. You counsel the fool, but will he listen? Snow-covered mountains. Is it not cold where you are? Yet your feet are still.

KEY 10: WHEEL OF FORTUNE



Round and around, rise and tumble. Bounty for the wicked, penance for the pure. Acceptance is wisdom. Wisdom is will. Do you think about the alchemy for conjuring a philosopher's stone?

KEY 11: JUSTICE

A trial for the convicted. Rectitude for the afflicted. You are the philosopher's stone, turning a leaden kismet into a golden rule. With you, there is no fortuity. There is only a sword, swift and sure.

KEY 12: THE HANGED MAN

You, benevolent and divine, your virtue is greater than the sum of their souls. They hurt you and yet you heal them. They condemn you and yet you love them. You are their grace and yet they spurn you. Will they know of your sacrifice?

KEY 13: DEATH

A kingdom falls. An emperor lies still upon the earth he ruled. You level him down to a lifeless peer with the commoner. Then you march on. Air becomes fire. Water becomes earth. Shadow becomes light. You are the nightfall, the consort of the sun.

KEY 14: TEMPERANCE

Temper mind with spirit, spirit with body, body with mind. Love is infinity because you bring harmony. You are why two is one. At every divide you are the emissary of peace.

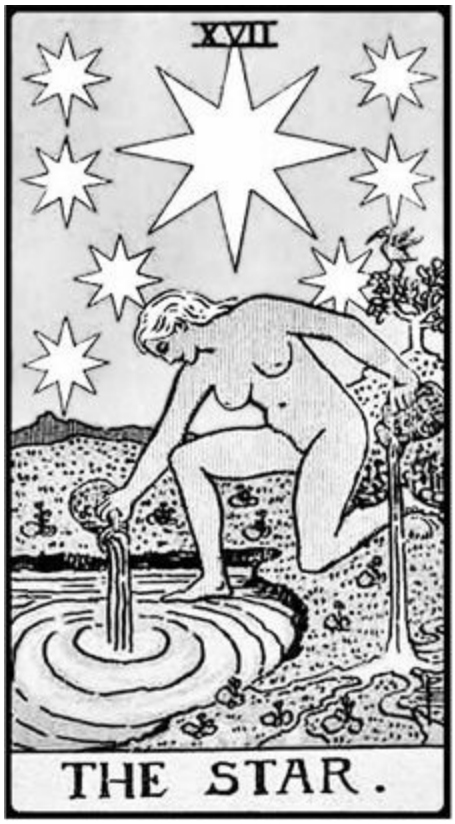
KEY 15: THE DEVIL

You mimic the prophet, you clever idol. You beguile the lovers with your allure. They are your captives. What deep pain has brought you to such anguish and spite?

KEY 16: THE TOWER

An imperious pursuit of power and providence, your masterpiece would exalt you to the echelon of the gods. Then a jolt of reckoning brought you down to nothing. Fire burning, crowns are falling. Rubble to dust in the umbra of the sacred tree.

KEY 17: THE STAR



When they fear that their sun may never rise again, you illuminate the hollows of their hearts. You restore the lake before it runs dry. You are why they rest tonight, lulled by their dreams of a rejuvenated day.

KEY 18: THE MOON

In the nightfall of the mind, you are the lucid afterglow. You are the pale light and the radiant shadow. You are a reflection on the lake of the soul, a contemplation of the untold powers below. They journey on the path of wisdom to find you.

KEY 19: THE SUN

You are the beaming end of the journey and you are the beginning. You are why they toiled, why they reaped. They pledged their faith to you to keep you burning, but it is not you that rises and sets. Open arms and cherub face. Are you the child in the philosopher or the philosopher in the child?

KEY 20: JUDGEMENT

Three poisons for a sleeping potion: enmity, greed, and delusion. They built the tower in their slumber. They journeyed through the darkest hallows by the moon. Now sound the trumpets! You awaken them and they rejoice. Will you tell them that there was no rise, no fall, no tumble, no stone?

KEY 21: THE WORLD

You are liberation. You are the final cessation of the wheel. When the candle is blown, the world will be lit and they will call it paradise. Paradise is a not the world beyond a world. It is you, the world that the fool and the hermit said would be.

The foregoing ruminations are provided as a sample to the intermediate practitioner of what study of the Major Arcana entails. In many of the card ruminations, there are cross-references to other cards or archetypes that I found relevant. Likewise, when you are writing ruminations, try to reconcile the cards with one another and draw connections. The intermediate practitioner should write his or her own ruminations, which will be kept in the journal for safekeeping and frequent review.

Appendix D:
Profile Tables and Ruminations on the Minor Arcana

The Minor Arcana represent the facets of the human condition and the elements of the universe. Profile tables set forth common attributions for the suits, and ruminations in the form of narratives offer a creative expression of study. The stories of the suits are written in the first person plural, to represent the memories and wisdom embedded into the collective unconscious. The following profile tables and narratives provide a sample to the reader of one approach to intermediate study of the Minor Arcana. The reader is strongly urged to read it as a sample only and then rewrite the tables and ruminations for personal study.

D1. Suit of Wands

Classical Element	Fire
Fundamental Energy	Active (Yang)
Astrological Signs	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Animal Symbolism	Lion, Salamander
Success Factor	Willpower, Innovation
Prevailing Character Traits	Passion, Motivation
Personal Issue Attribution	Creativity, Work, Growth; Health and Wellness
Quality	Synergy
Season	Spring
Cardinal Direction	South
Moon Phase	New Moon
Social Hierarchy	Proletariat
Armament	Cavalry
Hebrew Letter	Yod (corresponds with I)
Angel Representative	Raphael
Gospel	Mark (Thaumaturgy; Inspiration)
Activating Minerals	Carnelian, Fire Agate, Red Jasper, Ruby, Amber Sunstone, Pyrite, Red Spinel, Bloodstone
Activating Colors	Red, Orange, Yellow
Olfactory Correspondences	Bergamot, Ginger, Citrus, Basil, Angelica Root

	Significance	Personality Influences
Love	Development stage of relationship. *A love with stamina*.	Fire personalities: passionate, dynamic, impulsive.
Work	The suit of Wands is tailored to professional and personal development.	Lion: Be more authoritative, assertive; show your strengths.

Story of the Wands

We are presented with an opportunity for innovation.

Anticipating what the world has to offer, we endeavor to advance beyond our horizons.

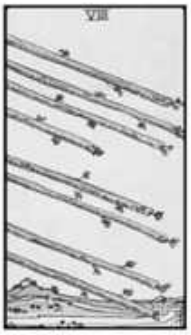
With drive and vigor, we persevere, and then we wait to see what our work will bring.

It brings victory and with it, peace and harmony to the home.

But the peace is short-lived. Motivation becomes competition against our own.

We must resolve the tensions to achieve glory. We must be a leader and bring the dissidents to agreement.

To do so, there are times we must stand our ground.



Then our goals will be met; our creativity will have its engine...

... though when we have attained much, others will want to take from us. We are inclined to protect our own.

Know that our advancement has a price. We become burdened, and we lose sight of where we are going. Where is our advancement leading us?

D2. Suit of Cups

Classical Element	Water
Fundamental Energy	Receptive (Yin)
Astrological Signs	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Animal Symbolism	Fish, Dolphin
Success Factor	Perception, Intuition
Prevailing Character Traits	Empathy, Concord, Compassion
Personal Issue Attribution	Love, Emotions, Relationships, Family
Quality	Fluidity
Season	Summer
Cardinal Direction	West
Moon Phase	Waxing Crescent
Social Hierarchy	Clergy
Armament	Naval
Hebrew Letter	Heh (corresponds with H_1)
Angel Representative	Gabriel
Gospel	John (Edification, Testimony, Fellowship)
Activating Minerals	Moonstone, Blue Calcite, Coral, Pearl, Rose Quartz, Lapis Lazuli, Blue Lace Agate
Activating Colors	Med. or Dk. Blue, Pink, Indigo, Purple
Olfactory Correspondences	Chamomile, Jasmine, Lavender, Rose, Ylang Ylang

	Significance	Personality Influences
Love	Relationship is emotionally charged. *A sentimental love*.	Water personalities: sensitive, caring, attentive, intuitive.
Work	Emotions are running high in the work sphere. Management of relationships and social networks.	Dolphin/Water Bearer: Voice your opinions; show more compassion.

Story of the Cups

It starts with an abundance of love in our hearts.

Then we find love in others.

We celebrate our joys together.

However, we eventually tire of the festivities and we retreat inward for solitary reflection.

That solace is the silence that our demons thrive in. We retreat so far into our darkness that we forget to see our good.

Memories of home and hearth, of childhood and family will keep us grounded.

We face many temptations that look like opportunities in the world.

We must remember to always pursue higher spiritual ground.

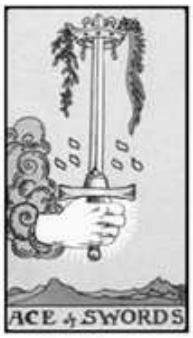
That is where we will find harmony of emotions...

... and harmony in our world.

D3. Suit of Swords

	Significance	Personality Influences
Love	Ideological- or intellectual-based attraction. *Good communication. Love of the mind*.	Air personalities: analytical, intellectual, perceptive.
Work	There are ideological clashes at play. Stress is high. Open communication is critical.	Eagle: Take swifter action; need to be more focused, resourceful.

Story of the Swords



There are ones who are born to be king.

The path of the king is plagued by difficult decisions...

... and strife.

Battles wound us and we must find respite.

We fight back harder, and when we win, someone else must lose.

That is the karma of the king. Nursing wounds, we try to flee from our regrets.

Let the blame fall on others. In defense, we deceive others before they can deceive us.

The deceit is a prison and we wonder what it will take to be freed of the bondage we caused.

We are haunted by what we have done.

The ultimate sacrifice: we are defeated. That is the cycle of kings. Live by the sword, die by the sword…

D4. Suit of Pentacles

Classical Element	Earth
Fundamental Energy	Receptive (Yin)
Astrological Signs	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Animal Symbolism	Bull, Snake, Dog
Success Factor	Material Resources, Physical Strength
Prevailing Character Traits	Pragmatism, Diligence
Personal Issue Attribution	Property, Finances, Material; The Physical Body
Quality	Fruition
Season	Winter
Cardinal Direction	North
Moon Phase	Waning Crescent
Social Hierarchy	Artisans and Merchants
Armament	Infantry
Hebrew Letter	Heh (corresponds with H_2)
Angel Representative	Uriel
Gospel	Luke (Ministry, Practice of Faith)
Activating Minerals	Moss Agate, Aventurine, Smoky Quartz, Black Tourmaline, Lodestone, Brown or Green Jasper
Activating Colors	Green, Gold, Brown
Olfactory Correspondences	Cedarwood, Cypress, Patchouli, Vetivert

	Significance	Personality Influences
Love	Materially beneficial relationship. *Social class or wealth plays a role*.	Earth personalities: reliable, loyal, committed, receptive.
Work	Seeker's financial situation is an issue. Corporate hierarchy is a factor. Reevaluate assets and liabilities.	Bull: Need stability. Stand your ground. Achieve with hard work.

Story of the Pentacles

An offer for gain, a promise of prosperity.

We are tenacious with our balance of manifold enterprises.

After toiling at the grindstone, we gain the recognition we worked for.

Yet the more we have, the greater the fear that we do not have enough.

Driven to attain material prosperity, we find ourselves shivering in the winter of our spiritual poverty.

Only through benevolence, charity, and generosity can we find redemption.

Restored to the path of honest work, the seeds we sowed bloom in full.

Aspirations coupled with methodical skill, we are artisans mastering our crafts.

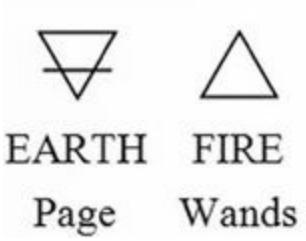
Soon enough we bask in our own prosperity...

... and bring honor to the family name.

APPENDIX E:
Profile Tables for Interpreting Court Cards

THE FOLLOWING PROFILE TABLES are well suited for focused study of the court cards and provide snapshot summaries of the Minor Arcana court cards. In a given spread, court cards can take on literal meanings and signify an actual person in the Seeker's life, or they can take on figurative meanings and either represent a facet of the Seeker's self or serve as an actual representation. For example, pages represent news or a message; knights represent action or progress; queens, nurture; and kings, management or authority.

PAGE OF WANDS



Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young woman, light complexion
Astrological Associations	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Character Traits	Motivated, career-driven, fiery tempered, energetic individual; creative artistic type.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Creative; Dynamic; Full of Promise
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Passivity; Inarticulate of Own Needs
Symbolic Representation	Receiving news or message re: career or creative projects.
Career Inclinations:	Creative fields; Working with hands; High-paced careers; Shop trades; Health; Agriculture

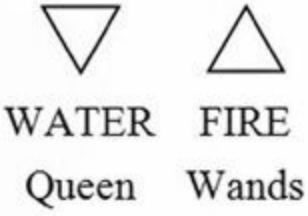
KNIGHT OF WANDS

AIR FIRE

Knight Wands

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young man, light complexion
Astrological Associations	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Character Traits	Motivated, career-driven, fiery tempered, energetic individual; creative artistic type.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Impetuous; Competitive
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Hot-Headed; Tendency to be Insecure
Symbolic Representation	Swift action; active progress in career or creative projects.
Career Inclinations:	Creative fields; Working with hands; High-paced careers; Shop trades; Health; Agriculture

QUEEN OF WANDS



Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature woman, light complexion
Astrological Associations	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Character Traits	Motivated, career-driven, fiery tempered, energetic individual; creative artistic type.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Balanced; Down-to-Earth
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Too Easily Yields to Others; Capitulation; Mediocrity; Wishy-Washy
Symbolic Representation	Strong, effective nurturing of career or creative projects.
Career Inclinations:	Creative fields; Working with hands; High-paced careers; Shop trades; Health; Agriculture

KING OF WANDS

△ △

FIRE FIRE

King Wands

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature man, light complexion
Astrological Associations	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Character Traits	Motivated, career-driven, fiery tempered, energetic individual; creative artistic type.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Passionate; Authoritarian
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Tyrannical; Egotistical; Hot Temper
Symbolic Representation	Leadership or effective management of career or creative projects.
Career Inclinations:	Creative fields; Working with hands; High-paced careers; Shop trades; Health; Agriculture

PAGE OF CUPS

EARTH WATER

Page Cups

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young woman, moderate complexion
Astrological Associations	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Character Traits	Sensitive, warm, emotional individual more focused on interpersonal relationships.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Emotional; Imaginative
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Quixotic; Dreamer; Overly Sensitive
Symbolic Representation	Receiving news or message re: interpersonal relationships.
Career Inclinations:	Spiritual or pastoral work; Counseling; Social Work; Arts & Humanities

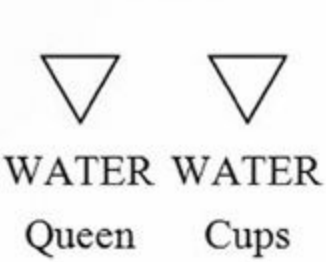
KNIGHT OF CUPS

AIR WATER

Knight Cups

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young man, moderate complexion
Astrological Associations	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Character Traits	Sensitive, warm, emotional individual more focused on interpersonal relationships.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Sensitive; Affable; Charming
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Gets Discouraged Easily; Unmotivated
Symbolic Representation	Assertive in interpersonal relationships.
Career Inclinations:	Spiritual or pastoral work; Counseling; Social Work; Arts & Humanities

QUEEN OF CUPS



Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature woman, moderate complexion
Astrological Associations	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Character Traits	Sensitive, warm, emotional individual more focused on interpersonal relationships.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Nurturing; Tender
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Manipulative of Others' Emotions
Symbolic Representation	Strong, effective nurturing of interpersonal relationships.
Career Inclinations:	Spiritual or pastoral work; Counseling; Social Work; Arts & Humanities

KING OF CUPS

△ ▽

FIRE WATER

King Cups

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature man, moderate complexion
Astrological Associations	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces
Character Traits	Sensitive, warm, emotional individual more focused on interpersonal relationships.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Caring; Diplomatic
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Overwrought; Worries Too Much
Symbolic Representation	Leadership or effective management of interpersonal relationships.
Career Inclinations:	Spiritual or pastoral work; Counseling; Social Work; Arts & Humanities

PAGE OF SWORDS

EARTH AIR

Page Swords

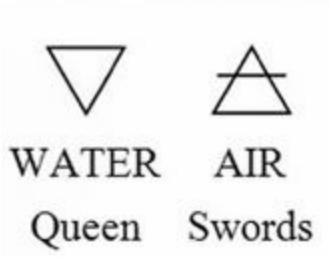
Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young woman, olive complexion
Astrological Associations	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Character Traits	High intellect; analytical and thoughtful; ambitious; assertive, confident individual; “Type A” personality.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Ambitious; Judicious; Capricious
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Inhibited; Self-Conscious
Symbolic Representation	Receiving news or message re: politics or ambitions.
Career Inclinations:	Communications; Analytical careers; Technical fields; Specialized professions

KNIGHT OF SWORDS

AIR Knight AIR Swords

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young man, olive complexion
Astrological Associations	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Character Traits	High intellect; analytical and thoughtful; ambitious; assertive, confident individual; “Type A” personality.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Dominant; Protective; Warrior
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Warpath; Shoot first, ask questions later; Pompous
Symbolic Representation	Swift action; active progress in politics or ambitions.
Career Inclinations:	Communications; Analytical careers; Technical fields; Specialized professions

QUEEN OF SWORDS



Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature woman, olive complexion
Astrological Associations	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Character Traits	High intellect; analytical and thoughtful; ambitious; assertive, confident individual; “Type A” personality.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Striking; Intelligent; High-Achieving
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Elitist; Snobbery; Spiteful
Symbolic Representation	Strong, effective nurturing of politics and ambitions.
Career Inclinations:	Communications; Analytical careers; Technical fields; Specialized professions

KING OF SWORDS

FIRE AIR

King Swords

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature man, olive complexion
Astrological Associations	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Character Traits	High intellect; analytical and thoughtful; ambitious; assertive, confident individual; “Type A” personality.
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Analytical; Stem; Dispassionate or detached from others; Arrogant
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Malicious; Small-Hearted; Unyielding
Symbolic Representation	Leadership or effective management of politics and ambitions.
Career Inclinations:	Communications; Analytical careers; Technical fields; Specialized professions

PAGE OF PENTACLES

EARTH EARTH

Page Pentacles

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young woman, dark complexion
Astrological Associations	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Character Traits	Materially and financially successful; industrious hard worker; stable and secure, reliable; strong business mind
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Industrious; Practical; Scholarly
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Materialistic; Superficial
Symbolic Representation	Receiving news or message re: finances or property.
Career Inclinations:	Business; Finance; Corporate; Administration & Commerce; Fashion; Entrepreneurial

KNIGHT OF PENTACLES

AIR EARTH

Knight Pentacles

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Young man, dark complexion
Astrological Associations	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Character Traits	Materially and financially successful; industrious hard worker; stable and secure, reliable; strong business mind
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Methodical; Rational; Stable
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Inertia; Aloof; Detached
Symbolic Representation	Swift action; active progress in finances, wealth, or property.
Career Inclinations:	Business; Finance; Corporate; Administration & Commerce; Fashion; Entrepreneurial

QUEEN OF PENTACLES

WATER EARTH

Queen Pentacles

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature woman, dark complexion
Astrological Associations	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Character Traits	Materially and financially successful; industrious hard worker; stable and secure, reliable; strong business mind
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Resourceful; Charitable; Noble
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Dependent on others; Vulnerable; Tendency to be self-absorbed
Symbolic Representation	Strong, effective nurturing of wealth and property.
Career Inclinations:	Business; Finance; Corporate; Administration & Commerce; Fashion; Entrepreneurial

KING OF PENTACLES

FIRE EARTH

King Pentacles

Literal Interpretation	
Physical Attributes	Mature man, dark complexion
Astrological Associations	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Character Traits	Materially and financially successful; industrious hard worker; stable and secure, reliable; strong business mind
Figurative Interpretation	
Facet of the Self, Upright	Enterprising; Reliable; Competent
Facet of the Self, Reversed	Stoic; Sophomoric; Conceited
Symbolic Representation	Leadership or effective management of wealth and property
Career Inclinations:	Business; Finance; Corporate; Administration & Commerce; Fashion; Entrepreneurial

Appendix F:
Numerological Associations

Numerology is a study grounded in the theory that numbers relate to certain patterns or synchronicities. This section will lay out reference tables of the numerological associations in the Minor Arcana. Understanding the relationship between the cards and numerology can add greater depth to a tarot reading. These attributions also work with the Tarot de Marseille system. However, the standard attributions for the Thoth will differ slightly.

F1. General Numerological Associations

	Numerological Significance	Significance of Three in a Spread	Significance of Four in a Spread
ACES	Beginnings; Power	Wealth; Success. The Answer is Yes.	Exceptional Greatness
TWOS	Balance; Dualism	Cliques; Segregation	Conference; Dialogue
THREES	Fruition; Expansion; Amplification of State	Warning of Deceit	Definite Plan Implemented
FOURS	Rationality; Stability; Boundaries of the Universe	Industry; Diligence; Divine Presence; Abundance	Order; Peace; Rule of Law Enforced
FIVES	Uncertainty; Shifts; Adversity; Changes	Competition. *Alt*. Could also suggest presence of spirits.	Unusual Power; Power Where Least Expected
SIXES	Harmony of Mental, Physical, and Spiritual	Success. Spiritual balance.	Pleasure; Full Control; Great Power
SEVENS	Wisdom; Spirituality; Important Developments	Alliances Formed	Disappointments Abound
EIGHTS	Justice; Judgment; Fortuity; Wealth	Short Journey to Come	Gossip; Rumors Spread
NINES	Change Coming for the Better	Delays; Debates; One Last Hitch in Plan Before Success	New Responsibilities to be Presented
TENS	Pinnacle of Success, or Pinnacle of Tribulation	Good Time to Buy/Sell	Exhausted and Overwhelmed

F2. Numerology and the Four Suits

Studying the keywords of the pip cards in the Minor Arcana in one snapshot table helps provide the numerological context of the cards. These attributions also work with the Tarot de Marseille system. However, the standard attributions for the Thoth will differ slightly from the chart below.

	WANDS	**CUPS**	**SWORDS**	**PENTACLES**
ACE *Beginning*	New Venture; Innovation	Abundance; Maternal Force	New Conquest; Invoked Force	New Offer; Gain; Investments
TWO *Balance*	Accomplishment; Dominion	Friendship; Love Cooperation	Stalemate; Truce Choice Restored	Multitasking; Asset Hannony
THREE *Fruition; Amplify*	Attainment; Establishment	Celebration; Abundance	Sorrow; Destruction	Validation; Discipline
FOUR *Stability*	Prosperity; Perfected Work	Introspection; Reservations	Repose; Recuperation	Earthly Power; Miserliness
FIVE *Uncertainty*	Strife; Competition	Grief; Loss of Pleasure	Defeat; Corruption	Destitution; Material Trouble
SIX *Harmony*	Success; Victory	Nostalgia; Childhood	Journey; Success After Troubles	Charity; Benevolence
SEVEN *Wisdom*	Resistance; Valor Courage	Temptation Illusory Success	Impulsiveness; Instability	Unfulfilling Material Success
EIGHT *Justice*	Swift Action; Rushing In	Abandonment; Disinterest	Imprisonment; Restriction	Aspiration; Diligence
NINE *Change Coming*	Recovery; Power with Strife	Wishful Desires; Material Pleasure	Despair; Stress Feeling Haunted	Prosperity; Material Gain
TEN *Pinnacle*	Exhaustion; Overly Burdened	Contentment; Fulfillment	Retaliation; End; Failures; Change	Stability; Great Plenitude

Appendix G:
Pythagorean Numerology

Pythagoras, a Greek philosopherand mathematician, was the founder of a secret society devoted to the esoteric theories of mathematics. The prevailing approach to numerology today is based on the works of Pythagoras, though of course, numerology is considered by most to be "pseudo-mathematics." Notwithstanding, the study is intriguing and can be integrated into tarot practice. The practitioner can look at the Life Path number and name correspondence of a Seeker and apply it to the interpretation of a tarot reading. It can help a Seeker think about what his or her innate character traits are and how those traits can be developed fully. It can also be used to help both Seeker and practitioner examine the problem presented by the Seeker and how innate character traits can be used to tailor the solution. Patternicity is also relevant. If a particular number recurs throughout a tarot spread, the practitioner can see whether there is an encoded message presented through numerology.

G1. Calculating the Life Path Number

It is believed that an individual's date of birth corresponds to a Life Path number, which predetermines the fundamental character traits of that individual, a theory not unlike that of Chinese numerology in the Lo Shu Square discussed briefly in this book. The Life Path number is calculated the same way a Seeker's Essence Card is calculated.

To calculate the Life Path number, take the two digits of the month of birth and add them to the two digits of the day of birth and to the four digits of the year of birth. In the below example, a Seeker with the date of birth September 24, 1981 would have the following Life Path number:

Life Path = [Month + Day + Year] = [09 + 24 + 1981]
= [(0 + 9) + (2 + 4) + (1 + 9 + 8 + 1)] = [9 + 6 + 19]
= [9 + 6 + (1 + 9)] = [9 + 6 + 10] = [9 + 6 + (1 + 0)]
= [9 + 6 + 1] = 16
Life Path = 1 + 6
Life Path = 7

The Life Path number represents what an individual's innate capabilities (and weaknesses) are collectively and what that individual can achieve with great success if his or her will is exercised in a way as to nurture those capabilities and manage those weaknesses.

Life Path	Innate Character Attributes
1 **Leader**	Born leader. Individualist. Independent. Tendency to be egocentric and arrogant. Motivated by glory and honor. Defeat will be particularly difficult for those born with Life Path 1 to accept. Life Path 1s are said to be born leaders. However, of all the life paths, the development of a person of Life Path 1 is the least determinable or predictable. While each one is born with the innate traits it would take to become a leader, each one is also born with an equally compelling inclination toward introversion, prone to take every fork in the road that leads as far away as possible from a position of leadership, power, and the spotlight. Therefore Life Path 1s forge two very different and distinct life paths. The one a Seeker is likely to take will be apparent from a tarot reading about that Seeker's life trajectory.
2 **Minister**	Born peacemaker. Spiritual. Enlightened. Diplomatic. A powerful mediator. Resolves conflicts. Temperance is a strong attribute. Tries to find balance and harmony in situations. Tendency to be indecisive or hesitant. Suited for careers that demand strong skills in conflict resolution. Counseling, mediation, ambassadorships, international or global relations, the medical profession, social work, or careers in music all align well with Life Path 2s. Avoid competitive work, or work that requires earning commissions to make a living, or careers of an adversarial nature. Motivated by interpersonal relationships and balance. Stronger mental faculties than physical; physical weaknesses will need greater attention to taking care of the body. A Life Path 2 will have the soul of an artist. They are sensitive, perceptive, and can also be withdrawn. Sensitivity is both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. Ability to understand both sides can lead Life Path 2s to hesitation when what they need most is conviction. They intuitively know what people's needs are and so they're tactful and diplomatic. Yet Life Path 2s try too hard to appease everybody's needs that they end up unable to make judgments or decisions when needed.
3 **Communicator**	Born communicator and raconteur. Strong skills in writing, oration, and expression. Articulate. Possesses the power of rhetoric and persuasion. Any career path that capitalizes on their extraordinary writing talent or communication skills will be aligned with Life Path 3s. Work in public relations, holding public office could also fulfill for the more outgoing Life Path 3s. Life Path 3s tend to take either a path of profound creativity or a path that has them interacting socially with others, a career in the limelight. Life Path 3s may also tend to cycle through many different career changes before embracing one for the long-term. Also, they may have to work much harder than the other life paths to reach the peak of success. It's harder for them to get to the top because, first of all, they have so many different interests and they want to pursue them all, all the time; and second, they spend too much of their time trying to be helpful to other people and nurturing others that they don't spend enough time being selfish and helping themselves. Warm, friendly, charismatic. Sociable. Fun-loving. Enjoys celebration. Overly sensitive. Life Path 3s tend to give out too many "second chances" and operate on the belief that people can change for the better. While

	that is one of their more noble traits, it also brings a great deal of disappointment to their lives. If a Life Path 3 begins his or her early years of life with too much optimism, that trust in others can easily become betrayed and that individual will spend the later years of life skeptical, pessimistic, and unyielding. Those of Life Path 3 must take care to not be too trusting. Tendency to take criticism too personally. Motivated by happiness. Weakness with punctuality. Weakness with commitments.
4 **Architect**	Born builder and planner. A natural designer. Life Path 4s are architects in the sense that they contribute to the design of our society. A Life Path 4 is also one who designs his or her own life, most likely someone who follows the ideology of free will over fate. Life Path 4s are pragmatic and capable of building the life they want, stone by stone; someone who has a clear understanding of every step that must be taken to accomplish their objectives. Life Path 4s possess an innate ability to chart milestones from objective to goal. The detail-oriented, organized aspect of Life Path 4's nature makes him or her well suited for entrepreneurship and executive management. Life Path 4s are highly inquisitive and tend to ask a lot of questions. They're also skeptics and suspend belief until they have proof. Typically Life Path 4s are great communicators and writers. They're analytical and idea-motivated. Life Path 4s are excellent organizers. However, there is a tendency to be unreasonable when life doesn't go as planned. Motivated by values and stability. Life may be filled with unexpected occurrences, such as sudden fortune, sudden misfortune, sudden acquisition, sudden loss, no matter the planning. Weakness in accepting the sudden changes.
5 **Pioneer**	The most magnetic of the life paths, Life Path 5 is a born pioneer and adventurer, someone who is not afraid of change, though that also gives him or her a restless soul. Life Path 5s tend to have a vacillating relationship with tradition. Some tend to go to the extreme and live a strictly traditional, orthodox life. Others go to the other extreme and thrive on heterodoxy, being nonconformists and avant-garde. There is an ongoing internal conflict between wanting to follow convention and norms and seeking societal approval, and the other end of the spectrum, of freedom from conformity, freedom from socially acceptable standards, and staunchly operating by self-determination. Naturally clever and full of wit. Lives for today. Sometimes forgets to save for tomorrow. Restless soul. Suited for careers in social justice, advocacy, publishing, legislature or political service, because Life Path 5s have a natural gift for political thought and organizing large groups. Life Path 5s are likely to achieve fame and recognition in life. That is because Life Path 5s explore, push their boundaries, challenge the status quo, and seek change. A risk-taker. Natural business and entrepreneurial skills, but due to brash, impatient nature, propensity to make grave errors in judgment. Also, they are not motivated by money-making, and so to succeed in business and entrepreneurship, often need to bring in strong alliances. A tarot reading can help a Life Path 5 tailor a concrete path for business success. Those with Life Path 5 are instigators of social change. They tend to be activists and motivators. They are multitalented and possess a diverse collection of skills and abilities.

	However, their unfocused energy that can hinder success. If a Life Path 5 can focus his or her energy and concentrate on one or just a few of those skills, the person can go far. One of their greatest temptations is bouncing from one skill to another and never fully honing any to mastery: jack of all trades, master of none.
6 **Nurturer**	Born nurturer. Strong moral compass. Strong faith and convictions. Traditionalist. A romantic at heart. Authoritarian, but allows others room for growth. Understanding. Compassionate. They have a sincere concern for the weak and the downtrodden. Life Path 6s are the shoulders that people cry on. They have a gift for assuaging others and letting them feel safe and secure. Life Path 6s work through crisis well and can lead people through crisis. Although they do not pine for the spotlight or desire to be the leader, when tragedy hits it will be Life Path 6s who lead others to safety and provide a sense of calm. They are the knights in shining armor. Born to be a humanitarian. Has the gift of development: can take anything in its infant stages and nurture it into maturity. Life Path 6s will demonstrate a natural aptitude for networking and forging alliances. However, tendency to be codependent. Outwardly an attractive individual, both physically and in character. However, can be possessive and overly protective.
7 **Philosopher**	Born thinker and philosopher. Analytical. Observant of surroundings and human nature. Life Path 7s seek higher knowledge. They are the most spiritual of the nine life paths. From birth, they possess an innate sense that there is more to this world than what is perceived by the five physical senses. A perfectionist. Holds everyone, including self, to high, exacting standards. Possesses spiritual wisdom and intuition. Tendency to be argumentative. They are well suited for academia, especially the arts and letters, a profession in law, social sciences, or staying in education for doctorate degrees. Likely to be respected among society. Tendency to be recluse. Life Path 7s will often feel like they do not belong. Their mental process and worldview will seem to differ from others. Thus, they develop a sense of self-sufficiency and also a preference for working alone. They need solitude and live by their own ideas and methods. Marriage and interpersonal relationships do not come easily for Life Path 7s because they have a tendency to appear aloof, detached, and even self-absorbed to others.
8	The life of a Life Path 8 can often play out like a tragicomedy, dramatic and Gatsbyesque, filled with glamour and glitz or harrowing pain, cataclysms, and loss. Power struggles are often at the crux of their struggles. Inadvertently, the people they hurt most are the people they love most. Life Path 8s do not like drama, and yet their lives play out like one anyway. They are both visionaries and risk-takers. They follow only their own decisions and rarely take into consideration what others advise, so there is a tendency to get reckless in their youth, especially when they become single-mindedly obsessed with achieving a particular goal. Although Life Path 8s are visionaries, they have a difficult time articulating to others what it is they see and often fail to convey their visions to others. Thus, what seems clear and unambiguous to the Life Path 8 may remain confusing and poorly explained to others. For Life Path 8s, stability is often a main, contentious issue. Depending on nurture and environmental or social

Tycoon	factors, Life Path 8s can be either incredibly stable, secure, and resourceful, or they go in the opposite direction and have to constantly battle with stability and attaining a sense of stability. Life Path 8s often end up in situations that can only be described as quantum entanglements. They have an extreme relationship with power, politics, money, property, wealth, and assets. There are also two types of Life Path 8s: the born tycoon or the born pauper (this does not mean you will necessarily be either a tycoon or pauper; rather, Life Path 8s simply have a relationship with money throughout their lives that feels like a vicious cycle). All Life Path 8s must strive actively to find balance and temperance with money matters. For Life Path 8s, the material plane and personal finances is a source of drama. Some Life Path 8s become wealthy, but are insecure in that wealth. Others struggle to make ends meet, and are thus insecure with their financial situation. For Life Path 8s, there is a consistent tension between what they have and what they want, defined in material terms.
9 **Artist / Healer**	Born artist and also born healer. Those with a Life Path 9 are subdivided into two different prongs: the Artist or the Healer. Such an individual is deeply understanding of humanity, whether the individual is an Artist or Healer. Generous. Selfless. The Artist has an acute ability to find the beauty in the world. The Healer has an acute ability to restore beauty. Natural talents in all forms of artistic expression. Suited for careers in the arts, medicine, or social justice. Life Path 9s will devote a great deal of their energy to the greater good. They sacrifice their money, time, and energy for a better world. It gives them great satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment to have made a difference. Life Path 9s tend to have friends from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds. They are a hub for differences to converge. Life Path 9s tend to be open-minded, progressive, and welcoming of all. They are less likely than the other life paths to be prejudiced and refuse to accept social biases. Life Path 9s typically accrue a great deal of good karma, and so they enjoy financial stability in unexpected, seemingly inexplicable ways, through inheritance, benefactors, donors, or sheer luck. In a sense, though, Life Path 9s are also karmically cursed to a life of selflessness. When Life Path 9s become selfish or self-centered, their worlds tend to turn upside down and much affliction befalls them. Life Path 9s will often seem destined for a life of service to others, and service to the greater good. Life Path 9s work well under pressure, and in fact pressure tends to motivate them. Careers that would exhaust and stress others out are the careers that Life Path 9s thrive in. The medical profession, high arts, journalism, teaching, managing nonprofit organizations at the board level, or ministry are well aligned with this Life Path.
Master Numbers	Traditionally there are two Master Numbers, 11 and 22, that are incorporated into numerology analyses; 11 is the spiritual power number and 22 is the material power number. If the digits of a Seeker's date of birth add up to the sum 11 prior to taking the theosophic reduction (i.e., the Life Path number would be 2), then in addition to the correspondences to Life Path 2, such an individual would likely possess

11 22	heightened intuitive awareness, empathic consciousness, and general inclination toward mysticism and spiritual knowledge. The number 11 is the power number of divine messengers. Those of Master Number 11 are spiritual warriors. If the digits add up to 22 (i.e., the Life Path number would be 4), then in addition to the correspondences to Life Path 4, such an individual would likely possess an extraordinary ability to accomplish goals. Such Seekers are the master builders of society. They are born with the greatest potential for material success. The number 22 is a force of nature and infuses those of Master Number 22 with incredible ingenuity, a perfect balance of pragmatism and idealism, and will.

Life Path numbers can be incorporated into tarot practice when the Seeker has provided his or her date of birth. It can help to offer the Seeker a sense of direction. The Seeker can scrutinize whether the Life Path determination resonates with their perception of themselves and, whether they respond in the affirmative or negative, what that might mean. These correspondences can also be used to help the Seeker capitalize on his or her strengths, to pursue the Seeker's desired future outcome.

G2. Name Correspondences in Numerology

Some believe that an accord exists between the energetic vibrations of numbers and the letters of the alphabet, in this case the English Latin-derived alphabet. One approach is to add up the corresponding numbers to every letter of a name and, similar to the Life Path number calculation, arrive at a single digit 1 through 9. That number corresponds to an archetype as set forth in the preceding table, which represents an individual's birthright. Another approach is to determine which letter of the alphabet a name vibrates the most dominantly with and use the below table to determine innate characteristics. Though the practice is referred to as Pythagorean numerology—in tribute to Pythagoras, who taught that there are only nine basic numbers—such a form of numerology is modern in origin, dating to the twentieth century.[6]

#			
1	**A**	**J**	**S**
	Born leader. Assertive. Confident. Motivated. Independent thinker.	**Leader, but tends to be more cautious than "A." Industrious. Dependable.**	**Spiritual roots often expressed in unorthodox ways. Independent. Audacious.**
2	**B**	**K**	**T**
	Sensitive. Neighborly. Motivated to help others. Benevolent. A dreamer. Desire to make a difference.	**High potential for achievement. Inspires others. Powerful. Warrior spirit. May have a hero complex.**	**Peacemaker. A romantic at heart. Beloved by others. Makes a great teacher.**
3	**C**	**L**	**U**
	Sociable. Friendly. Kind. Motivated by happiness. Tendency to be hedonistic.	**Expresses the joy of living. Original thinker. Creative. A great writer. Great eye for aesthetics.**	**Struggles to find balance. Inconstant. Impulsive. Mercurial. Effervescent.**
4	**D**	**M**	**V**
	Born teacher or mentor. Honest. Sincere. Pragmatic. Possesses common sense. Natural high intelligence.	**Keeper of the home and hearth. Protective nature. Protective over family and friends. Tendency to be defensive.**	**Capable of vast accomplishment. One of most powerful vibrations in alphabet. An uncommon spirit.**
5	**E**	**N**	**W**
	Versatile and inspirational. Interested in spiritual	**Always seeking excitement and variety. Spontaneous.**	**Power of persuasion. Excellent verbal and**

	matters. Energetic. Motivated. Noble. Highborn demeanor.	**Magnanimous personality. Tendency to be too proud.**	**communication abilities. However, may have a tendency to be secretive.**
6	**F**	**O**	**X**
	Humanitarian. Cheerful. Creative. Sanguine. Tendency to be dogmatic. Stubborn and willful.	**Responsible. Efficient. Accomplished. Proper. Adroit. A natural contrarian. A little different from others.**	**A libertine. Emotional. Strong convictions. Intense energies. Dynamic. Highly resourceful.**
7	**G**	**P**	**Y**
	Reserved thinker. Often misunderstood. An uncommon personality. Idiosyncratic.	**Great depths of perception. Introspective. Highly astute. Genial and sympathetic.**	**Committed to uncovering mysteries and the hidden to bring understanding. A scholar of the esoteric.**
8	**H**	**Q**	**z**
	Success in business and finance. Strong financier skills. Savvy. Practical and organized.	**Distinct and often eccentric. Generous. Unstable relationships. Tendency to be a jack of all trades.**	**Powerful mind. Capable of great achievement. The golden one. Blessed. Protected.**
9	**I**	**R**	
	Sensitive. Intuitive. Deeply perceptive of others and surrounding. Emanates beauty.	**Selfless. Benevolent. Cosmopolitan. Cultured and refined. Serves the public good. Great people skills.**	

Isopsephy is the practice of adding the numerical values assigned to certain letters and analyzing that number for numerological significance. Isopsephy and numerological name correspondences can be incorporated into tarot practice to offer insight to a Seeker on how education, experiences, environment, and skill sets have nurtured the Seeker into the person he or she is today. It can help provide a more detailed prescription for personal success. The Life Path number offers insight into the Seeker's innate character traits and given strengths and weaknesses, which can be utilized to secure the Seeker's desired future outcome.

If the Seeker is contemplating a new project or venture, these alphabetical attributions can be used in conjunction with a tarot reading to help a Seeker select an appropriate business name, title, or other designation for that project or venture.

G3. The Decisive Age

The Decisive Age is a year when a great flux of energies collects around an individual in a way that opens a significant fork in his or her life path. It is when you will be presented with two distinctly different destinies, and the decisions you make at that time govern which destiny you will manifest. The Decisive Age is a period of epiphanies, awakening, transformation, reckoning, and a commitment to a particular life path. Events will seem to amplify or converge that year, all to decide which fork in your life path of possibilities you will walk.

To calculate a person's Decisive Age, calculate the sum of each single digit of the month, day, and year of birth added together. In the below example, the date of birth September 24, 1981 is used.

Decisive Age = 0 + 9 + 2 + 4 + 1 + 9 + 8 +
Decisive Age = 34

If a Decisive Age took place already in a Seeker's past, then much of what that person is going through today is attributed to the decisions made at that age or what occurred in that person's life at that time, leading him or her down the present particular destiny. Had the person made different choices at that time, his or her life today might look significantly different. A tarot reading can help a Seeker understand the cause and effect of that Decisive Age to the present and what actions the Seeker can take going forward to walk the most fulfilling life path.

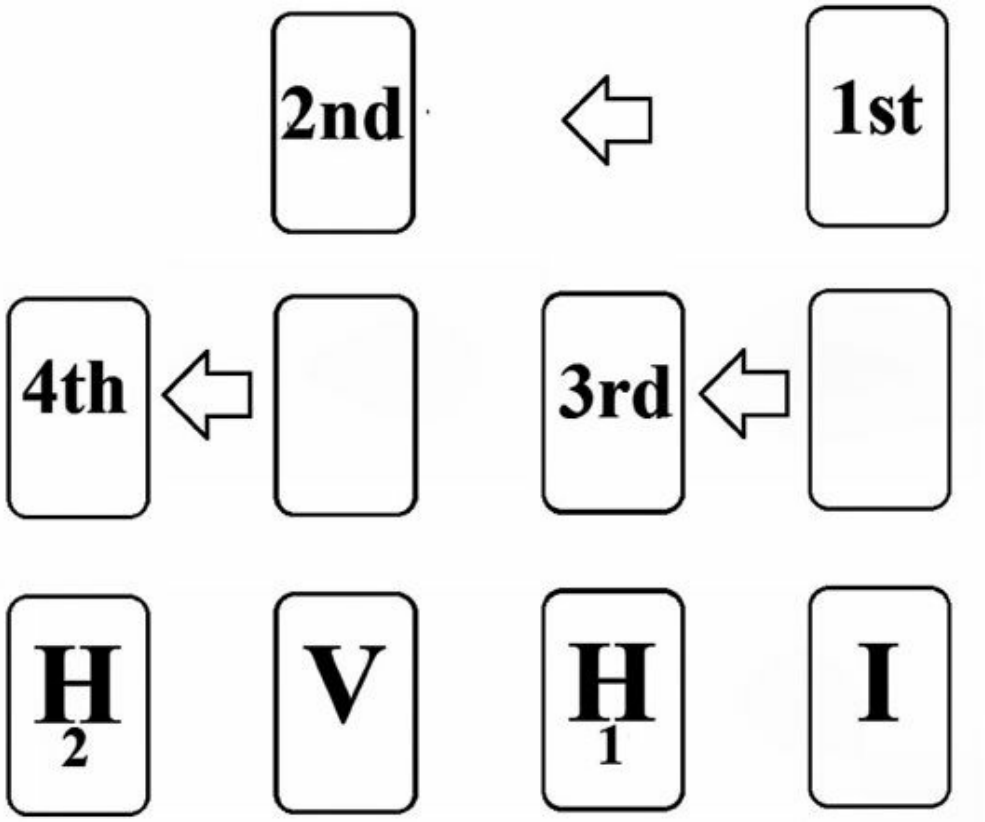
If a Decisive Age has not yet come to pass and is in the Seeker's future, then the Seeker is likely to be feeling like he or she hasn't peaked yet. Since the Decisive Age has not yet come to pass, and before that year comes, the Seeker should know what it is exactly that he or she wants out of life and make sure every decision, no matter how minor it may seem at the time, is keyed toward those objectives. A tarot reading can help illuminate the Seeker's path from present to that Decisive Age and keep the Seeker on track of his or her objectives toward a fulfilling life. A tarot reading can help a Seeker keep his or her radar on for opportunities so as not to not miss any.

Appendix H:
Sample Logs and Templates

The following templates will help you to create your own personal logs and tables for your journal. Keeping updated and accurate notes on your practice is essential for the development of any professional. Paul Foster Case recommended that tarot students practice the First Operation to improve accuracy. A table is provided to help log the First Operation practice. The practitioner should keep a log of all readings. When reading for the public, be sure to maintain at least one form of contact with each Seeker, for possible future communications. In the interest of space, many of the tables herein have been condensed. When the practitioner creates his or her own tables, the actual application of the table will likely take up several pages, especially the detailed summaries of readings or tarot deck research notes.

Quick Review of the Case Method First Operation

Select Signifier (or Significator) Card.
Shuffle deck with Signifier Card and cut as follows:



Locate the pile that the Signifier Card is in. That pile indicates the nature of Signifier's questio that the tarot will answer. See below table for reference:

I	***Personal Development; Health & Wellness***. Seeker is asking about matters of personal development, such as work or career. Could indicate an interest in beginning a new venture or carrying out a new idea. Pile is also associated with the physical, such as body, health, or wellness issues. (*Corresponds with Wands*.)
H 1	***Love, Marriage, Family***. The internal sphere: Seeker is asking about emotions, feelings, personal relationships, or desires. This pile pertains to the domestic sphere and interpersonal matters. When love or romance is the matter at hand, or the matter that Seeker should focus on at present, the signifier will appear here. (*Corresponds with Cups*.)
V	***Politics, Ambitions, Social, Intellectual***. The intellectualized sphere: Seeker is asking about ambitions and high aspirations. This pile corresponds with the Seeker's role in society. Activists and leaders often find their signifier cards in this pile. This pile could also pertain to conflict resolution, imbalances or disappointments. Note further that this pile could suggest intellectual matters at play, or a mental struggle. This is the hardest of the four piles to read, but curiously enough, the signifier rarely appears in this pile-only for the most unique of Seeker

	spirits does the signifier appear here (*Corresponds with Swords*.)
H 2	***Money, Business, Property***. Seeker is asking about a material matter, finances, property, or wealth. When the signifier appears in this pile, the Seeker should be focusing on financial concerns, wealth management, or the settlement of a particular piece of property. (*Corresponds with Pentacles*.)

First Operation Practice Log

#	DATE	SIGNIFIER	PILE INTENDED	PILE OUTCOME	NOTES
Ex.	12/12/2012	Queen of Swords	H2	V	Incorrect.
Ex.	12/12/2012	1: The Magician	I	I	ACCURATE.
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

Total Incorrect: **/ 20** **Total ACCURATE:** **/ 20**

Record of Completed Readings

#	Date of Reading	Name of Seeker	Card Spread Used	Misc. Notes (Fees, Etc.)
Ex.	12/31/2012	Tora	Celtic Cross	$50. DOB: 05/17/1978. First Operation Result: H1. Contact: (123) 456-7890.
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Detailed Summary of Reading

#

Date of Reading	:
Time of Reading	:
Location of Reading	:
Fee/Compensation (*Optional*)	:

Name of Seeker	:
Seeker's Contact Info.	:
Date of Birth (*Time of Birth Optional*)	:
Life Path Number & Essence Card (*Optional*)	:
Signifier Card	:

Seeker's Inquiry	:
Tarot/Oracle Deck Used	:
Reading Methodology/ Card Spread(s) Used	:
Summary of Past Readings Performed (*If Applicable*); Seeker History	:

Practitioner's Notes (Cards Drawn, Interpretation Notes, Etc.)	:
Seeker's Feedback	:
Miscellaneous Notes	:

Attachments:

- ☐ Written Notes _____
- ☐ Photographs _____
- ☐ Other _____

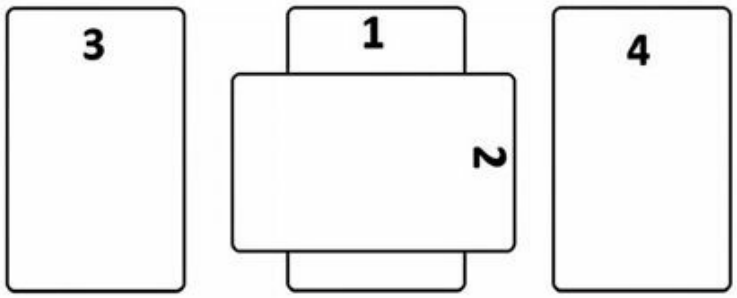
Morning Routine Quick Tarot Reading

The following spread template can be used to log routine morning card readings. For a period of time, draw a four-card spread as shown below every morning and record your initial notes. At the end of the day, return to the reading to reflect. Did some of the cards make sense by the end of the day? Did you misread any cards? The primary exercise of the reflection at the end of the day is to assess how well you interpreted the cards in the morning. The morning routine card readings are a good exercise for intermediate practitioners who want to hone their reading skills. This exercise will help you begin to pick up on how the cards apply to everyday life. Be sure to keep a log of the readings in your journal to chart your progress.

Today's Date : _____

Time of Log : _____

Deck Used : _____



Card #	*Position Meaning*	*Card Drawn*
1	Overall Outlook for Today	
2	What Crosses My Path Today	
3	Yesterday's Unfinished Business	
4	Upcoming Goals and Objectives	

Reading Notes:

End of Day Feedback

Time of Log : _____

Feedback Notes:

Template for Card Profiles

After dedicated study to each individual card, consider writing a profile for it, to keep in your tarot journal.

(Card Image)

Card Name	:
Keywords Upright	:
Keywords Reversed	:
Card Description	:
Misc. Attributions	:

Symbols in the Card

Card Interpretation
Upright Interpretation :

Reversed Interpretation :

Sample Card Profile

Card Name	:	**Key 7. The Chariot.**
Keywords Upright	:	Victory. Self discipline. Strong willpower.
Keywords Reversed	:	Riot. Ruthlessness. Derailing. Pride.
Card Description	:	A charioteer, proud and tranquil, in full armor is on a stone gray chariot, which is being pulled by two sphinxes, one black and one white. An azure starry canopy hangs above his head, supported by beams from the chariot. He holds a wand in his right hand.

Misc. Attributions	:	Associated with the astrological sign Cancer; Water. Ruling planet: Moon. Number 7 suggests wisdom. Note body of water behind chariot. Associated element: Water. Two sphinxes and two faces on breastplate suggest Urim and Thummim, divination for innocence or guilt. The triumph of Light. Conquest on all planes (Waite). On the path toward discovery and understanding of secret senses. Represents the vision of Ezekiel. Movement of the chariot conceals a secret (the secret of the High Priestess?), one of spiritual significance.

Symbols in the Card

Eight-sided star on charioteer's head: sovereignty of the sun; life energy.
Laurel wreath: victory; command.
Azure starry canopy: collective unconscious, which the charioteer wields with control. Pillars holding up the canopy suggest that charioteer's victory and control is supported by the collective unconscious.
Wand in right hand: power; empowerment.
Waxing and waning moons on shoulders, with faces: fluctuations of our emotions/personality.
Engraved symbols on black tunic: the subconscious.
Black and white sphinxes: the physical senses we use to process the world; knowledge & intuition; however, in card imagery, are pulling in opposite directions, though facing and looking the same way.
Yellow background: sun; active energy. Yellow wheels of chariot also indicate active energy.
River behind chariot: Reference to Watery essence of The Chariot card.
City in distance: Heavenly Jerusalem; City of God

Card Interpretation

Upright Interpretation	:	Conquest. Triumph over obstacles in Seeker's life. Full control of emotional faculties. Movement in the right direction. Current movement will lead to victory. Seeker is controlled; master of self-control and self-assertion. Great control over one's own willpower. Putting into action body and mind, knowledge and intuition. The chariot represents the Seeker's personality and tenacity in motion toward accomplishing a goal. Perfect control on more than one plane. Spirit in movement.
Reversed Interpretation	:	Seeker must reconsider direction. Victory is not certain in current path chosen. Warning to make better choices. The Chariot reversed indicates that Seeker is supposed to enjoy conquest and success, but current choices have put Seeker in the wrong direction. Be careful of movements. Make sure movement is in right direction. Could also indicate lack of use of willpower.

Template for Compiling Tarot Deck Research Notes

There are many tarot decks to choose from. To organize the chaos, the practitioner who wants to build a tarot deck library should research all options thoroughly. One way to do so is through comparison notes. Prepare the following chart for each deck being contemplated by the practitioner. Then compare the profiles of each deck to narrow down the options.

Name of Deck	:	
Publisher	:	
Publication Date	:	
ISBN	:	
Card Size (Width x Height)	:	
Author(s) / Illustrator(s)	:	
Deck Theme(s)	:	
History of Deck	:	
Minor Arcana Suit Names	:	
Court Card Titles	:	
Key Numbers & Card Titles of Major Arcana	:	
Notable Variations from Rider-Waite-Smith	:	
Most Notable Ideological Influences	:	
Personal Observations / Opinion	:	
Miscellaneous Notes	:	
Additional References and Resources; Deck Reviews	:	

APPENDIX I:
The Marseille Major Arcana

THE FOLLOWING IMAGES of the Major Arcana are from the Marseille tradition and are considered the predecessors of the Major Arcana imagery in the Rider-Waite-Smith. Images from the Marseille tradition, which are now in the public domain, are provided in this appendix for comparative purposes.

Key 1—Le Bateleur
The Magician

Key 2—La Papesse
The Popesse (High Priestess)

Key 3—L'Imperatrice
The Empress

Key 4—L'Empereur
The Emperor

Key 5—Le Pape
The Pope

Key 6—L'Amoureux
The Lovers

Key 7—Le Chariot
The Chariot

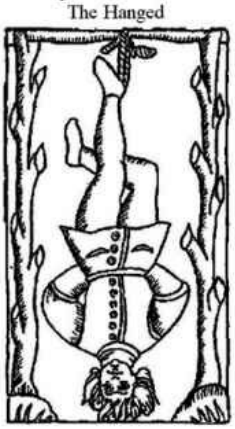
Key 8—La Justice
Justice

Key 9—L'Hermite
The Hermit

Key 10—La Roue de Fortune
Wheel of Fortune

Key 11—La Force
Strength

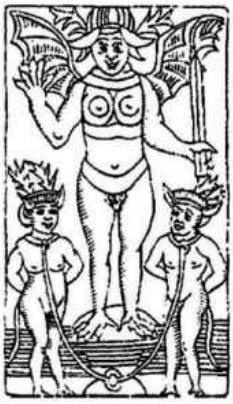
Key 12—Le Pendu
The Hanged



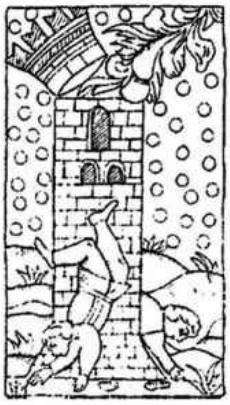
Key 13 [La Mort]
Untitled [Death]

Key 14—Temperance
Temperance

Key 15—La Diable
The Devil



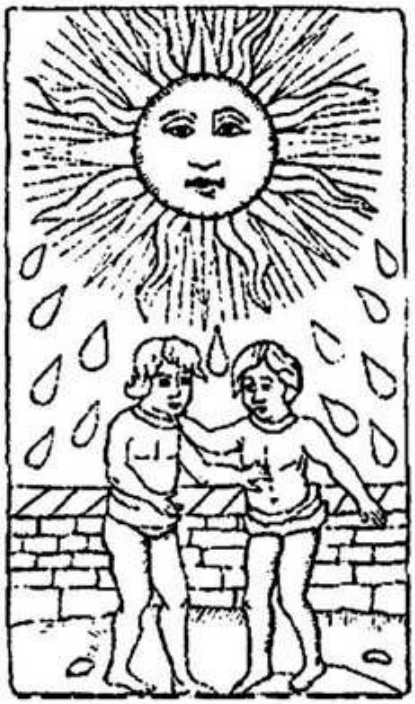
Key 16—La Maison Dieu
The House of God (The Tower)



Key 17—L'Etoile
The Star

Key 18—La Lune
The Moon

Key 19—Le Soleil
The Sun



Key 20—Le Judgement
Judgement

Key 21—Le Monde
The World

(Key 0) Le Mat
(*Unnumbered*) The Fool

Note: In the Marseille deck, Le Mat or The Fool was placed at the end of the Major Arcana series rather than the beginning.[7]

Notes

1. The term "unconscious" as used throughout this book will refer to the processes within the mind that a human individual is not aware or conscious of. It will refer to a plane in the mind that registers all that we do and perceives at depths and with breadth beyond the present cognitive. From the vantage points of the metaphysical and metaphysiological, the unconscious of one individual can connect to, and thus share information with, the unconscious of another individual, and every unconscious of every individual is interconnected to form a singular unconscious plane called the collective unconscious. Contrary to the common view that the unconscious is a shadow of the cognitive mind, and therefore does not serve cognitive functions, some psychologists now contend that the unconscious can in fact carry out any of the high-level cognitive functions we would ordinarily attribute to the conscious mind. See Hassin, Ran R, "Yes It Can: On the Functional Abilities of the Human Unconscious,"*Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8:2 (March 2013): 195–207. See also Chapter 3, note 11 below. The use of the term "unconscious" herein is based in small part on that modern view, and on the contention that the tarot can facilitate the high-level cognitive functions of the unconscious. This book does not attempt to inform the reader on psychology. The terms as used throughout this book that may have been borrowed from psychology are used only to propound the author's theory on how the mind works metaphysically and metaphysiologically, in turn for the purposes of understanding how tarot works.
2. Throughout this book, "conscious" and "consciousness" are not used as a term from psychology or neuroscience, but rather these terms will refer to the plane in the mind consisting of information and knowledge that we are aware of, manifested from our physical reality. There is full cognition and intentional action. The conscious mind encompasses our intellections and our emotions. Herein reside the memories available at instant recall. The "subconscious" refers to unintentional cognition and action, though still manifested in the physical reality. These are memories from the present life that are not readily available at instant recall. Cultural knowledge, evolutionary influences, norms, and values that are affecting an individual's behavior and physical reality but that the individual may not be conscious and aware of will also be placed here under the term "subconscious." Sometimes, information and knowledge from the conscious mind is pulled into the subconscious as a defense or coping mechanism. Other times information and knowledge from the unconscious is pulled forward into the subconscious. The "unconscious" as used herein can be further subdivided into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The "personal unconscious" is a systematic record of all cognitions of an individual soul from the space-time continuum. It includes past-life memories and also information that was perceived from the physical reality but never registered in the conscious, and so it passed into the subconscious and, due to dormancy there, subsequently passed into the personal unconscious. The "collective unconscious" is the systematic record of all cognitions of all souls encompassing the entirety of the space-time continuum. It is likened to the Eastern notion of the Akashic records, or the monotheistic singular God concept.
3. "Pope Says Only Jesus Saves, Not Sorcerers and Fortune Tellers,"*Vatican Radio*, April 5, 2013,

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/04/05/pope_says_only_jesus_saves,_not_sorcerers_and_680059.

4. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," in *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 119.
5. Contemporary texts on tarot relied heavily on the groundwork paved by the Golden Dawn and Hermetic tradition, which synthesized tarot and astrology. Thus, much terminology from astrology was borrowed for tarot, such as the term "querent." In classical Western astrology, a querent is the person who is propounding an inquiry on the astrologer and desiring a resolution. The term was likely transferred to nineteenth- and twentieth-century tarot practice, to refer to the one who consults a tarot reader with an inquiry. I prefer the term "Seeker." William Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1852), 75–76.

Chapter 2

1. Catherine Perry Hargrave, *A History of Playing Cards and a Bibliography of Cards and Gaming* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 6.
2. W. H. Wilkinson, "Chinese Origin of Playing Cards," in *The American Anthropologist*, Vol. VIII, January 1895, 61–78.
3. James McManus, *Cowboys Full: The Story of Poker* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 30–31.
4. McManus, *Cowboys Full*, 30.
5. McManus, *Cowboys Full*, 31.
6. *Decoding the Past: Secrets of the Playing Card*, January 15, 2008 (A & E Home Video), DVD.
7. Paul Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot: From Ancient Roots to Modern Usage* (Destiny Books, 2004), 2–4.
8. Dai Leon, *Origins of the Tarot: Cosmic Evolution and the Principles of Immortality* (Berkeley, CA: Frog Books, 2009), 7. In Leon's work, the term "Mamelukes" is used in place of "Mamlûk."
9. Simon Wintle, "A 'Moorish' Sheet of Playing Cards," *The Playing-Card, Journal of the International Playing-Card Society*, Volume XV, No. 4, May 1987. Retrieved from www.wopc.co.uk/assets/files/moorish.pdf.
10. Helen Farley, "The Evolution of the 'Mother' in Tarot," *Hecate*, Volume 32, No. 2, 2006, 68. Duke Filipo Maria Visconti was said to be a despotic ruler "with a taste for astrology and board games."
11. Christina Olsen, PhD, "Carte da Trionfi: The Development of Tarot in Fifteenth-Century Italy (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994).
12. Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*, 2–3.
13. Olsen, "Carte da Trionfi."
14. Eden Gray, *Mastering the Tarot* (Signet Books, 1971), 11. At the time of this writing, a majority of tarot historians concur that the tarot was popularized by wandering bands of Bohemians, or gypsies, and that these gypsies introduced tarot divination and use of tarot for fortune-telling to the Europeans. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed* (Oregon: Noreah Press, 1999), 13.
15. The earliest documented historical record of playing cards used as divination is in a 1765 memoir by the Italian writer Giacomo Casanova, mentioning a Russian peasant girl who arranges twenty-five playing cards into a square and is able to correctly state details of his love life. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed*, 11.
16. For instance, the Templar cross appears throughout the Major Arcana, most prominently in Keys 2 and 20, a bit concealed in Key 10, and in Key 15, the Devil card appears to be the imagery of Baphomet, a deity allegedly worshiped by the Knights Templar.
17. *Decoding the Past*, DVD.
18. Ronald Decker and Michael Dummett, *History of the Occult Tarot* (Duckworth Publishing, 2002), x.

19. Etteilla, Mathers, Waite, and many other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tarotists were Freemasons. Waite's deck in particular, the Rider-Waite-Smith, is said to be rich with Freemason symbolism. Bro. William Steve Burkle KT, "Masonic Allusion and Symbolism in the Figures and Interpretations of the Major Arcana of the Tarot by Arthur Edward Waite," *Piestre-Stones, A Review of Freemasonry* (2008, September 23). Retrieved from www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/major_arcana_tarot.html.

20. Court de Gébelin wrote about his conviction that tarot cards originated from the works of Egyptian priests who hid secrets from the Book of Thoth in the tarot card images. His theories gave birth to contemporary tarot divination. On the positive side, Court de Gébelin's writings on tarot gave birth to modern uses of the cards for divination and perhaps spurred the Golden Dawn's interest in tarot for occult purposes. On the negative side, many of the common misconceptions of tarot's origins stem from Court de Gébelin's writings. Cynthia Giles, *The Tarot: History, Mystery and Lore* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 23.

21. Gray, *Mastering the Tarot*, 11.

22. Some tarot scholars have suggested that the Egyptian origin of tarot predates de Gébelin and the Egyptian origin narrative was a common understanding among French occultists. One theory asserts that the Egyptian origin narrative comes from the Fratres Lucis, a division of the Rosicrucian Order, in an initiatory document that predates the French Revolution (1789–1799 AD). Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed*, 111.

23. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Continental Tarots* (Tarot University, 2005), 5.

24. Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 7.

25. There are two primary schools of the Kabbalah, one following the Judaic tradition and the second, the Hermetic Qabbalah, a product of the Italian Renaissance. Robert Wang, *The Qabalistic Tarot: A Textbook of Mystical Philosophy* (Sam Weiser, 1987), 3–4.

26. Giles, *The Tarot: History, Mystery and Lore*, 39. English occultists A. E. Waite, William Wynn Westcott, and Aleister Crowley translated Eliphas Levi's works and in the process, modified Levi's interpretive approach, especially where it might contradict with the new English occult approach to tarot. Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed*, 6. The modifications were an attempt at reconciling the true traditional French approach under a Marseille-based framework with the new English approaches, later known as the Rider-Waite-Smith and Thoth. The two distinct "Continental" (Levi's original works in French) and the English (such as the Rider-Waite-Smith) approaches should not be conflated, however.

27. Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, translated by A. P. Morgan (Wilshire Book Company, 1893). Papus, along with Oswald Wirth, a Swiss occultist and creator of the esoteric Wirth tarot deck, were students of Eliphas Levi and continued in Levi's French tradition of tarot. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed* (Oregon: Noreah Press, 1999), 6.

28. To read more about Blavatsky's influence, see Sylvia Cranston's *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life & Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movemen* (Tarcher Books, 1993).

29. In 1880s London, among W. B. Yeats's personal affects was a tarot deck. Yeats was also purported to be a member of the Golden Dawn. Kathleen Raine "Yeats, the Tarot, and the Golden Dawn," in *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1, Winter 1969, 112.
30. June Leavitt has written two excellent books on the matter: *Esoteric Symbols: The Tarot in Yeats, Eliot, and Kafka* (University Press of America, 2007) and *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka: Theosophy, Cabala, and the Modern Spiritual Revival* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
31. The Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck originally published in 1909 was drawn by Pamela Colman Smith under the direction of famed occultist A. E. Waite. The deck was published by William Rider & Son of London. Images of that deck printed in this book are taken from *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* written by A. E. Waite and published in 1911 and are thus in the public domain. They are not sourced from images that U.S. Games Systems, Inc. claims copyright to. To view the public-domain Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, see the website Sacred Texts, an archive of electronic texts about religion, mythology, legends and folklore, and occult and esoteric topics: www.sacred-texts.com/tarot/pkt/index.htm. Sacred Texts is run by John Bruno Hare. Holly Voley, a renowned twenty-first-century writer and researcher on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, also provides a wealth of resources about the public-domain deck. See Holly's Rider-Waite Site, http://home.comcast.net/~vilex/. The images of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck used herein are sourced from Holly Voley's archive of images.
32. K. Frank Jensen, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," *The Playing-Card*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2005, 30.
33. Robert Wang is the author of *The Qabalistic Tarot: A Textbook of Mystical Philosophy* (Marcus Aurelius Press, 2004) and *Tarot Psychology* (Marcus Aurelius Press, 2007). He is also the co-creator of the Golden Dawn Tarot Deck (U.S. Games Systems, 1977).
34. Arthur Rosengarten is the author of the groundbreaking book *Tarot and Psychology: Spectrums of Possibility* (Paragon House, 2000).

Chapter 3

1. Throughout this book, "faith" will refer generally to any spiritual or religious subscription. Faith as used herein is the body of doctrines that a person believes to be the truth, irrespective of proof or provability. That body of doctrines governs how the individual views him- or herself, others, and the world. Per the foregoing, atheism is considered a faith, as is any established religion, monotheistic or polytheistic, paganism, the Baha'i Faith, religious syncretism, etc. Tarot semiotics touches frequently on faith and assumes faith to be an integral part of an individual's ontology.
2. "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead." Deuteronomy 18:10–11, King James Bible.
3. Carl Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
4. Richard Wilhem and Cary F. Baynes, trans, "Foreword by C. G. Jung," in *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), xxi.
5. Wilhem and Baynes, "Foreword by C. G. Jung," in *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, xxi.
6. Michael Shermer, "Patternicity: Finding Meaningful Patterns in Meaningless Noise," *The Scientific American*, December 2008. Retrieved from www.scientificamerican.com/article/patternicity-finding-meaningful-patterns.
7. Shermer, "Patternicity."
8. Bertram R. Forer, "The Fallacy ofPersonal Validation: A Classroom Demonstration of Gullibility," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1949, 118–143.
9. Ly de Angeles, *Tarot Theory and Practice* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2007), 25.
10. A version of "Myth of the Divination-Fulfilling Prophecy" was first published in the *American Tarot Association Quarterly Journal*, Spring 2013.
11. As used herein, the term "subconscious" refers to the periphery around the conscious plane in the mind and is the unintentional cognition that becomes unintentional action that is manifested in the physical reality. At least for the purposes of this book, it is distinguished from the personal unconscious, which funnels into the collective unconscious. The terms as used herein differ from their use in psychological sciences, because here it is contended that information, such as past lives, etc., resides in the unconscious. See Chapter 1, Note 1, above. Thus, here the terms take on a metaphysical and metaphysiological dimension.
12. Lon and Morris Isaac Stein Geiser, *Evocative Images: The Thematic Apperception Test and the Art of Projection* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1999).

Chapter 4

1. Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, The New Golden Dawn Ritual Tarot: Keys to th Rituals, Symbolism, Magic and Divination (Llewellyn Publications, 1997).
2. Stuart R. Kaplan, The Encyclopedia of Tarot, Volumes I–IV (U.S. Games Systems, 2006).

Chapter 5

1. "The [Rider-Waite-Smith tarot], for all its popularity … cannot truly be considered as 'traditional.' " Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed* (Oregon: Noreah Press, 1999), 4.
2. See Appendix I for images of the Marseille Majors to compare.
3. The earliest tarot decks referred to the suit as Coins. It was not until the 1900s that members of the Golden Dawn such as MacGregor Mathers renamed the suit of Coins "Pentacles." K. Frank Jensen, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," *The Playing-Card*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2005, 30.
4. The concept of four classical elements—Fire, Water, Air, and Earth—originated in 440 BC with the Greek philosopher Empedocles. Fathi Habashi, "Zoroaster and the Theory of Four Elements," *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry*, No. 2, Volume 25, 2000, 109.
5. Papus, *Tarot of the Bohemians* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1892), 11, 19–23.

Chapter 8

1. Giles, The Tarot: History, Mystery and Lore, xii.
2. "[T]he Universe was created from the four elements, Fire, Air, Water, Earth, in the order given, each growing as it were from its predecessor and all animated in turn by the Word breathed upon them at the Creation." William Thomas and Kate Pavitt, The Book of Talismans, Amulets and Zodiacal Gems (London: William Rider & Son, Ltd., 1922), 6.

1. It is believed that Pamela Colman Smith, the illustrator of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, took her inspiration for the Minor Arcana card imagery from an earlier deck, the Sola-Busca tarot. Frank, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 31.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol. 9 Part 1)*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).
3. Ronald Decker, Thierry Depaulis, and Michael Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).
4. Gray, *The Complete Guide to the Tarot*, 227. Eden Gray is credited with reviving the late-twentieth-century interest in tarot divination and the contemporary approach to card interpretation used by the majority of tarot practitioners after the 1980s. She is also credited with coining the term "the Fool's journey" for describing the consecutive narrative found in the Major Arcana.
5. Per Eastern metaphysical or theosophical belief, the Akashic Records is a figurative library that exists in a different dimension or astral plane from physical reality. That figurative library contains the whole of all knowledge, past, present, and future, capturing the complete spectrum of the space-time continuum. One mystical theory to the Major Arcana is that the twenty-two cards can be read in their totality to reveal the key to accessing the Akashic Records.
6. Donald Michael Kraig, "Astral Projection, Pathworking, and the Tarot," in *Tarot & Magic* (Llewellyn, 2002), 39–62. Pathworking is a Western metaphysical practice of visualizing a complete landscape different from an individual's present reality, and exploring that landscape's topography, interacting with the characters or spiritual beings occupying that landscape, with the objective of gaining insights that will be helpful to that individual's present reality. Contemporary Western occultists have used the Major Arcana cards as twenty-two landscapes or astral planes to use for pathworking. Through pathworking with the Major Arcana, the individual can attain the twenty-two wisdoms that convey the purpose of human life.
7. Some tarot historians assert a link between Cathar and gnostic doctrine with the imagery on the Major Arcana cards, believing that the imagery of the cards were used to preserve Cathar theosophy in a secret way, given the circumstances of political suppression and threat of Inquisition at the time. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed* (Oregon: Noreah Press, 1999), 10-12.
8. Jensen, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 30.
9. The author of this book strongly recommends that the serious tarot practitioner acquire the following books for his or her reference library: John Michael Greer, *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult* (Llewellyn Publications, 2013) and Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Tarcher Books, 2013). These references will aid immensely in tarot symbolism interpretation. Many of the meanings provided in the Cyclopedia herein are influenced by both Greer's and Hall's works.
10. Traditionally in the early Italian tarot decks, circa 1400s, The Fool was raggedly dressed as a beggar. Other European decks depicted The Fool as a madman. In the 1600s, the French tarot depicted The Fool as a jester, wearing a multicolored fancy shirt. Etteilla's interpretation of

The Fool was that of the alchemist. Christine Payne-Towler, *The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed* (Oregon: Noreah Press, 1999), 20.

11. "As above, so below" is a foundational principle in the Hermetic tradition. It is believed to be derived from the first lines of the Emerald Tablet: "That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above, working the miracles of one." The Emerald Tablet is credited to an author who went by the name Hermes Trismegistus, which was likely a pseudonym, though no one is sure of the author's identity. The Tablet is dated to originate from around the eleventh or twelfth century.
12. The lemniscate symbol throughout the tarot conveys divinity, of possessing a strong bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, the singular and the plural, the individual and the cosmic whole. It conveys a unification of all layers of the Seeker's consciousness and a sense of perpetuity or incorruptible fortitude. It is a sign indicative of possessing both divine and practical knowledge and the merger of the two. Note its presence in Key 8: Strength and the Two of Pentacles. It is a symbol of spiritual or mental power.
13. Eliphas Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, trans. Aleister Crowley, 1861, 13.
14. Mark Amaru Pinkham, *Guardians of the Holy Grail: The Knights Templar, John The Baptist, and the Water of Life* (Adventures Unlimited Press, 2004), 9.
15. Edward Burman, *The Assassins: Holy Killers of Islam*(Crucible, 1987). While some believe the Major Arcana to contain the secrets of the Knights Templar or even the Nizari Ismailis (Assassins), whether there is any interconnecting heritage between these orders and the tarot as the picture book containing their mystical secrets cannot be verified.
16. Practitioners are divided about the elemental association of Key 1: The Magician. Generally the card is associated with Mercury. Mercury is associated with the zodiac signs Gemini, which is Air, and Virgo, which is Earth. Thus, the majority of practitioners associate The Magician with Air, believing that the card's interpretive emphasis on the power of the mind is why it should be attributed to Air. Others, in the minority, such as the author, associate it with Earth because The Magician is also associated with the Greek myth of Hermes, who was no only a messenger of the gods, but also a promoter of commerce and the god of commercial gain. Since The Magician card is about manifestation, and Earth energy is required for any physical manifestation, the card is better associated with Earth than Air.
17. The attributions for Mercury the planet should not be confused with the attributions for mercury, the metallic element. Modern astrology most often corresponds Mercury the planet with the element Earth, while Western alchemy corresponds mercury the metallic element with Air.
18. William Thomas and Kate Pavitt, *The Book of Talismans, Amulets and Zodiacal Gems* (London: William Rider & Son, 1922), 162. Thetwin pillars imagery throughout the tarot represents an important passageway likened to the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, that stood at the entranceway of Solomon's Temple, the first temple of Jerusalem per the Old Testament. The concept of the pillars is also found in tenets of Freemasonry. They symbolize the balance between knowledge and intuition, mercy and severity, the presence of God (or a strong connection to higher cosmic powers), and the yin-yang polarity between male/female, light/dark, activity/passivity. The artful command of these components will empower the commander to become an architect of destiny. The twin pillars can suggest the use of intuition

and premonition and, with that use, the learned knowledge of how to control one's own fate.

19. In 1 Kings 7:18 and 7:20 of the Holy Bible, the twin pillars of King Solomon's temple were decorated with pomegranates. In the High Priestess card, there are seven pomegranates depicted on the curtain, with the number 7 symbolizing wisdom and divine knowledge, the energetic vibration of sages.
20. John Gilbert, *Introduction to Tarot*, E. McLendon and S. Smith, Ed. (Lexington, KY: American Tarot Association), 20.
21. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 15.
22. Kirsch, J. P. (1910). "*Popess Joan*, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company). Retrieved May 25, 2014 from New Advent www.newadvent.org/cathen/08407a.htm. To delve further into the Pope Joan narrative, read Peter Stanford's *The Legend of Pope Joan: In Search of the Truth* (Berkeley Trade, 2000).
23. *Catholicism Online, Saints and Angels*, s.v. "St. Adelaide," www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=525.
24. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Joan I (queen of France)," www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/304202/Joan-I.
25. Alison Weir, *Isabella: She-Wolf of France, Queen of England* (Pimlico, 2006), 92–100.
26. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 16.
27. A. E. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot* (Philadelphia, PA: David McKay Company, 1930) 53–55.
28. Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).
29. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 17–19.
30. A. E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 1910, 32.
31. Eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge means awareness of good and evil, and the mythos follows that such awareness then leads to lust, pride, envy, greed, gluttony, anger or hate, and sloth. Ascension of the Tree of Life is to choose altruism, right action, chastity, humility, love, selflessness, and temperance.
32. Israel Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (New Falcon Publications, 1984), 63.
33. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*.
34. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot, 33*.
35. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot*, 58.
36. Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992), 156, 169–170. Sourced from Wikipedia.org, s.v. "Ishtar," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar.
37. Michael Hunt, "The Early Christian Symbols of the Octagon and the Fish," The Feast of the Lord's Ascension, Agape Bible Study, May 17, 2007, www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/the%20sign%20of%20the%20fish.htm.
38. The dharma wheel, or Dharmachakra, is the Buddhist wheel of life. It reminds followers of the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha and symbolizes the cycle of samsara, or rebirth, and

also of spiritual transformation.

39. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 34.

40. 1 Peter 5:8 in *The English Standard Version Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

41. "This is the hermit of the Tarot; the number which refers to initiates and to prophets. The prophets are solitaries, for it is their fate that none should ever hear them. They see differently from others; they forefeel misfortunes. So, people imprison them and kill them, or mock them, repulse them as if they were lepers, and leave them to die of hunger." Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 23–24.

42. Legend holds that Peter the Hermit instigated the First Crusade, though historians are doubtful of the veracity of that legend. According to legend, Peter led the life of a hermit when he heard divine voices instructing him to go East, toward the Orient. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Peter the Hermit," Volume 11, 1913, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Peter_the_Hermit.

43. A mandala is a circular symbol used in Hinduism and Buddhism to represent the universe. The fundamental design of a mandala is a center circle enclosed by a square enclosed by an outer circle. Mandalas are used for spiritual teaching and spiritual ascension.

44. The circle within a circle featured in Key 10 bears a striking resemblance to the spiritual seals of Western ceremonial magic traditions, such as those found in the *Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon*, or *Clavicula Salomonis Regis*, a seventeenth-century grimoire published anonymously, featuring the Seal of Solomon, along with the seals of numerous lesser spirits. Seals are most often presented as a circle within a circle, filled with glyphs, sigils, and symbols, much like the circle presented here in Key 10, forming the energetic signature of a particular spirit.

45. Case notes inscribed within the wheel of Key 10: Wheel of Fortune are ROTA, Latin for wheel; TORA, the phonetic equivalent of the Hebrew *Torah*, the law; ORAT, the present tense of the Latin verb "to speak"; and ATOR, or *Hathor*, the Egyptian goddess of fertility, which corresponds with Key III: The Empress. Paul Foster Case, *An Introduction to the Study of Tarot* (New York: Builders of the Adytum, 1920), 32. Case further notes: "Now, the Empress, who corresponds to Hathor, is the number 3; the sum of the numbers of the major trumps is 231; and 6, the reduction of 231, is the extension of 3. Thus, in a sense, the whole series is summed up by the Empress, and thus it is literally true that the Wheel of the Tarot speaks, or reveals, the Law of Hathor."

46. The alchemical symbol for sulfur in the Wheel of Fortune corresponds with Fire; mercury for Air; the astrological symbol of water for Water; and salt for Earth.

47. Dharma is the body of natural law that governs the universe, spiritually and physically. The two wheels in Key 10 are also attributed to the Wheel of Ezekiel from Jewish mysticism, where two wheels, one inscribed in the other, turn in opposite directions, symbolizing the fluidity of perpetual motion, the counterbalance of light and dark, and the flux of life. Wang, *The Qabalistic Tarot*, 196-197.

48. Leftward or counter-clockwise indicates yin energy, the unorthodox, skepticism, the occult, and the unconscious. When the letters are read counter-clockwise, it reads "TORA," which calls to

mind The High Priestess. The High Priestess is governed by the Moon, as is leftward directionality. Right or clockwise indicates yang energy, the convention, faith, consciousness, and divine ascension. It is represented by the Sun. Clockwise, the letters read "TARO" or "ROTA" and reaffirm the concept of dharma. Left-right symbolism will be further discussed in Chapter 12.

49. Mary K. Greer, *The Complete Book of Tarot Reversals* (Llewellyn Publications, 2002), 16.
50. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot*, 70.
51. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 26–28.
52. Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.
53. The Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis, dated around 1614, is an anonymously published manifesto about a pilgrimage to the East, where esoteric knowledge was learned and brought back to the West. Thereafter, the esoteric Christian fraternity the Fraternity of the Rose Cross was founded. The imagery of the sun rising from the waters is taken from a line in the Fama Fraternitatis: "Howbeit we know after a time there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and humane things, according to our desire, and the expectation of others: for it is fitting, that before the rising of the Sun, there should appear and break forth Aurora, or some clearness, or divine light in the sky." *Fama Fraternitatis: To the Wise and Understanding Reader* (an English translation of the *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* (1614)), "Rosicrucianism," The Hermetic Library at Hermetic.com, http://hermetic.com/rosicrucianism/fama-fraternitatis.html.
54. Piotr Dimianovich (P. D.) Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1976), 55.
55. Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot*, 56.
56. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 30–31.
57. Paul Carus, *History of the Devil* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1900), 104–105.
58. Carus, *History of the Devil*, 111–112.
59. The name Baphomet first appeared in twelfth-century France. It is generally known as the false idol that the Knights Templar were accused of worshipping during the Inquisition. When 231 members of the Knights Templar were interrogated by the Church, twelve admitted under torture of knowledge of the idol. Yet historic records indicate that it was not the worship of an idol called Baphomet that led to the persecution of the Templars, but rather the alleged worship of deities or figurines that appeared to have multiple heads or faces. "Myth of the Baphomet," Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, April 17, 2007, http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/baphomet.html.
60. The eight-pointed star is reminiscent of the Star of Inanna, the Lady of Heaven. The Sumerian goddess Inanna represents fertility and self-determination. The myth of Inanna descending into the underworld is expressed in Key 17: The Star, symbolized in the eight-pointed star on the card, and conveys the Seeker's descent into his or her personal unconscious, manifesting inner strength after an incident of powerlessness (expressed previously in Key 16: The Tower). There are also strong feminist themes in Key 17, emanating through the Inanna mythos.
61. Similar to how some are born psychic, some are born empathic, which is an innate trait of feeling other people's pains and joys as if they were one's own. Just as psychics are believed

to be able to access information from a time or place that is not their own, empaths are believed to be able to access emotions, feelings, sentiments, even thoughts from a mind or soul that is not their own. The way the ability manifests is often as high sensitivity, natural gifts of creativity, and finding cruelty or torture unbearable to witness. The Star card is the card of the empath. It often appears in readings for those who demonstrate extraordinary empathic abilities. Interesting to note is how empaths often suffer from digestive or stomach problems due to their association with the solar plexus chakra. The solar plexus chakra corresponds with personal power, and an empath often inadvertently channels a great deal of energy through his or her solar plexus, which healthwise often leads to issues with the abdomen, stomach, spleen, intestines, or kidneys.

62. Although the astrological sign Cancer is associated with the crab, note that the word "cancer" was used in classical Greece and Rome to denote many forms of shellfish, and in both Greek and Sanskrit the word has a double meaning as "crayfish." Thus, even though the character trait of displaying a tough shell-like exterior and vulnerable, emotional interior is associated with the Cancer sign today, that trait extends to general symbolism of the crayfish, as depicted in Key 18: The Moon. J. Ö. Swahn, "The Cultural History of Crayfish," *Bull. Fr.* Pêche *Piscic.*, 2004, 243.
63. Swahn, "The Cultural History of Crayfish," 245.
64. See Chapter 9, Note 15.
65. Even though the sun's gravitational force also has an effect on the Earth, it is not as great as that of the moon. Note that it is not the moon's force per se that causes tides, but the tension between the Earth's pull downward and the moon's pull upward.
66. Phrase is inspired by Flannery O'Connor's short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge." While the author of this book is not contending any credible connection between O'Connor's works and the tarot, the title of that remarkable short story does help the literary practitioner better understand the meaning of Key 18: The Moon, especially when the card appears in reverse.
67. A fascinating detail in Key 19 of the Rider-Waite-Smith is the inclusion of the word "LOVE" beneath Smith's signature. Mary K. Greer, one of the most celebrated contemporary tarot experts today, is credited as the first to observe the detail. See Jensen, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 37.
68. Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 33–34.
69. On the theme of duality and dichotomy throughout the Majors: The Fool denotes a choice resulting in flying or falling off the edge of the cliff; The Magician, whether upright or reverse, is about creation versus destruction; The High Priestess is about duality, and the twin pillars Jachin and Boaz signify the balance of knowledge and intuition; the relationship between Key I and Key II, The Magician and The High Priestess; the relationship between Key III and Key IV, The Empress and The Emperor; the twin pillars motif repeating again in The Hierophant; the theme of primordial choice in The Lovers; the two sphinxes, dark and light, in The Chariot, as well as the male-female, yin-yang dichotomy depicted in the lingam and yoni; the twin pillars again in Justice and the theme of balance; Temperance and the two cups representing dual states of mind; the concept of choice first presented in The Lovers, resulting in The Devil; the

two water jugs in The Star; and the twin pillars in The Moon. Here, in The World card, the figure depicted holds two balanced wands.

70. James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10–11.

71. Revelation 4:7 in *The English Standard Version Bible* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2009).

72. In Western astrology, fixed signs correspond with stability, fortitude, steadfastness, solidity, security, strong conviction, and nurturing energy.

73. Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic*, 59.

74. Frank, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 31.

75. Habashi, "Zoroaster and the Theory of Four Elements," 110.

76. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot*, 18.

77. Note the hand gestures depicted in the four aces. In the two active suits, the Wands and the Swords, the hands depicted are closed-fist, suggesting power, capability, human strength, and action. In the two passive suits, the Cups and the Pentacles, the hands depicted are open-palm, suggesting receipt, prosperity, openness.

78. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 64.

79. In contemporary renderings of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, the two figures depicted in the Four of Wands are often depicted as a male and a female, to signify marital, familial, or romantic bliss. See Erik C. Dunne and Kim Huggens, *Tarot Illuminati* (Lo Scarabeo, 2013) (tarot deck); Ciro Marchetti and Barbara Moore, *Gilded Tarot* (Llewellyn, 2012) (tarot deck); and Robin Wood, *Robin Wood Tarot* (Llewellyn, 1991) (tarot deck).

80. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 64.

81. "But I have promises to keep, / and miles to go before I sleep." Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923).

82. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot, 22*.

83. Robert Wang, *The Qabalistic Tarot: A Textbook of Mystical Philosophy* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1987), 58.

84. To learn more about the indigo child attribution, read Lee Carroll and Jan Tober's *The Indigo Children: The New Kids Have Arrived* (Hay House, 1999).

85. *Symbol Dictionary: A Visual Glossary*, SymblDictionary.net, s.v. "Caduceus (Kerykeion, Herald's Wand)," http://symboldictionary.net/?p=1131.

86. Dennis L. Merritt, *Hermes, Ecopsychology, and Complexity Theory* (Fisher King Press, 2012), 52–53. The caduceus should be distinguished from the rod of Asclepius, which is a wand with a single snake entwining it and no wings. See also Walter J. Friedlander, "Definition of the Caduceus," *The Golden Wand of Medicine: A History of the Caduceus Symbol in Medicine* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5–10.

87. *Sex: The Secret Gate to Eden*, directed by Thelema Press, 2006. Documentary.

88. Throughout the tarot, the tree symbolizes the extension of knowledge from Mother Earth, or of the earth. The tree represents knowledge. The tree of knowledge is an allusion to the interconnection of all things. When the tree imagery appears, such as it does here in the Four of

Cups, it is a sign to the Seeker to examine how the disparate parts are in fact related to a cohesive whole. It is about urging the Seeker to understand the patterns.

89. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot*, 19.
90. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 83.
91. Thierens, *General Book of the Tarot*, 21.

1. By far the more popular and also the traditional reference to the card is "significator," most likely of astrological and Hermetic origins. In horary astrology, a significator is the planet identified during a reading to signify the querent (the Seeker consulting astrology for an answer) or the quesited (the inquiry at hand). See William Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology*, ed. Zadkiel, 1852. The Hermetic approach to tarot heavily integrated astrology into the cards and thus may have transferred the terminology "significator" from astrology into tarot. I prefer to use the term "signifier," per its standard dictionary definition.
2. Paul Foster Case, *Oracle of the Tarot: A Course on Tarot Divination*, 1933, 6.

1. Common to many esoteric traditions, both Eastern and Western, the left hand represented the moon and the right hand represented the sun. The left hand guided the individual in the spiritual quest, in divination, and in personal psychic empowerment. The right hand guided the individual in external personal development and helped one to find his or her role in society. The left hand related to self-empowerment. The right related to tradition, duty, moral obligation, and authority.
2. The approach here is based on Carl Jung's theory of four basic psychic functions: Intuition, which is perception by way of the unconscious; Feeling, which is the subjective emotional plane; Thinking, intellectual cognition and logical reasoning; and Sensing, perception by way of the five physical senses. The four psychic functions correspond in tarot as follows: Fire/Wands relates to Intuition; Water/Cups relates to Feeling; Air/Swords relates to Thinking; and Earth/Pentacles relates to Sensing. Giles, *The Tarot: History, Mystery and Lore*, xii.

1. Two books on tarot court card interpretation have been heavily influential on the author: Mary K. Greer and Tom Little, *Understanding the Tarot Court* (Llewellyn Publications, 2004); Kate Warwick-Smith, *The Tarot Court Cards: Archetypal Patterns of Relationship in the Minor Arcana* (Destiny Books, 2003).
2. "The court cards always have a voice." Avia Venefica, "Court Card Meanings in Tarot," Tarot Teachings, www.tarotteachings.com/court-card-meanings-in-tarot.html.
3. According to *Book T*, knights and queens will represent actual individuals in the Seeker's life in the majority of readings, whereas pages and kings more often than not take on a figurative meaning. MacGregor Mathers and Harriet Felkin,*Book T—The Tarot*, G. H. Fra. ΠΙ, ed. (Los Angeles: The College of Thelema, 2012) (first published in 1888), 103.
4. Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 37, 39, 41–43, 45–46.
5. *Book T—The Tarot*, 65.
6. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 83. Waite implies that the Queen of Swords is merciless and, although she wields a large sword, powerless. The divinatory meaning for the card includes the keywords *widowhood, female sadness, embarrassment, sterility, mourning*, and *privation*. In reverse, the card doesn't get any better: *malice, bigotry, deceit*.
7. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, left-right symbology was very important in spirituality, art, and expression. James Hall, *The Sinister Side: How Left-Right Symbolism Shaped Western Art* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5–6. The notion that left equated with demonic, malevolent forces, and right with heavenly, benevolent forces likely came from a limited interpretation of the New Testament. However, the left-right dichotomy can be traced back to Aristotle and Pythagorean philosophy. Aristotle associated the left with darkness, evil, chaos, and the female, and the right with light, goodness, order, and the male. Hall, *The Sinister Side*, 15.
8. Richard Cavendish, *The Black Arts: A Concise History of Witchcraft, Demonology, Astrology, and Other Mystical Practices Throughout the Ages*, 40th edition (New York: Perigee Trade, 1968), 2.

1. A significant percentage of tarot practitioners prefer not to let Seekers handle the practitioners' personal tarot decks. Thus, in a reading, the only individual to handle the deck is the practitioner. Adhering to that tradition has proven highly effective for many and is one that can be considered by the reader of this book. However, I happily hand over my cards to Seekers for shuffling.
2. Richard Palmer, *Tarot: Voice of the Inner Light* (Scotts Valley, CA: Custom Book Publishing 2008), 8–9.
3. Christiana Gaudet, *Christiana Answers a Question about Shuffling a Tarot Deck* (2013, November 19) [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtube.com/watch?v/TGl8XMKlXcU. Christiana Gaudet is the author of *Tarot Tour Guide: Tarot, The Four Elements, and Your Spiritual Journey* (Grimes, IN: Jupiter Gardens Press, 2012) and *Fortune Stellar: What Every Professional Tarot Reader Needs to Know* (Grimes, IN: Jupiter Gardens Press, 2010). Visi Gaudet's website at http://tarotbychristiana.com.
4. The more popular method for cutting the tarot deck before a reading is to cut it right to left three times only, not four. The purpose is to call upon the energy of the theosophic or divine Trinity. Three is the number for spiritual manifestation. It is the number that vibrates with spiritual communication, and so the energy of the number three is invoked to call in spirit intervention. I cut it four times to represent the four classical elements—Fire, Water, Air, and Earth—and the "four corners" principle, which is essentially a metaphor for the four cornerstones of human livelihood: our work, our emotions, our ideas, and our resources. In tarot practice, do whatever feels most right to you, but fulfill one point: Whatever you choose to do, know *why* you do it. Do not accept a practice simply because someone else has done it that way. Whatever you do, you must know *why*.

1. Gilbert, *Introduction to Tarot*, 25. Gilbert teaches beginner tarot readers a simple yes-no spread where drawing an upright card indicates yes and drawing a card in reverse indicates no.
2. Case, *Oracle of the Tarot* ("Never proceed with a divination unless you have been successful in this first operation"), 9.
3. For more information about chakra cosmology, read Harish Johari's *Chakras: Energy Centers of Transformation* (Destiny Books, 2000).
4. While A. E. Waite is attributed as the first to publish the Celtic Cross tarot spread in his book *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, the spread itself seems to predate his book, having been a divination method used by members of the Golden Dawn. Anthony Louis, *Tarot Beyond the Basics: Gain a Deeper Understanding of the Meanings Behind the Cards* (Llewellyn Publications, 2014), 12–13.
5. IMDb, s.v. "Eden Gray," www.imdb.com/name/nm0336597/bio.
6. Aleister Crowley and Lady Freida Harris, *Thoth Tarot Deck* (Stamford, CT: U.S. Games Systems, Inc. 1978); James Wasserman, *Instructions for Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot Deck* (Belgium: U.S. Games Systems, Inc., 1978).
7. Joseph D'Agostino, *Tarot: The Path to Wisdom* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1994), 113.
8. Astrologer-tarot readers would likely incorporate other reading techniques, techniques taken from natal chart reading, such as analysis of conjunctions (two cards in the spread that form a line and reading them as a pair of energies that amplify each other), squares (two cards that form a 90-degree angle in the spread, read as two energies that could be in conflict or create obstacles), trines (two cards that form a 120-degree angle, amplifying), or oppositions (two cards that form a 180-degree angle, causing tension), and treat such card pairings as facets of the Seeker's situation to be interpreted alongside the above card position assignments.
9. Robert Wang, *The Qabalistic Tarot: A Textbook of Mystical Philosophy* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1987), 252–254.
10. Per Greek and Hellenic alchemy, the universe is constructed from three spiritual primes called the Tria Prima: salt (base matter, a solidifying agent, corresponding with ash), mercury (a transformative agent, representing the spirit of life, corresponding with smoke), and sulfur (a binding agent, representing fluidity, corresponding with flame).
11. Allen Pittman, *Walking the I Ching: The Linear Ba Gua of Gao Yi Sheng*(Bluesnake Books, 2008), 9.
12. Tom Bisio, *Strategy and Change: An Examination of Military Strategy, the I-Ching and Ba Gua Zhang* (Outskirts Press, 2010), 12.
13. Gray, *Mastering the Tarot*, 161–162.
14. Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 28.
15. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the tenets of the Golden Dawn and other Western occultists established the tenets that influence tarot ontology today, it was believed that the solar system had nine planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Today Pluto is considered a dwarf planet and no longer counted.

However, the traditional attribution of the number nine for the Planetary Cards in tarot card counting remains.

16. In many branches of Western metaphysical studies, such as astrology and numerology, the number eleven is a Master Number and represents the "Light Bearer." The number holds spiritual significance in the Thelema religion, which was founded by Aleister Crowley. Also, numerologists believe that the time 11:11 appears to human perception more frequently than any other number, and the frequency that defies chance or coincidence is due to synchronicity. It is believed to represent spiritual presence. Marie D. Jones, *11:11 the Time Prompt Phenomenon: The Meaning Behind Mysterious Signs, Sequences, and Synchronicities* (New Page Books, 2009), 21.

17. See Chapters 5, 9, and 10, and Appendices B, D, and E.

18. The seasonal, astrological, lunar, and numerical attributions for timing set forth in this book represent the author's practice and traditions only. Note that different tarot traditions will set forth different attributions. Through the practitioner's own subscribed belief systems and ongoing tarot practice, each practitioner will arrive at his or her own attributions. The important point is to be consistent. If summer is attributed to the suit of Cups, then summer is always attributed to the suit of Cups. If instead the suit of Cups is attributed to the season of spring for the practitioner, then spring is always attributed to the suit of Cups. Practitioner and tarot deck will program toward each other to result in a customized interpretive method.

1. If none of the spreads set forth in this book suit you, consider reading Sandor Konraad's *Classic Tarot Spreads* (Schiffer Publishing, 1985) to explore additional spread techniques.
2. Quite possibly the best tome published to date on card reversals is Mary K. Greer's *The Complete Book of Tarot Reversals* (Llewellyn Publications, 2002). Greer is one of the preeminent tarot scholars of our time and the serious student of tarot will have read her writings.
3. David A. Philips, *The Complete Book of Numerology* (Hay House, 2005), 6–8.
4. Fathi Habashi, "Zoroaster and the Theory of Four Elements," 109.
5. Case, *An Introduction to the Study of Tarot*, 1920, 9, and Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 72.
6. Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 72. A facsimile reproduction of the diagram prepared by Papus that illustrates elemental affinities is provided at the end of Appendix B.

1. Julian Moore, *Numerology: Numbers Past and Present With the Lo Shu Square* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).
2. To learn more about how to devise your own tarot spreads, read *Tarot: Get the Whole Story: Use, Create & Interpret Tarot Spreads* by James Ricklef (Llewellyn Publications, 2004) and *Designing Your Own Tarot Spreads* by Teresa Michelsen (Llewellyn Publications, 2003).

1. Joan Reese, "Examining Intuitive-Creativity Via Reading Tarot Cards in a Person-Centered Climate" (PhD diss., Saybrook University, 2010), 1–3.
2. In her paper "Examining Intuitive-Creativity," Reese cites several examples: Weyl's two-component relativistic wave equation of the neutrino; Watson and Crick's structure of a DNA molecule; Panck's quanta; Plato's theory of forms; Jung's model of consciousness; Gödelm's theorems; Vernadsky's work in biogeochemistry; and others. Reese, "Examining Intuitive-Creativity," 3, footnote 1.
3. Reese, "Examining Intuitive-Creativity," 3.

1. Thomas and Pavitt, *The Book of Talismans*, 3–4.
2. The cosmological principle behind energetic supplements is that of interconnectivity. The various human conditions vibrate at particular frequencies like radio waves, and certain colors, cardinal directions, natural properties of stones, and other unseen energies vibrate at corresponding frequencies. Our unconscious transmits information and emanations into the conscious world on these radio waves, these sine wave frequencies, which is the energy created for success or failure. By reducing the emanations of energy that manifest as failure and amplifying the energy emanations that manifest as success, we create an environment for success. From there, our actions and conduct do the rest. Thus, an understanding of these frequency correspondences can help a Seeker control his or her environment or personal consciousness in such a way as to amplify energies for success and reduce energies for failure. In tarot terms, failure is the result of particular elemental imbalances within the Seeker or around the Seeker's given situation. Balancing out the four elements through energetic supplements on the principle of metaphysical interconnectivity can start a Seeker on the path toward success and away from failure.
3. Translucent (or milky) quartz crystals are considered yin crystals and are used to harness receptive energies. They channel love, enhance communication, spirituality, and intuition. The dominant elements are Water and Earth, which correspond with Cups and Pentacles. Transparent (or glass-clear) quartz crystals are considered yang power crystals, and help to harness active energies such as creativity, power amplification, ambition, control, or aggressive healing. The dominant elements are Fire and Air, which correspond to Wands and Swords. When the practitioner is reading about love, relationships, family issues, money or property matters, keeping a yin crystal nearby may be helpful. When reading for work, career, ambitions, creative or development issues, opt for a yang crystal.
4. Feng shui and many traditional Chinese practices are based on Wu Xing, the theory of five elements, in contrast to the Western theory of four. Wu Xing espouses Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water to be the five basic elements that the universe is composed of, whereas the Western theory espouses Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. Synthesizing a Western tarot approach with Eastern practices such as feng shui would first require a reconciliation of Wu Xing and the classical four elements. Here, the author attributes both Wood and Fire of Wu Xing to Wands; Earth to Pentacles; Metal to Swords; and Water to Cups. A theoretical rationale for that attribution may exceed the scope of this book, so for the purposes of the techniques taught in this book, the attribution will be assumed as a given.
5. James Wasserman, *Instructions for Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot Deck* (Belgium: U.S. Games Systems, Inc., 1978), 5.
6. Israel Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon Publications, 1984), 40, 48. The Three Gods referenced in IAO are Isis, Apophis, and Osiris Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System*, 90. "IAO should be pronounced as Eee (as in key) Ah-Oh." Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System*, 58.
7. John Dee, *Dr. John Dee's Spiritual Diaries (1583–1608): A True & Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years Between Dr. John Dee & Some Spirits*, ed. Stephen Skinner

(Golden Hoard Press, reprinted 2011).

8. From Philippians 4:13, *The English Standard Version Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
9. From Psalm 28:7, *The English Standard Version Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
10. From 2 Timothy 1:7, *The English Standard Version Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). I changed the tense and pronoun from the original text. The original is as follows: "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."
11. Sharon Gannon, *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu* (2010, April), Jivamukti Yoga. Retrieved from http://jivamuktiyoga.com/teachings/focus-of-the-month/p/lokah-samastah-sukhino-bhavantu.

1. Edward Munroe, *Neo-Platonism*, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, St. Elias School o Orthodox Theology, www.iep.utm.edu/neoplato.
2. Other twentieth- and twenty-first-century tarotist-astrologers of note: Muriel Bruce Hasbrouk *Tarot and Astrology: The Pursuit of Destiny* (Destiny Books, 1986); Samael A. Weor, *Practical Astrology: Self-transformation Through Self-knowledge: Kabbalah, Tarot, and Consciousness* (Glorian Publishing, 2010); Corinne Kenner, *Tarot and Astrology: Enhance Your Readings With the Wisdom of the Zodiac* (Llewellyn, 2011); and Elizabeth Hazel, *Tarot Decoded: Understanding and Using Dignities and Correspondences* (Red Wheel Weiser, 2004) However, the author of this book does not believe that traditional astrological correspondences are interchangeable with traditional tarot correspondences. Therefore, for example, the elemental correspondence for Mercury in astrology, i.e., Air, does not necessarily apply to Key 1: The Magician just because Key 1 is associated with Mercury. Likewise, while most traditional astrologers will correspond Air with the planet Jupiter, in tarot, there are instances when Jupiter and Fire correspond instead.
3. The following texts are highly recommended to the student interested in the study of Kabbalah: Rav Yehuda Ashlag and Rav Baruch Ashlag, *Kabbalah for the Student* (Bnei Baruch, 2008); Rav Michael Laitman, *Kabbalah for Beginners* (Bnei Baruch, 2007); and Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (HarperOne, 1996).
4. Wang, *The Qabalistic Tarot*, xv.
5. One of the most exemplary works on the intersection is Dovid Krafchow's *Kabbalistic Tarot: Hebraic Wisdom in the Major and Minor Arcana* (Inner Traditions, 2004).
6. Leon, *Origins of the Tarot*, 83–105.

1. A direct translation of "Namo Amituofo" or "Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa" might not be as helpful as an explanation of the mantras' meanings. "Namo" in its essence means to become one with, to pay homage to. "Amituofo" (some say "Amitabha") refers to the Buddha. "Guan Shi Yin Pusa" is the Goddess of Mercy. Recitation of "Namo Amituofo" or "Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa" is believed to attune one's personal frequency to the frequency of the divine.

Chapter 24

1. Friend and tarot colleague Richard Palmer shared with me these three questions that he often encourages his clients to use when consulting the tarot. Generally, practitioners may have Seekers rephrase questions to "What do I most need to know right now?" or some derivative of that. I prefer Palmer's more precise approach, which asks the reading to illuminate the Seeker's blind spots.

Chapter 26

1. Hope Ballard is a professional intuitive tarot reader. See Tarot with Hope, www.tarotwithhope.com.

1. Liber Θ (Liber T): Tarot Symbolism and Divination (The College of Thelema, 2012), 100.
2. The Five Operations follows the general structure and format of the modus operandi for invoking entities from the spirit worlds per ceremonial magic traditions, generally commencing with an opening of prayers and incantations to invoke the divine, then various stages of interrogatories, and then a closing. Hall, Manly P., The Secret Teachings of All Ages (Los Angeles: 1928), 101.
3. Case, Oracle, 8. However, later in the same text, Case mentions an alternative method of selecting signifiers. For married men and women, use Kings and Queens respectively. For unmarried men and women, use Knights and Pages respectively. Children of either gender should use Pages. Case, Oracle, 74. The suit selected for the signifier then corresponds with the Seeker's astrological sign (presumably the sun sign).
4. If Key 1, The Magician and Key 2, The High Priestess are used as the signifiers, then count clockwise when Key 1, The Magician is the signifier and counter-clockwise when Key 2, The High Priestess is the signifier. If the signifier selected does not seem to face left or right particularly, such as The Emperor, The Hierophant, or the King of Swords, then go by the corresponding element. For active elements Fire and Air, go clockwise. For passive elements Water and Earth, go counter-clockwise.
5. It is not known to the public what the intentions and rationales were of the assigned numerical values for card counting. There are, however, theories. The Planetary Cards are assigned 9 to represent the 9 planets of the solar system known to the astrologers at the time. The Zodiac Cards are assigned 12 for the 12 constellations. Elemental Cards are assigned 3, not 4 since the Earth association is being counted as a Planetary Card. While the general Courts are 4 for the four members of the court, Pages are assigned 7 to correspond with the seven archangels in the Book of Enoch. The Hebrew word for angel, malach, means messenger. Angels were God's messengers tasked to perform certain missions, and likewise, the Pages of the tarot Court are the deck's messengers. When they appear in a reading, especially in the Opening of the Key, they represent a message being transmitted to the Seeker. Aces are assigned 11, a master number in numerology. However, some traditions assign the number 5 to Aces. See Hughes-Barlow, Paul, Tarot and the Magus: Opening the Key to Divination, Magick and the Holy Guardian Angel (Brighton, England: Aeon Books, 2004).
6. Views are divided here as to whether the signifier should be counted as 1, or whether count 1 should commence with the card immediately following the signifier. That division relates back to the differing philosophies of the Self. In most texts on the Opening of the Key, the signifier is included in the card counting technique, following the view of the Self as being physically inclusive in the unconscious. Another view, which is the minority approach in card counting, is to exclude the signifier from the count. Thus, count 1 begins with the next card (and the signifier is considered 0). The philosophical rationale is that the Self is not physically (or metaphysically) detectable in the unconscious, and instead, the Self is just a convenient fiction, present merely as a way of framing the problem at hand, i.e., to anchor the circle toward the Seeker's personal energies. Whether a practitioner adopts the prevailing view of counting the signifier as 1 or assumes the signifier as 0, as in the case of the Waite numbering of The Fool

card, would be dependent on the practitioner's philosophy of the Self.

7. Cards in a spread are considered either well-dignified or ill-dignified. If a card is being paired, look at its pair to determine dignities. If a card is in a spread, look at the neighboring cards. If its pair or neighboring cards are of the same elemental correspondence or is an element that would strengthen that card's elemental correspondence, then that card is well-dignified. If its pair or neighboring cards are of a weakening element, then that card is ill-dignified. Liber T, 103. Note that when a card appears in reverse, the reversal changes the card's energy, which can result in it becoming ill-dignified.

8. The many texts differ on the issue of pairing. One approach is to pair the remaining cards in the circle, not the cards that had been marked and read during the card counting. By that approach, pair the first card to the immediate left of the signifier with the first card to the immediate right, the second card to the immediate left with the second card to the immediate right, and so on until every remaining card in the circle that wasn't marked during the card counting has been paired off. Tally the number of pairs that are strengthened as active energy, the number that are intensified as passive energy, and the number of weakened pairs. A greater number of active pairs suggests a Seeker who innately possesses the traits of Fire or Air. A great number of passive pairs suggests a Seeker who takes on the traits of Water or Earth. A greater number of pairs weakened in opposition suggests a Seeker who is presently in a state of internal unrest. The other approach, the one set forth in this book and the one preferred by the author, is to pair off the marked cards only, as they represent the energies most relevant to the Seeker's situation while the remaining cards in the circle only represent peripheral energies. The peripheral energies can be read by pairing off the remaining cards and reading the elemental dignities briefly, but that would be entirely at the practitioner's option.

9. According to Case, an even number of marked cards (excluding the signifier) suggests that the environmental or external forces surrounding the Seeker are aligned supportively and will guide the Seeker toward success and happiness, whereas an odd number of marked cards will indicate opposition. The leftover odd card without a pair represents the oppositional force that the Seeker must triumph over. Such an odd leftover card is also significant to the Key and should be carefully considered by the Seeker. Case, Oracle, 67.

10. Paul Foster Case attributes Judgement with Fire, though astrologically Judgement corresponds with Pluto, the ruling planet for Scorpio, a Water sign. There is disagreement between practitioners as to whether Key 20, Judgement is governed by Fire or Water. The author of this book associates Judgement with Water, though that is but a personal preference.

11. According to Case, the last card landed on during the card counting procedure is the most crucial card for answering the Seeker's question. In the Queen of Swords example, the last card landed on would be Judgement, so per the Case method, the Judgement card would be considered the most important card for the practitioner's consideration. Case, Oracle, 66. Here, the practitioner's approach differs from Case. The importance of all marked cards during the counting procedure are weighted equally and read as a narrative.

12. Texts such as the Liber T, estimated to be first published around 1888, instruct that the practitioner should decide, based on the First Operation and the subsequent Narrative performed, which astrological House would best correspond with the Seeker's matter at hand and to locate the signifier in that House. If the signifier is not found in that House, try a second

related House. If the signifier is not found in that pile either, the Opening of the Key divination should be abandoned at that time. Liber T, 83. The author of this book does not subscribe to such instruction and instead, identifies the pile that the signifier appears in and interprets that corresponding House to be relevant to the matter at hand. Interpretation goes forth from there.

13. This hypothetical is based on an actual reading. In the actual reading, the Seeker had been experiencing a great deal of unresolved romantic tension with an individual who was a Gemini and the synchronicity stirred a great deal of emotion. As the tarot student progresses in his or her study, such inexplicable synchronicities will occur frequently.

14. For the Third Operation in the Opening of the Key, early Golden Dawn writers held a different methodology from the one set forth in this chapter. According to texts such as Liber T, the practitioner again locates the pile that contains the signifier. Note that pile's corresponding House and zodiac sign. A Major Arcanum is associated with that particular zodiac sign, a correspondence table for which is set forth in Appendix B2. Next, interpret all the cards in the pile as a narrative through the framework of that corresponding Major Arcanum card. Example. Using the Queen of Swords illustration in the chapter, if the signifier was located in House 5, which is the 4 o'clock position, then the cards in that pile should be read within the framework of the corresponding Major Arcanum. House 5 is Leo, and corresponds with Key 8, Strength Thus, issues of fortitude, compassion, and the triumph of love over hate will be the themes of the answer to the Seeker's inquiry. The pile of cards in House 5 are spread out and read as a narrative, keeping in mind that the theme of that narrative and the thesis will be fortitude, compassion, and the triumph of love over hate, i.e., the themes of The Strength card. That would be the approach to the third operation per Golden Dawn texts such as Liber T. However, the approach espoused in this chapter diverges from the earlier texts to provide a more practicable method using the Zodiac Spread.

15. Pingree, David, The Yavanajataka of Sphujidhvaja (Harvard Oriental Series, 1978). The Yavanajataka is a text on Indian astrology believed to have been written around 120 BC.

16. The Hermetic doctrine of Prisca Theologia espoused that a true, singular theology exists and was inherited by the humans of antiquity directly from God. See Yates, Frances A., *Giordano Bruno & Hermetic Tradition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1964). Over time, that divine theological knowledge was lost. Thus, to attain knowledge of that true, singular theology, one must work backward and in the context of the ancients. The energetic workings of the 36 Decans are a legacy of that divine theological knowledge, and so it would be probable for the Key to be formulated from a divination operation that calls upon the Decans to find a Seeker's line of advantage, in other words, the Key.

17. Texts differ on how the Fourth Operation should be executed. An alternative to the one provided in the chapter is to set down only the first 36 cards of the pile and read the 36 Decans spread from those first 36 cards only. Liber T, 102.

18. Liber T, 102.

19. "The Theory of Qi" in Chapter 3 explained the practitioner, Seeker, and tarot trinity for accessing the collective unconscious.

20. In chaos theory, the butterfly effect is essentially the idea that the precise timing of a butterfly's flap of the wings can determine the formation of a hurricane weeks later, in a far removed

distant location. That theory is relevant to tarot practice. Given the butterfly effect and chaos theory, the question presented is this: how can you predict tomorrow's weather with any accuracy at all when the flap of a single butterfly's wings could result in profound natural disaster later in time, in a different place? Likewise, metaphysically, how can divination with a deck of cards reveal future outcomes when a single change in the card count could alter a tarot reading altogether? The practice of card counting is a form of ritualistic homage to that theory. Card counting is about making room for the butterfly effect and allowing it to work favorably for the practitioner than against. Of course, none of this is science; it's ritual. It's ritual based on metaphysics. While the Golden Dawn might not have considered the butterfly effect exactly, as that theory was formulated much later in time, the fundamental idea of finding order in chaos was a relevant part of the society's theosophic work.

1. Robert Place, *The Tarot: History, Symbolism, and Divination* (New York: Tarcher Books, 2005), 5–28.
2. The French card maker Jean Noblet is attributed with one of the early popularized Tarot de Marseille decks, circa 1650. The Jean Dodal Marseille tarot is another, circa 1701. See Thierry Depaulis, *Tarot, Jeu et Magie* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1984).
3. Although Waite never offered a public explanation for the switch between Key 8 and Key 11, the switching of the card order relates back to the Cipher Manuscript, the founding tenets of the Golden Dawn. K. Frank Jensen, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 33.
4. Wasserman, *Instructions for Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot Deck*, 8.
5. In the late 20th and early 21st century, contemporary tarot systems have risen in popularity, borrowing from the three traditions (Tarot de Marseille, Rider-Waite-Smith, and Thoth) but remaining distinctly new divination systems. Such decks include but are certainly not limited to the *Voyager Tarot* by James Wanless and Ken Knutson, the *Mary-el Tarot* by Marie White, or the *Poet Tarot* by Kelli Russell Agodon and Annette Spaulding-Convy, among others. The author of this book recommends that beginners who are serious about becoming a tarot practitioner learn the traditional three systems first, and then advance on to learn the contemporary systems.

1. Corinne Kenner, The Symbolist: A Simplified Guide to Tarot Symbols and Terms (Two of Cups Tarot, 1999), 9.
2. In A. E. Thierens's General Book of the Tarot, Thierens attributed Key 1, The Magician to Aries, compared to the majority approach of attributing Key 1 to Mercury. Thierens, General Book of the Tarot, 47. Key 2, The High Priestess according to Thierens is Taurus, compared to the majority approach of attributing Key 2 to the moon. Key 3, The Empress, according to Thierens, is Gemini, compared to the majority approach of attributing Key 3 to Venus. To study all of Thierens's astrological attributions, read General Book of the Tarot.
3. Joseph Crane, Astrological Roots: The Hellenistic Legacy (Bournemouth, England: The Wessex Astrologer, 2007). See also Joseph Crane, A Practical Guide to Traditional Astrology (Arhat Publications, 1998).
4. The elemental associations found in this book are based on Western astrological concepts as adapted from the majority approach of tarot symbols interpretation. There are many other alternative elemental and astrological associations to tarot adopted by practitioners. The associations set forth in this book represent one approach only.
5. Papus, The Tarot of the Bohemians, 47.
6. L. Dow Balliett, The Day of Wisdom According to Number Vibration (Atlantic City, NJ published by the author, through L. N. Fowler Co., 1917).
7. Waite, the creator of the Rider-Waite-Smith, placed The Fool at the beginning of the Majors so that it would correspond with the Hebrew letter Aleph and thus The World would correspond with Tau, the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. All subsequent Golden Dawn–based decks seemed to have followed Waite's lead. Frank, "The Early Waite-Smith Editions," 33.

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Acknowledgments

It could have been fate or it could have been my fortune that brought the *Holistic Tarot* manuscript to Leslie Larson's desk; either way I am indebted first to the cosmos for orchestrating the match-up and second to her talent. She is *the* editor every author dreams of. I am also a big fan of her fiction, *Slipstream* and *Breaking Out of Bedlam*.

Two hundred three thousand, six hundred eight thanks to Teja Watson who helped this book come together and who is frighteningly impressive with her editorial eye. Teja, how you fixed my words, line by line, is real magic.

A huge thank you is due to Susan Quasha, who did an amazing job with the cover design and the formatting throughout the text. Thank you, Susan, for taking such great care with my baby. Erin Wiegand at North Atlantic Books has also been a godsend. North Atlantic Books overall deserves high praise.

Mom and Dad did what they could to keep me on a conventional path but knew in their hearts I wasn't really going to keep to it. And in the end, that was okay. "Tah … *roh*? Tah-roh? What is that? It's what? You wrote a book about how to play with cards?! … [*thinks about it*] Good for you! Mommy proud." My sisters Cindy and Tansy were probably the least shocked out of everybody when I shared the happy news.

To my husband James, thank you for an open mind. To the American Tarot Association, thank you for your very important work. Richard Palmer, master tarot reader, poet, and astrologer, thank you for sharing your great ideas.

Last but never least, my dear Prince Marshall Rimbaud the Great also known as乖乖, thank you for always keeping me warm while I write. Meow to you, too.

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