

THE TAROT

A CONTEMPORARY COURSE OF THE
QUINTESSENCE OF HERMETIC OCCULTISM

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*Peu de science éloigne de Dieu
Beaucoup de science y ramène*

*A little knowledge keeps one from God;
great knowledge brings one back to him.*

INTRODUCTION

In traditional Western occultism, the Tarot is recognized as the keystone of the whole philosophical system called Hermetism. It is very hard to discover its actual origin. The most competent and famous occult authors like Eliphas Lévi, P. Christian, Fabre d'Olivet, Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (Paracelsus), Oswald Wirth, Papus (Dr Gérard Encausse) and others, are of the opinion that the Tarot's true symbolism comes from Ancient Egypt. That master of Hermetism, Eliphas Lévi, tells us this boldly in his *Transcendental Magic, Its Doctrine and Ritual*:

'This Clavicle [as he calls the Tarot's Arcana] regarded as lost for centuries, has been recovered by us, and we have been able to open the sepulchres of the ancient world, to make the dead speak, to behold the monuments of the past in all their splendour, to understand the enigmas of every sphinx and to penetrate all sanctuaries. . . . Now, this was the key in question; a hieroglyphic and numeral alphabet, expressing by characters and numbers, a series of universal and absolute ideas. . . .

'The symbolical tetrad, represented in the Mysteries of Memphis and Thebes by the four aspects of the sphinx—a man, eagle, lion and bull—corresponded with the four elements of the old world, [i.e. water, air, fire and earth]. . . . Now these four symbols, with all their analogies, explain the one word hidden in all sanctuaries. . . . Moreover, the sacred word was not pronounced: it was spelt, and expressed in four words, which are the four sacred letters: *Yod** (י), *Hé* (ה), *Vau* (ו), *Hé* (ה). . . .

The Tarot is a truly philosophical machine, which keeps the mind from wandering, while leaving its initiative and liberty; it is mathematics applied to the Absolute, the alliance of the positive and the ideal, a lottery of thoughts as exact as numbers, perhaps the simplest and grandest conception of human genius. . . .

An imprisoned person, with no other book than the Tarot, if he knew how to use it, could in a few years acquire universal knowledge and would be able to speak on all subjects with unequalled learning and inexhaustible eloquence. . . .'

This passage which is well known among occultists worthy of the word, is perhaps one of the best definitions of the Tarot's value and greatness that we have. The enthusiastic 'discoverer' of these keys to the ancient wisdom, pious magician and former priest, Eliphas Lévi (in private life Abbé Constant) supplied us with this concise and inspired explanation.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Eliphas Lévi was followed by a long succession of occultists who accepted the Tarot as a basis for their investigations and writings. But none had so fiery a pen and such a burning conviction as he.

Papus, in his *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, a classical book about the mystery of the Major and Minor Arcana, tells us in a legend, that the whole

* The name of the Hebrew letter 'Yod'—corresponding to our 'i'—is spelt here with a 'y' because of its pronunciation.—AUTHOR.

initiatory wisdom of Ancient Egypt was recorded in the symbols of the Tarot cards as a last attempt to preserve this wisdom for future generations, and was made just before Egypt was invaded and destroyed by the advancing hordes of the Persian king.

These cards, originally made of metal or strong leather, were later used as a means for gambling, just as the Egyptian priests intended them. For *they knew that human vice will never die*, and so their mysterious cards were unknowingly used by the barbarians as a means of transmission—throughout subsequent ages—of the most sacred and hidden results, attained by the old wisdom of Egypt.

As I have said, many eminent occultists have written about and led intensive investigations into the Tarot's philosophy and symbolism. Several of them are mentioned in the Bibliography included in this book. The list is, of course, incomplete, as there are many others, who to a greater or lesser degree were connected with the Hermetic tradition of occultism. But here there is neither the room nor the purpose to give any other names. For an understanding of the present book, it is essential to realize that I have tried to expound the Tarot *as a useful instrument of cognition*, as Eliphas Lévi described it, and at the same time to provide a practical manual, instead of just an exposition of the author's own views on the matter of Hermetism. For I look on the Tarot as the 'algebra of occultism', which enables a man—who knows its use—to progress independently in a safe way, traced for us in these ancient Arcana.

I am a firm believer, that when creating his work, a writer should—in the *first place*—aim for the *usefulness of that work*. This means that readers and students should be given full opportunity to apply the knowledge which is supposed to be in such a book. The mere expression of a writer's opinions about a subject and his description of it is *not sufficient*. There are many authors and each one is entitled to have his own particular conception. In my opinion, when expounding such a large and profound system of occult philosophy as the Tarot undoubtedly is, the reader should be invited (to a certain extent) to co-operate *with the author* in the practical use of the teachings given in the text of the book. And that is what I have tried to do.

If you attentively read the brilliant definition of Eliphas Lévi at the beginning of this Introduction, you may expect to get some knowledge of how to use the Tarot. Therefore, firstly I have collected the most essential matters for each Arcanum, which have been partially taken from the classical works mentioned in the Bibliography, but mainly from my own experience, derived from the years (1926–1933) when I studied Hermetism exclusively.

At that time, I had a group of earnest students who studied the *Book of Hermes* (a name often used for the Tarot's philosophy) for a long period, and we systematically went through the whole course, from the first to the last (twenty-second) Arcanum. Texts were read, explained, discussed and their practical meaning was demonstrated and used in exercises, and notes were carefully taken.

As a basis for the lectures, I used, apart from the works of other com-

petent exponents, the unique book by Prof. Gregory Ossipowitch Mebes, a leading authority on Hermetism in Russia prior to 1917. Actually, it was not even a proper book, but rather a series of lectures duplicated on very large sheets of thick paper (about 12" × 15"), with all the diagrams made by the author's own experienced hand.

It was never for sale on the open market as a book and only a few initiated circles of students were lucky enough to get a copy. We bought ours from a Russian refugee who brought the book with him in 1919, when fleeing from his country which had just fallen into Communist hands.

Gradually, as our knowledge grew in the course of seven years spent on intensive study, I began to write my own work, which was intended to be a synthesis and condensation of all that we were able to learn about the Tarot and its practical use. Under this use, I understand the application of ideas expressed in the Major Arcana (these are given under three 'veils', according to the three worlds recognized in the Tarot's sister system—the Kabbalah) as being, a guide to creative thinking; for the development of the ability of concentrated, deliberate thinking; for the direction of thoughts and feelings into channels as indicated in the Arcana, and finally, as an approach to the ultimate mystery of the Tarot-Kabbalah-Magic unity, the Unmanifested Spirit, the Ain-Soph, the Unknowable.

After the whole of the very considerable material was collected and put in order, the first seven Arcana were elaborated and written about 1938. Then came a change in outer conditions, political as well as personal. I began to travel extensively, visiting other continents, including a period spent in India and later, a long stay in Australia, so that there was not much time available for the long work necessary to complete the whole task.

It is only now, that the work—conceived more than thirty years ago—has come to realization in the form of the present book.

At the present time there is no adequate and original work in English dealing with the Tarot, and the last major works in other languages are more than fifty years old. Only one of these, the previously mentioned encyclopaedic course by Prof. G. O. Mebes seems to satisfy—to a certain extent—what I would term a 'practical exposition' of the subject. Anyway, as far as I know, that eminent work is not available and can hardly be consulted. Therefore, when I finished *Occultism and Spiritual Paths* (other books being: *In Days of Great Peace and Concentration*), the idea occurred to me to make use—now that I have the time—of material collected many years ago. Before he begins to work with this book, the reader is strongly advised to study *Occultism and Spiritual Paths* because many introductory and technical points relating to the present work, have been extensively explained in it and therefore cannot be repeated here.

Also, some important instructions in the realm of the practical use of occult powers, such as self-defence against any hostile influences, have been expounded in *Concentration*.

The classical Tarot embraces four sub-divisions of occultism which are expressed as Alchemy, Astrology, Kabbalah and Magic. So, for each

Major Arcanum (or Trump) the writer has had to reserve a certain portion of the text for each of these sub-divisions. But, in every case, the main part has been dedicated to, firstly an explanation of the *symbolism* of the picture on each card; secondly to the *place of the particular Arcanum in the scheme of the Tetragrammaton*; thirdly to an explanation of the *Hebrew letter* belonging to the card; fourthly to the corresponding *branch of occult teachings*, Western and Eastern alike (Yogas included), and finally to exercises for the *practical use of the mental equations*, provided by the 'theosophical' operations with the figures, leading to the stabilization of the mental processes in the student's mind; the creating of new currents of thought and subsequently to the deeper understanding of the fate of the macrocosm and microcosm in the world's manifestation as we know it. The exercises are usually placed at the end of the Arcana. It seems that they are especially attractive to most students, simply because it is then possible to see, how the theory which has been expounded, actually works in practice.

I am not a believer in sterile lecturing, which is rather like learning to drive a car merely from a manual without having any practical experience on the road. So, as the Tarot is NOT only a more or less fascinating literary subject, but is also just the '*algebra of occultism*', I have arranged the contents of this book accordingly. Anyway, it is for the reader to see for himself how this has been done.

In treating of the Arcana I have adapted the classical method of analysis. This means that they are considered according to the normal numerical sequence, that is position in the whole pack of 22 cards, which means that Arcanum I is followed by Arcanum II, III, IV, and so on.

A Russian author who wrote a booklet about the Tarot, P. D. Ouspensky, made an attempt to break this tradition and to consider the Arcana in pairs. Here is an extract from his opinions and explanations in the matter (from the Russian edition of *The Tarot, the Ancient Pack of Cards*, 1912):

'It is known, that in the subterranean initiatory temples of ancient Egypt the paintings depicting the ideas of the Tarot were arranged in TWO rows, probably on columns, with a passageway between them. This has been confirmed by the well-known occult writer and authority on Hermetism—P. Christian, in his *History of Magic*.

If this was so then is it possible, that in one row there were Arcana from I to XI, and in the opposite one, Arcana XXI (or O, zero) to XII.'

Ouspensky supposes that such an arrangement was made in order to allow the aspirants for high initiation to read the pictures IN PAIRS, and not separately. If this was the case, then it could have been, for example, that opposite Arcanum I, was that of XXI (O), while II corresponded to XXII, and so on. The student can complete the series for himself.

But this theory—which requires the Arcana to be studied in pairs—does not find any support among the foremost of the authoritative writers on the Tarot. Moreover, the actual interpretation of the Arcana as given by Ouspensky, is more poetical than scientific or logical. A peculiar property

of the East-European mind manifests itself in Ouspensky, when in his interpretation he very often allows himself to yield to the 'feeling of fear'. Some of the Arcana are 'terrifying' for him. I cannot agree with such an attitude, and as far as I know neither does any other author.

In his 'analysis' he relies more on a kind of *individual visions*, than on a strictly impartial interpretation. However, he wrote the book (which I read in its original, Russian edition of 1912) when he was still comparatively young and consequently perhaps, more emotional and less experienced than in his later years.

Another point on which I disagree with Ouspensky is his unjust treatment of Dr Gérard Encausse ('Papus'), who contributed incomparably more to the wisdom of the Tarot than Ouspensky. Papus followed the classical tradition of Eliphas Lévi, which is only right. It is true, that the learned French doctor had little emotion when he interpreted the Tarot in his main books on the subject, that is *The Tarot of the Bohemians* and *The Divinatory Tarot*. But the work which he performed in these two books is and will remain as a *classical primer for everyone* who begins to study the Hermetic philosophy of the Arcana. The clear, concise exposition of Papus seems to be much more convincing than the too individual conceptions of Ouspensky.

The Divinatory Tarot is provided with a FULL set of cards, that is 22 Major and 56 Minor Arcana, made under the direction of Papus. They are quite artistic and at the same time, preserve most of the symbols and hieroglyphs. It would be very useful for each student to obtain a good, complete set of the Tarot cards, with exact presentation of symbols and other figures, so that they can be used apart from the book. But it might not be very easy to do so at the present time. I have been informed from France that *The Divinatory Tarot* of Papus has long since been unobtainable there as well as in England, while the Tarot of Oswald Wirth is too old. Therefore I have provided this book with a new, symbolically exact version of the Major Arcana.

This work is so constructed, that in the chapters dealing with the Arcana proper, there will not be any *general explanations*, but only those which refer to the particular Trump under discussion. This is because of the necessity to concentrate solely on one idea, when studying each Arcanum.

Therefore, in this introduction there must be given everything which does not belong directly to any one of the 22 Major Arcana. This brings us firstly to the *great central idea* of the whole construction of the Tarot. It is the Tetragrammaton.

Before commencing the actual study of the Arcana, the student should be in a position to name each letter of the Tetrad and to know its exact meaning in all of its variations and positions in the particular Arcana. So I am quoting here, a definition taken from the chapter 'The Egyptian Tarot' of the previously mentioned book, *Occultism and Spiritual Paths*:

'The Tarot is neutral; neither good nor evil in itself, just like figures which can express any quantity, suitable or unsuitable, true or false.

The whole system is based on the Universal Principle which manifests itself in every sphere of life. We may call it the 'Law' (*Tetragrammaton*

or *Tetrad of Hermetists*). The symbols used are letters of the old Hebrew alphabet, plus figures and numbers. Three veils for three worlds. This is comfortable, for knowing the meaning of such a letter-symbol, and so on, that is, the fixed idea behind it, we can operate just as a mathematician does with algebraic formulas and terms. It is also very valuable for those, who being tired of the usual occult bungling which occurs at the present time, want to found their studies on a firm basis, without sacrificing their reason and logical thinking.

A short example may serve to show how the principles of the Tarot operate. . . .

The Great Law (the Tetrad) is the same for all the three worlds in which we may employ the Tarot.

(1) If there is any manifestation in time and space (this does not necessarily mean only the three-dimensional physical space), then there must be *first, the acting element* or power which initiates (or begins) the process. We symbolize it by the figure one (1), and letter 'Yod' י. This element is **POSITIVE, DYNAMIC AND ACTIVE**. The picture of the *First Arcanum* (or Trump) of the Tarot represents a Man, standing with one leg crossed (sometimes covered by long robes). He is also called a *Magician*.

The same three qualities as given above are ascribed to and connected with the figure '1' and the letter י (Yod).

(2) Apart from the active primary principle (or as some would prefer 'creation') there is still a second element necessary for manifestation, which element being the receptacle, a screen, something to serve as a basis or fulcrum for the active י (Yod). This element is passive, negative and material. Its number is, of course, (2), the Hebrew letter is 'Hé' ה, and the picture on the card is of a seated woman.

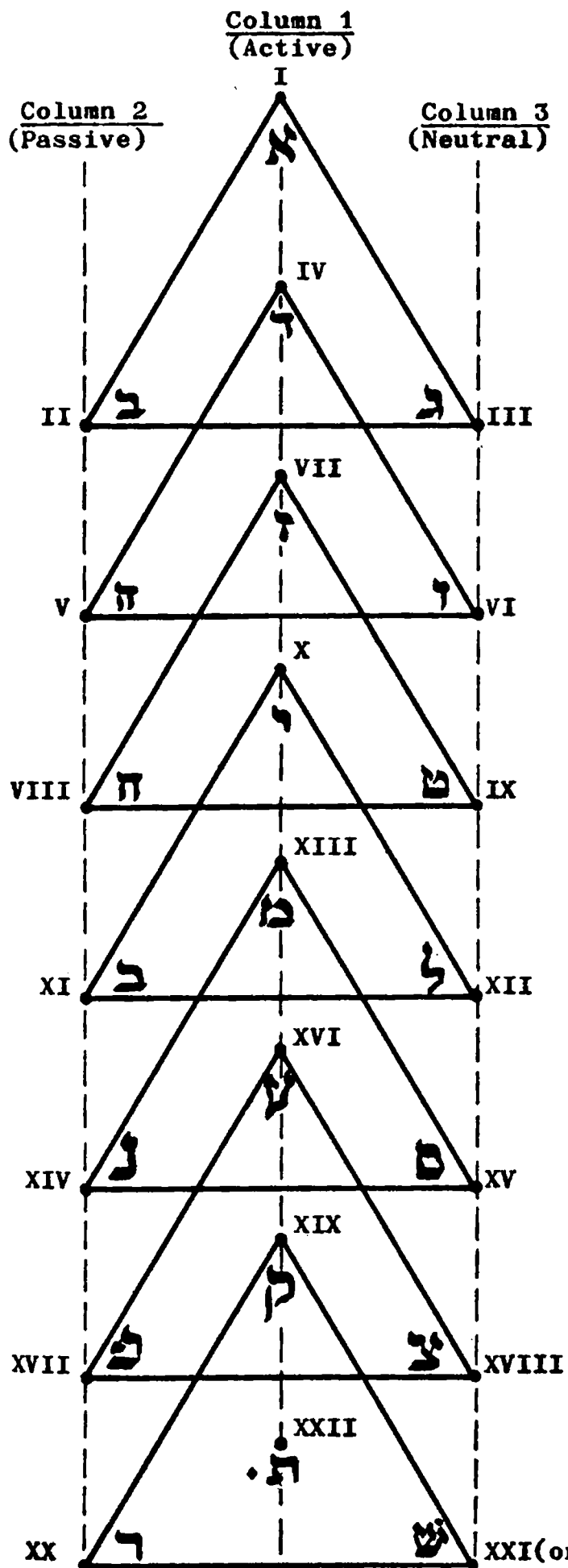
(3) When י acts upon ה, the third principle appears, having the number three (3) and letter 'Vau' ו. It is the result of the action, it is neutral, reflecting in itself the qualities of the first and second Trumps of the Tarot, just like a child depending upon its parents.

(4) The primary 'THREE' as a whole forms a new unit, the 'first family', metaphysically conceived on the most subtle plane of being, next after the Unmanifested, Immaterial Absolute.

This element bears the number four (4), its letter is the **SECOND 'Hé' ה**. This letter is not passive as in the second Arcanum, but active, being the 'Yod' of the next triangle. It is essential to realize this, for only then can the mighty idea of the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) Yod-Hé-Vau-Hé be properly understood. Incidentally, the reader has probably noticed that the Tetragrammaton or Tetrad is identical with the mysterious, biblical **NAME OF GOD**.

The fourth Trump creates a new unit (triangle) as was stated above, producing new, more complicated forms of manifestation in the gradually arising more densely material lower worlds.

This Law works on every plane of existence. In the abstract realm we already had a look at it. On the astral plane, for example, it can be expressed



➤➤➤ First Triangle

➤➤➤ Second Triangle

➤➤➤ Third Triangle

➤➤➤ Fourth Triangle

➤➤➤ Fifth Triangle

➤➤➤ Sixth Triangle

➤➤➤ Seventh Triangle-
Transition to the
Minor Arcana

as: Impulse (׃ Yod or (1) plus astral surroundings (2) creates emotion (3). The whole will form what we call 'experience' or the emotional process in man. Man (׃ Yod), wife (⌒ Hé) and child (ן Vau) are a unit (Second ⌒) of a new quality and of extended activity (4) able to repeat the primordial process in a wider field.

The first 'FOUR' form the primary symbolical triangle of the Tarot. Its upper point is 1 = ׃ (Yod), the left is 2 = ⌒ (Hé), while the right one is 3 = ׀ (Vau). The point placed in the middle of this triangle is also the FIRST point of the NEW one, and is 4 = ⌒ (Second Hé). It is equal to the ׃ (Yod) of the first projection of force. To this come new seeds, as in the first case: a new 2 = ⌒, while 3 = ׀, and so on. On this scheme are constructed the seven mystical triangles of the 22 Major Arcana of the Tarot. Each one has a different meaning and relation to the manifested world. (Fig. 1)

On it is also based the whole numerology of Hermetism. Because any number can be reduced to one of the primary four, that is 1, 2, 3 or 4, the process is usually called the 'theosophical addition' or 'reduction' We will practise it in the following chapters.

So much about the Great Tetragrammaton, the NAME OF GOD.

Now it is time to look attentively at the scheme of Fig. 1, for in it we have the whole construction of the Tarot presented in a way easy to memorize. Place the letters of the Great Tetragram in the first triangle, beside the numbers of the Arcana: ׃ (Yod), of course, will belong to Arcanum No. 1; ⌒ (First Passive Hé) to No. II; ׀ (Vau) corresponds to No. III, and the point inside the triangle to the ⌒ (Second active Hé). At the same time we can clearly see how this active Hé becomes the ׃ (Yod) of the next triangle.

Therefore, Arcana I, IV, VII, X, XIII, XVI, XIX and XXII are all ׃ (Yod). Arcana II, V, VIII, XI, XIV, XVII and XX are all ⌒ (First Hé). Finally, Arcana III, VI, IX, XII, XV, XVIII and XXI (also called Zero) represent the ׀ (Vau) or the neutral element.

So now, when studying each of the Arcana separately, we can always remember WHICH IDEA is its basis, for each Major Arcanum has its own letter—one of the 22 of the Hebrew alphabet—as well as its own number, which we already know. But each triangle, which follows on from the FIRST, also has the four letters of the Great Tetragram, and represents the same unique idea, but on a different plane. This will be shown in the following chapters, when we analyse the Arcana one after another. And then you will see, that the numbers from 1 to 22 also have a mystical meaning: 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19 and 22 are *active*, while 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 20 are *passive*. Finally, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 and 21 are *neutral*. So it is with all the columns shown in Fig. 1. Column No. 1 is active (male), column No. 2 is passive (female) and column No. 3 is neutral. The FIRST triangle is that of the Divine Life, the highest, as it is according to the Kabbalah. The following triangles each time represent a lower world, until we come to the last, the seventh triangle, which symbolizes the physical realm. A more extended exposition belongs to the following chapters.

Now we will analyse the Minor Arcana. Actually, they are almost equiv-

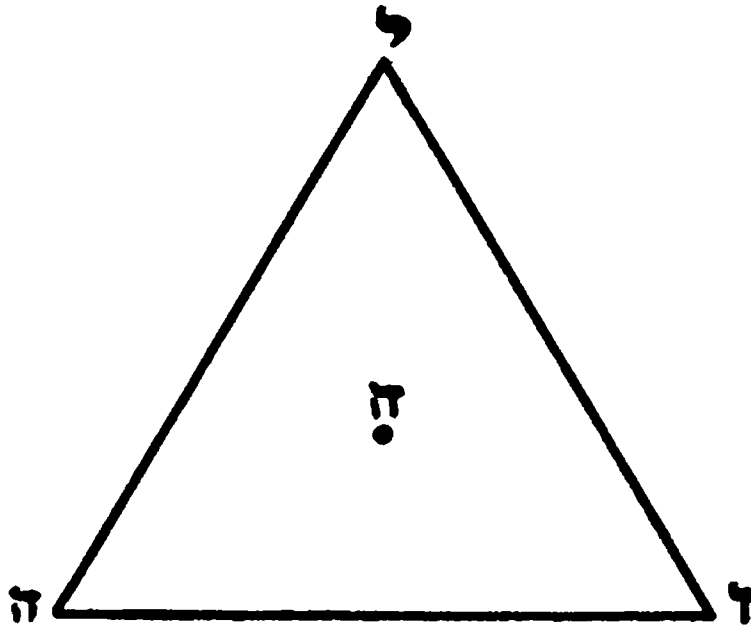


Fig. 2 Triangle

alent to the usual set of playing cards, with the difference that there is an additional 'figure' in each suit. It is the 'Knight'. The traditional explanation of the Minor Arcana—unchanged by most competent authors—is as follows:

We already know, that, within it, the Tarot includes four elements of occult wisdom: Alchemy, Astrology, the Kabbalah and Magic. I deliberately say 'includes' and not 'is composed of', as erroneously stated by some people: for the Tarot is much more than just these sub-divisions of occultism. This we can recognize if we remember the definition of the Tarot which describes it as a 'philosophical machine'.

Further, the Tetragrammaton reveals itself in the Tarot (1) as the Name of the Almighty composed of four letters; (2) as four kingdoms of spirits; (3) as four elements of Alchemy, and (4) as four classes of men.

Now, the first suit of the Minor Arcana correspond to (1), that is wands; the second suit corresponds to (2), that is swords; the third suit to (3), that is cups, and the fourth suit to (4), that is pentacles.

These suits are the four sides of a SQUARE which is a part of the Tarot's symbolism and is shown in Fig. 3 of the text. Each side of this mystical square, which has a point in the middle, represents an element. Thus, wands symbolize FIRE (elves); cups represent WATER (sprites); swords are AIR (sylphs); while pentacles symbolize the densest element or EARTH (gnomes which live in it).

The *figures* have the following meaning:

In each suit of the Minor Arcana the King represents the first letter of the Tetragrammaton (Yod) and FIRE ♀, the Queen the second letter (Hé) or WATER ♂, the Knight the third letter ♀ (Vau) or AIR, and the Knave is the fourth (Second Hé) or EARTH, ♂.

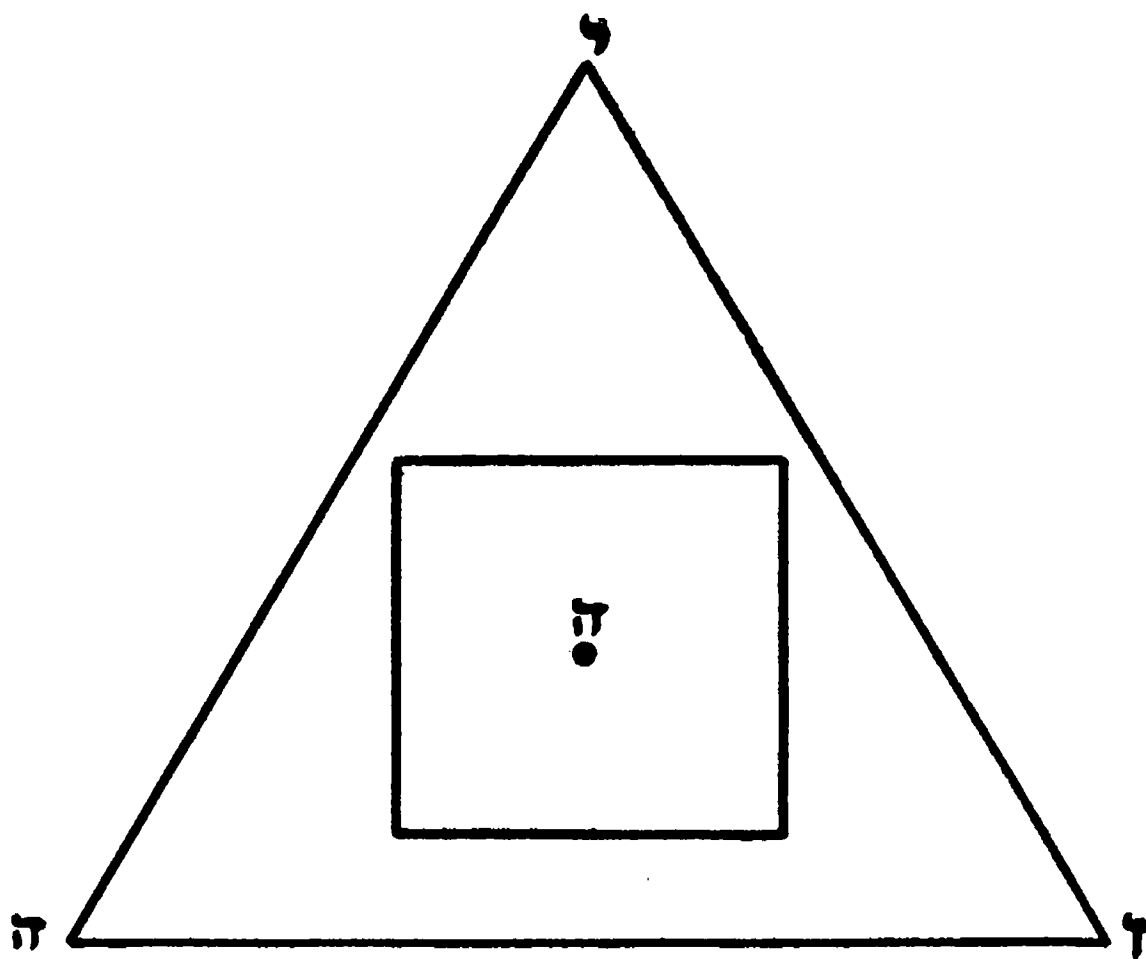


Fig. 3 A Square in a Triangle (Symbol of the Tarot)

Consequently, one is fire, two—water, three—air, and four—earth. This is the **FIRST** square.

As we know, the *first cycle*, through its last element (or Second Hé) is the seed of the next, the *second square* (or cycle) in which five is the second element 𐌚 (First Hé), six the third 𐌚 (Vau), seven the fourth 𐌚 (Second Hé). Similarly, seven is the first principle of the *third* or the last square, eight the second principle of the same; nine the third; ten the fourth. In the same way the last side of the triangle is completed. This triangle may be presented in two ways, as is shown in the general symbol of the Tarot. It can be placed inside the **SQUARE**, or it can contain the **SQUARE** (See Fig. 3).

The mystical **POINT** as seen in the square and triangle, summarizes the whole figure to which it belongs. The traditional expression is, 'that the whole of the square or triangle are equal to the point'. In the course of the analysis in the following chapters, we will again return to this axiom.

In the suits, the colour **BLACK** symbolizes **ACTIVE** qualities, as is the case with wands and swords, while **RED** means **PASSIVE** qualities, to which belong cups and pentacles. We may say that here **BLACK** stands for the *rajasic* element (Eastern Tradition) or will-power, energy, initiative, movement, and action, with **RED** as the *tamasic* element indicating inertia, lack of movement and unconsciousness.

In divinatory practice with the Tarot's cards **WANDS** and **CUPS** are considered as 'GOOD' indicating the best of fortune, friendship and blessings; but **SWORDS** and **PENTACLES** are just the opposite, that is 'EVIL', hostility, and dangerous conditions and relationships. The meaning of the colours is given in slightly different words by different authors, but the **GIST** *must always be the same*, as in this connection it is an unchangeable quality.

Combinations of all of the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana therefore reflect the main principles of life: good and evil, active and passive, all being dependent upon a man's will or lying beyond it, as his unavoidable Destiny or Karma as Easterners would say.

For a *full understanding of every combination* of the Minor Arcana, an extensive study of their meaning and symbols is essential, plus a certain necessary amount of intuition. This does not come without long years of hard work, providing one is really interested in this sub-division of Hermetism. 'Le Maitre' ETTEILLA (his proper name was Alliette) the famous French fortune-teller and commentator on the Tarot (in its divinatory conception), is said to have developed and possessed such a knowledge and ability of intuitional synthesis, that it was sufficient for him to take only a quick look at the series of cards set out for his client in order to see the past, present and future fate of the person. Papus in his *Divinatory Tarot* widely uses Etteilla's conceptions and explanations of the significance of the Minor Arcana.

Nevertheless, the main philosophical value and usefulness of the Tarot lies in its 22 Major Arcana, or Trumps. Actually, they are the basis of the present book. Their symbols are at the same time so exact and flexible, so inspiring and yet leaving one so much liberty in their interpretation, that many writers have found it profitable to use the Tarot

as a basis for their works, often without even mentioning its name.

If the attentive student considers the number of parts, chapters and the whole plan of another of the writer's books—*Concentration*, he will find the same principles employed. (also in 'Samadhi').

Years ago, when lecturing about the Tarot, I found it practical and advisable to divide the subject matter of each Arcanum into separate lessons, which were then much more readily assimilated during the time given for a lecture, than if the whole Arcanum were dealt with at once. The student will find the same method used here, as it proved to be so successful in the past. Hence, several lessons will belong to each of the Major Arcana. But in this work everything has been greatly augmented and revised, with enlarged chapters incorporating new material based on latest experience.

I have tried to limit the number of drawings to the bare minimum, giving only the really important schemes and pentacles. Two reasons for this are:

(1) If the student works properly and realizes the meaning of the symbols given, he will easily extend them, if he finds this useful for his mental processes. So, for example, the special unfolding of Solomon's Star and of the Pentagram as sometimes encountered in old works about the Tarot, may be found independently, and therefore may yield certain profit for an occultist.

(2) These unfoldings do not belong to the basic truths of the Tarot, as do the pentacles of its arcana, and they do not provide much initiatory material, *if given in a ready form*. If you are successfully initiated into all three meanings of Fabre d'Olivet's mystical triangles, your broadened and enlightened mind will not need many graphical schemes in order to approach closer to the very CORE of the Initiation of the Western Tradition. Here, of course, I mean the super-mental abilities of 'cognition without thinking', which is the genuine INTUITION.

Now, I would like to stress, that the Tarot in itself does not expound any definite SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE, but rather has the purpose of expanding the abilities of the student, that is to teach him an infallible method for developing and using his mental faculties. From the occult point of view the man of average intelligence is not well prepared for the realization and solving of the deep problems of the microcosm and macrocosm. No doubt some people have brilliant flashes of mental understanding and even intuition, but all such are only of a sporadic character and could hardly be called controlled abilities, or *guided intuition*. That is because there are so many different occult currents and conceptions, which we can easily observe in our own epoch. The mental machine of the Tarot tries to fill this gap and to help every earnest seeker, who cannot as yet follow any DIRECT SPIRITUAL PATH, as taught by the great Teachers of humanity, but who feels an urgent need to examine everything for himself and to reconcile his mind to the supposed highest aims of human attainment.

Many people have an unquenchable thirst and curiosity to know mentally much more than recognized philosophical or psychological studies can offer them. Some want to systematize the degree of occult knowledge which they already possess, while others are keen to unveil certain secrets, which lie hidden behind the 'security walls' surrounding the main occult problems.

For all such, the Tarot offers a unique possibility to achieve their various aims, and at the same time educate their minds and open quite new vistas before them.

Of course, the Tarot of the second half of the twentieth Century is probably not the same as that taught in the underground initiatory crypts in Egypt three or four thousand years ago, or in the secret chambers of the Great Pyramid, and in the subterranean temple between the paws of the Sphinx. Simply because we are not the ancient Egyptians. Our minds have certainly evolved a little since those far off days, that is, we are, as a mass, much more intelligent than the corresponding ancient people, for whom the knowledge of their primitive and cumbersome art of writing and reading was the rare privilege of comparatively few, while the masses remained uneducated.

Adding a little to our fantasy, supported, anyway, by the few reports which we have about the methods of the ancient initiations, we can imagine a group of young candidates slowly walking among the pillars, in the half dim light of coloured oil lamps, under the leadership of a majestic looking high priest, who in short, half-veiled sentences explains to them the mystical truths of the Arcana and the other symbols around them.

This method was followed by the ancient occultists in order to prevent any insufficiently developed candidates from slipping through the 'safety barriers' erected for the purpose of screening the aspirants. Many teachings were given in quite an enigmatic outer form, and the candidates had to cope successfully with them before they 'passed to a higher class'.

Now it is different. The invention of printing has enormously popularized all knowledge, and the unrestricted publication of millions of books at the present time apparently puts everything within the reach of all. But if we look closely and with an unprejudiced eye, we will agree that the invisible veil still exists, although there are no secret crypts buried deep under the tightly-guarded temples and pyramids. For now it lies *inside ourselves*.

The most elevated of spiritual truths have been expounded by the advanced sons of humanity during the last two thousand years, and in spite of the Gospels on the Love of Christ, hatred and murder are still far from being eliminated. What is the cause? The same veil of inner unripeness and ignorance, which prevents the practice of Truth as revealed in the Gospels, also prevents unsuitable persons from entering the ancient temple of the Tarot, even if almost everything in it is exposed without any artificial barriers.

Anyway, every occultist knows about this unwritten but very efficient law. *Now, on the other side of the coin* we have, for example, a primitive native of Central Africa or New Guinea who certainly does not know anything about the manufacture of firearms or even of the physical laws

which determine the functioning of a rifle or revolver. But once a weapon is placed in his hands and it is explained how to insert the cartridge and pull the trigger, he is capable of using the weapon to kill without the need of any other knowledge about it.

In occultism there are secret technicalities which sometimes can work even if placed in ignorant hands (similarly to the foregoing example). In this book some of them may be indicated closely enough for use, but only those which CANNOT be employed under any conditions for wrongful (that is evil) purposes. Others which do not give such a guarantee will be mentioned only up to the point where their application begins, but no further. Paul Sédir, in his unique book *Initiations*, states that his master, Monsieur Andréas, once told him that: 'All the crimes and evil arising from the wrongful or malicious use of say, mesmerism, weigh heavily on the inventor of that method, Dr Mesmer himself. . . . Such is the Law. So it can be imagined what terrible debts he has to pay for the past, as well as for future misuse of his discovery.'

That is why no occult book of any value—written by an honest author who is conscious of his responsibility—will reveal dangerous practices. Such authors are aware of the fact, that men are much more eager to MISUSE occult or psychical powers, than to USE THEM FOR GOOD AND UNSELFISH PURPOSES.

In two of my other books, *Concentration* and *Occultism and Spiritual Paths*, I have spoken extensively about this, that is about some particular types of magic. Referring the reader to these sources, I would like to mention briefly, that in this twentieth century magic is still not dead and this also includes the so-called 'black magic'. There is one thing against which every black magician will always fight: *it is his unmasking*. He will use everything he can in order to avenge this, and to render harmless to him, the person who reveals his true quality.

Nowadays, the lower types of occultists, who have only egoistic and material aims, invariably try to pass as 'great souls', 'spiritual teachers' or 'perfect masters'.

It has so happened, that the writer has openly expressed his opinion about some of these rogues, referring to them in his published articles and also in correspondence with some of their misguided 'disciples'. In due time the expected reactions came. Strong efforts from the 'black' side have been made in order to harm him and to make any further work impossible. Whoever has read *Occultism and Spiritual Paths* will know more about the means and methods used in such cases. Here I shall mention only the fact, that if a photograph of a man or his signature is available, the necessary 'contact' may well be established with the body of the prospective victim by the magician, providing he knows the techniques and possesses some will-power.

In this particular case the eyes and other organs were attacked; but as soon as the origin of the ailments were discovered, the aggression was countered and frustrated (see the chapter 'Magic' in *Occultism and Spiritual Paths*).

In spite of all this there have been some books published which reveal sufficient data to give the 'keys' to some occult experiments. I had them

about 30 years ago, and learned quite a few things from them. Fortunately, they are no longer available. But there remains a large volume by Papus about the practices of Ceremonial Magic, in which enough material is given to enable a persistent and strong-willed person to perform some 'real' experiments, which sometimes seem to be harmless for those around them, but not necessarily so for the performer (see *In Days of Great Peace* the chapter 'My Path to Maharshi'). A special 'magic book' is required, which must be a purely '*personal*' one, compiled and written by the operator himself at certain hours of the day and night according to astrological conditions, and which takes several months to prepare.

The terminology in this book will be limited to the minimum necessary for a clear understanding, so that only a few of the terms which are seldom used in popular occult literature need to be explained. These are as follows:

Astrosome: as used in the Kabbalah means the whole complex which remains when the physical body is taken out of consideration, and refers to the astral and mental bodies combined. In the following lessons I will use the word, mostly in reference to the astral body alone, and when the mind's conductor (that is mental body) is meant, it will be mentioned separately.

Atman: the spiritual SELF in all, also the similar principle in man, often wrongly called 'the soul'. Synonymous to the ATMAN are: Spirit, Supreme Self, God, and in Hermetism—the MONAD.

Binary: in the Tarot is two opposite, polarized assertions or qualities, definitions or conditions, actions or states similar to the two poles of a magnet. Binaries as such are unworkable and belong to the realm of unsolved problems. To neutralize a binary means to balance it through the creation of a third element between the poles. This element must contain something from each pole of the binary, and is a concrete solution of the binary, making it workable and applicable to life.

Cliché: a French word, the philosophical meaning of which is close (*but not identical*) to the English '*image*', sometimes also to '*surroundings*'. Contemplation of a cliché means that consciousness perceives the surrounding conditions. Clichés may belong to the past, present or future. They are impressed on the subtle matter of the astro-mental planes. They can be 'seen' or 'read' by men with developed psychic abilities. All true spiritual Masters are able to see clichés at any time.

The Copper-Serpent: or the redemptive cliché of the middle astral has the formula י ה ש ו ה (Yod-Hé-Shin-Vau-Hé). It is the aim of elementars which belong to the evolutionary types. Its realm is the middle and higher astral sub-planes. It frees those who are able to come to it, from all the dangers between incarnations. Saints and advanced 'white' occultists come to this Serpent almost immediately after having left their bodies. In olden times, Moses raised the symbol of that powerful cliché of redemption in the desert, when the plague decimated his people. Everyone who looked upon it with faith was saved from death. Later, the Messiah, the Christ, was himself similarly raised in his body upon the Cross for the sake of downfallen and suffering humanity.

Egregor: is a collective entity, such as a nation, state, society, religions and sects and their adherents, and even minor human organizations. The structure of Egregors is similar to that of human beings. They have physical bodies (that is, collectively all the bodies of those who belong to the particular Egregor) and also astral and mental ones; the Egregor being the sum total of all these elements.

Egregors have peculiar forms in the super-physical worlds, similar to their symbolized representations like the lion of Britain, the cock of France, the eagle of Germany, and so on. These forms—as was stated by Paul Sédir, who observed them before World War I—can be seen by a clairvoyant person, or by others with the direct assistance from a spiritual Master, as it was in Sédir's case. In his *Initiations* he tells us how, shortly before 1914, he was shown the future of Europe for some years ahead, by the mysterious Monsieur Andréas. He speaks about the tragedy of his beloved France, which later bled herself white in the First World War. In the subsequent vision, which was also evoked by the same Andréas, Sédir was also shown the far off past, going back to the time of St Joan d'Arc and even spoke with her and took part in the mystical ceremony which followed in the dungeons and cellars of the old castle, where the saint was imprisoned before her execution at the stake. There is an interesting moment in the story when Sédir—as can clearly be seen from his narration—was also shown the more distant future, probably World War II which was so disastrous for France. But he was forbidden to reveal anything about it, although his deep concern shows through his sad words at the conclusion of the chapter. In all these visions, the Egregor of France had the form of a cock, while the others were represented by different birds and animals as mentioned before.

Elementar: is an adapted term for a dead human being devoid of its physical body. It has to be used here because of the lack of a more suitable word in English. Therefore, 'the state of being an elementar' simply means, that in us which remains after our physical death.

An elementar as a disincarnate being lives on *two* planes instead of *three*, that is only on the astral and mental. Hermetism principally occupies itself with HUMAN elementars. The consciousness of an elementar belonging to an average man is very dim, like his dreams, and does not reach the clarity of his former physical consciousness. But in the case of an Adept or Master, the consciousness on the two planes is much more lucid than on the physical one.

The word elementar is derived from the French 'élémentaire'.

Evolution: this is the antithesis of involution, the ascent of the superior principle from its merging in the inferior, dense realm, that is Spirit evolving (ascending) from matter. Involutionary tendencies, sometimes occurring in evolutionary beings (as for example, humans) are unnatural for them and against the law of evolution which binds men. Therefore, tendencies such as attachments to material things, sensuality, and so on, are an EVIL for those beings. The general purpose of evolution is the removal from the *Consciousness, Self* of all material veils. And this is the measure of progress in man: the less involutionary or material attachments he

possesses, the higher is the degree of his evolution and the closer is the day of his *reintegration*.

Exteriorization of the astral element or astrosome: this term is used for the voluntary and temporary abandonment of the physical body by an advanced occultist (no one else can perform such an operation), while retaining full consciousness and awareness of what then happens.

The Great Arcanum of Magic, or Great Operation: realization of the conquered supreme occult knowledge, or Hermetism. In other words, the means leading directly to Reintegration. Other explanations are in the text of this course.

Initiation: development of consciousness surpassing the average human level. Knowledge of laws hidden from laymen which govern the life of the universe. Traditionally in occultism, those who know more initiate (or teach) those who are their disciples. True initiation is the direct influencing of the still immature consciousness of a pupil by the perfectly evolved spiritual consciousness of the Master. There are some secret societies which are supposed to transmit certain knowledge to the members who pass through their rituals.

Involution: the descent of a superior and subtle principle into an inferior and dense one, such as Spirit into matter. In other words, the *Self*, wrapping itself in material shells, or forms, lower instincts and feelings. For certain kinds of entities who are still on the *descending* arc of the manifested life-creation, involutionary tendencies are natural and right qualities for them, for such is their destiny, their 'good'. If evolutionary tendencies (see 'Evolution') could exist in such involutionary beings, they would definitely be improper and therefore 'evil' for these beings.

Macrocosm: the universe as a WHOLE; the consciousness manifested in it is the *Central Consciousness of the Whole*, not integrated into separate functions.

Magic: the influencing of the manifested life around us through the use of will-power and knowledge of the laws governing the worlds (or planes). From this point of view, Hermetism recognizes most human activities as having a 'magic' character. In a narrower conception, magic is the field of activity of a man who has dedicated himself to this sort of knowledge. Such a man is called a 'magician'. Magic can be evolutionary (good or 'white') as well as involutionary (evil or 'black'). Magic is a part of Hermetic philosophy or the Tarot.

Mantram: magic formula for influencing the surroundings (environment) of the operator. These can be fairly long sentences.

Microcosm: or 'small universe': in Hermetism it refers to Man; the reflection of the Whole in consciousness enclosed in the human body. The laws governing the macrocosm are analogous (not identical) to those governing the life of the microcosm. For a human being, realization of these laws is equivalent to reintegration into the PRIMORDIAL WHOLE.

Nahash or Astral Serpent: this is a symbol of passions and involutionary tendencies which pursue physical and astral lusts and attachments. It is a great enemy of all newcomers into the astral world (that is elementars of

recently dead persons), unless they are sufficiently initiated. Nahash tries to pull them into the involutory current of the planet. It has no power over men who, during their physical lifetime, have learned to master their lower impulses and vasanās, i.e. attachments to the material life of the flesh. Nahash is a cruel master of weaklings, unable to raise their aims beyond the physical and egoistic levels. The realm of the Astral Serpent is the dark cone of the planet, the lower astral, briefly, that which, with justice, is called *purgatory* (temporary hell).

Pentacle: a combination of symbols united to form a drawing. They may or may not possess powers of realization. Details appear in the text of this book.

Phantom: the sixth element in man, which is attached to the seventh, that is to the physical body. Its Kabbalistic name is NEPHESH. Its functions are normally, decomposition of the dead body or formation of the embryo and subsequently the foetus in the mother's womb. Nephesh often interferes with Ruah to the disadvantage of the elementar. It is not free from involutory attachments (impure ones). Sufferings and fears after death are principally due to Nephesh, which tries to prolong its existence by substituting the weak (in an average man) consciousness of Ruah with its own dim awareness, thereby sapping the evolutionary impulses.

Reintegration: this term was introduced by the first and true *Rosicrucians* (fourteenth century) and gradually made common in Western occultism. It means that the spark of consciousness involved in the different veils of matter (as it is with man), finally returns to the Central Sun of non-incarnate SPIRIT-CONSCIOUSNESS, that is *it becomes reintegrated*. From separateness in different bodies (forms) the SPIRIT again merges into the ABSOLUTE, WHOLE, GOD, NIRVANA, BRAHM, and so on.

Reintegration is the ultimate aim of true occultism, having equivalents in Eastern mysticism like: Self-Realization, Liberated State, Jivanmukti. In Christianity it is called Salvation in Heaven, and in Buddhism Nirvana, a complete extinction of all illusion of separateness in the forms of matter and egotism. The idea of Reintegration comes from the old Egyptian Initiations and prevails throughout the whole construction of the Tarot's system.

Saint: a highly evolved person who has definitely ceased to pursue any egoistical aims (that is involutory ones) and who has learned practically, the evolutionary activities (unselfish ones). In this way saints are supposed to fulfil God's Will and therefore, some initiatory circles call them 'Friends of God'. In his further progress, the saint becomes a SAGE, that is, one who has nothing more to learn or a PERFECT MAN, a MASTER.

Setram: is a magic formula for influencing the consciousness and the astrosome of the operator himself. Usually it is a very short word or sentence connected with one's monad like 'I AM'.

Soul: in Hermetism this is the astral counterpart of the individual, also called RUAH, the fifth element in man. It is not to be confused with the *elementar*, which is not a one-plane entity like Ruah, but two-plane.

Ternary: this is essentially a neutralized *binary*. A ternary, contrary to a binary, is constructive and has multi-lateral uses in Hermetism. The

number '3' is a sacred one especially in some religions. The symbol of the ternary is a triangle. Depending on action connected with the triangles, they may be involutionary or evolutionary.

Tourbillons or Vortexes: are astral creations of force which are the bases of all astro-mental realizations. Tradition ascribes the funnel like forms to them. Knowledge of the laws ruling over the tourbillons and their construction, is one of the foremost principles of magic. Although it **CAN NOT** be given in open language to the public at large, it has been sufficiently described for initiates in this course, under the veil of Kabbalistic structures. The most guarded secrets of Hermetic magic are: *finding the point of support* for the tourbillon on the physical plane, and the *formula of transition* from the astral to the physical world.

Unitarianism or Unitary Philosophy: this is a Hermetic conception of the *unity* and *origin* of life. Everything manifested is the result of the **ONE WILL, ONE SOURCE** of all life. From **IT** we come, wander through different worlds (or planes) and finally return to **IT**. The primary idea of Unitarianism was first brought by *Moses* from the initiatory sanctuaries of Egypt and given to the ancient Jews to retain—until the coming of the Messiah—as a strict monotheism. It is also the corner-stone of the Tarot.

Mouni Sadhu

Melbourne, December, 1959

The illustrations of the 22 Major Arcana in this book were made by an Australian artist—Mrs Eva G. Lucas of Melbourne.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET AS USED IN THE KABBALAH

<i>No. Letters</i>			<i>No. Names of Corresponding Sephiroth</i>		
1	Aleph	א	1	Kether	כתר Crown
2	Beth	ב	2	Chocmah	חכמה Wisdom
3	Ghimel	ג	3	Binah	בינה Mind
4	Daleth	ד	4	Chesed (Gedulah)	חסד Grace, Clemency, Will
5	Hé	ה		גדולה	
6	Vau	ו	5	Pechad (Geburah)	Severity, Intelligence
7	Zain	ז		פחד—גבורה	
8	Heth	ח	6	Tiphereth	תפירת Beauty, Harmony
9	Teth	ט	7	Hod	חוד Glory, Peace
10	Yod	י	8	Netzah	נעה Victory, Justice,
11	Caph	כ	9	Yesod	יסוד Form, Prudence
12	Lamed	ל	10	Malkuth	מלכות World, Kingdom, Realization
13	Mem	מ			
14	Nun	נ			
15	Samech	ס			
16	Ayin	ע			
17	Phe	פ			
18	Tzaddi	צ			
19	Quoph	ק			
20	Resh	ר			
21	Shin	ש			
22	Than	ת			

The remaining letters have no corresponding Sephiroth

♂
Arcanum I
MAGUS
THE MAGICIAN

N
Aleph -
Letter=
Mother



Divina Essentia
Vir
Natura Naturans

CHAPTER I

ARCANUM I (⌘ ALEPH)

LESSON 1

FOR a truly intelligent and evolving man, the foremost principles in life are: (1) his *consciousness of that life*, and (2) the *degree of the power of realization* which is at his disposal in his present incarnation.

The striving after the so-called 'initiation' in the three-plane existence, usually manifests itself in man in one of these two principles, but very often in both of them.

In Hermetism, INITIATION is based on what are known as ARCANUM, or mysteries. Here should be explained the difference between the three terms known in Latin as *arcanum*, *mysterium* and *secretum*.

'*Arcanum*' (in English also often called Trump) is a mystery, necessary for the cognition of a definite kind and number of things, laws or principles; a mystery without which one cannot operate, since the necessity of that cognition has been born in us; a mystery accessible to a mind strong and curious enough to see that knowledge. Used broadly, all scientific sentences which explain any kind of practical activity can be placed under this term. '*Mysterium*' is the magnificent system of Arcana and their secrets which are used as a synthesis by a definite occult school (Hermetic). It is also a basis for that school's activity and contemplation.

'*Secretum*' (its equivalent in English is simply 'secret') means something which a number of men *agree to hide*, for some practical reason or even a caprice.

In this lesson one of the most important matters for us to study will be the first term *arcanum*. It can either be expressed in words, written in any usual language, or *SYMBOLIZED*.

The ancient initiatory centres chose this third way for the transmission of the highest ideas which were born in their minds, that is they recorded them in *SYMBOLS*.

We can discriminate between *three types* of symbolism:

- (1) The symbolism of *colours*, a feature of the initiation of the *BLACK RACES*.
- (2) The symbolism of *geometrical figures* and cards, being the privilege of the *RED-SKINNED RACES*.
- (3) The symbolism of *numbers*, which belongs to the *WHITE RACES*.

An immense memorial to Egyptian symbolism has come down to us in which is combined all the three types of the symbolical expression of ideas. It is just that collection (pack) of 78 cards with their coloured pictures, explaining the so-called 22 Major and 56 Minor Arcana. Each card is also

linked with a definite numerical symbol. As tradition records, these numbers were placed on the walls of subterranean galleries (passageways), into which an uninitiated neophyte was allowed to enter only after a series of exacting tests.

The collection of cards is also known as the Gypsies' Tarot (or the Tarot of the Bohemians). We will consider it as the basis and scheme for the metaphysical concentration, or mental contemplation as practised by the ancient initiates.

But it may be said, that each nation has its own system of thinking and meditation, the outer expression of which is its language. If the nation has learned to write, then the elements of the language are expressed as an alphabet.

In the same way our Tarot represents a kind of initiatory alphabet. The whole pack consists of a system of the letters or signs of that alphabet, while details of the cards and their colours provide something of a commentary for these signs. We may bind the 22 Major Arcana of the Tarot together with the hieroglyphs of that mysterious alphabet, which today is termed ancient Hebrew.

Each letter of that alphabet also has a numerical meaning, and it is in just this order that we will study them, always remembering the motto of the white races: everything according to NUMBER, MEASURE and WEIGHT.

LESSON 2

Now we can pass on to the analysis of the Arcana themselves. ARCANUM I has the corresponding Hebrew letter ALEPH (א) and its idea is UNITY. The hieroglyph for the first arcanum is a MAN; but look attentively at the symbol for the letter Aleph and we will undoubtedly find there the idea of trinity in the form of two parts, connected by a third (analyse Aleph graphically for yourself).

The card represents a MAN standing with right hand raised and holding a sceptre, a symbol of authority. The left one is directed towards the earth. The whole figure cleverly symbolizes the letter Aleph. Over his head there is the sign of infinity (a figure '8' lying on its side). His forehead is decked by a golden circlet, and his waist by a similar belt. A table in the form of a cube stands before the Man, and on it are lying three objects. These are a CUP, a SWORD and a COIN. In this way—apart from the idea of the Trinity-in-Unity—the card presents four mysterious things for our consideration.

For the moment we will delay analysing them and occupy ourselves with an explanation of the twofold position of the Man's arms.

In all fields of knowledge we find *binaries*, or combinations of two opposite poles or planes. Metaphysics speaks about the ESSENCE and SUBSTANCE of things, placing these two opposite to one another.

Science speaks about *principles or maxims*, as the antithesis of *facts*. To this realm also belong the well known use of the terms SPIRIT and MATTER. Mentally analysing life we will meet with similar binaries

such as, LIFE and DEATH, CONSCIOUSNESS and REALIZATION, GOOD and EVIL. Particular questions in different kinds of practical science bring us many other binaries like LIGHT and SHADE, HEAT and COLD, and so on.

In most of these cases there is a possibility of what, in Hermetism, is termed a neutralizing of the binaries, which simply means the birth of a third or intermediary element which offers us a passage from one extreme to the other. In such a way is created the idea of the threefold manifestation, the TWO merging together, with the help of the THIRD to form a UNIT.

For example, between light and shade we have half-shadow, which is the same in essence, and so obtain the in between grades of lightness and darkness. Between heat and cold there are the medium temperatures; between high and low sounds are intermediary ones; between positive and negative electricity there is a neutral state, and so on. Similarly, the opposition of the sexes as between husband and wife is neutralized by the birth of their child, and so all three elements melt into a new unit which we call *the family* (see the explanation about the Tetragrammaton in the 'Introduction').

However, not all binaries can be so easily neutralized. In philosophy the binary 'ESSENCE — SUBSTANCE' may be readily resolved into the term 'NATURE', but try to neutralize such ones as:

- (a) Spirit—matter (*the soul*)
- (b) Life—death (*exteriorization into the astral*)
- (c) Good—evil (*deed, or even our own human binary*)
- (d) Consciousness—power of realization (*harmony*).

I have given you ready solutions as not everyone will be able to find them independently or easily.

Therefore, one of the properties of INITIATION may be defined as just *the ability to neutralize* (or to solve) the above-mentioned *basic binaries*. The ancients related the range of these to the so-called GREAT MYSTERIES.

The MINOR MYSTERIES approximately embraced the sciences which today come under general education as taught in our secondary schools; for in those distant days the level of the common education was, of course, very low and even reading and arithmetic were considered to be noteworthy.

Now, the neutralization of the binary 'SPIRIT—MATTER' is the subject of what is termed the *theoretical* initiation; but the remaining three *Great Binaries* will belong to practical initiation of which we will speak many times in the following lessons.

So we can realize what we are striving for and can thus underline the general ideas connected with the conception of the threefold steps in the unitarian scales. Apart from the evident gradation in the ternaries we may see the hierarchical basis present in their construction. The upper degree is reflected in the others because of its hierarchical superiority. This means

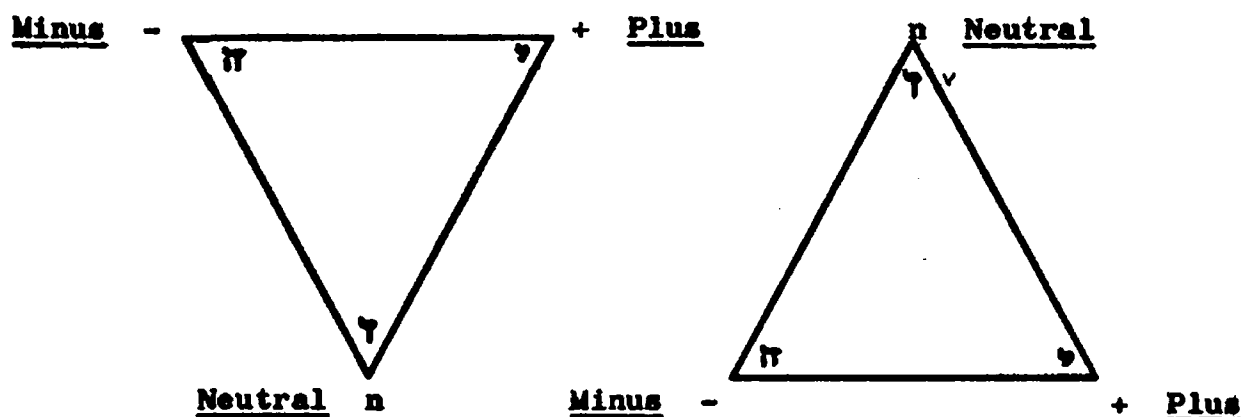


Fig. 4 Unitary Triangles

that the authority vested in a lesser ruler differs from that of a superior one only in the amount, or reach of his power, but not in its character or principle. We can also see that a general manager who exercises authority over many subordinates, must synthesize the power of all of them in himself. We still want to underline the idea of the unbroken passage from one degree to another. We can observe three of them, but in the majority of the examples given, the transition from one degree to the next is uninterrupted, flowing action.

From consideration of the *unitary ternaries* comes the possibility of their *twofold* creation. We begin with the extreme elements to obtain the middle one. Such a proceeding will be called the 'general type of the ordinary ternary', symbolizing it with the number '1'.

In Fig. 4 ' + ' symbolically corresponds to the positive pole, that is to that beginning of the binary which we consider as the active, expansive, (male) pole, while the ' — ' is the passive (female) one which attracts the former. The letter 'n' means the middle (neutral) term. In many cases it is possible to begin with the neutral element and separate it in order to determine both of the poles.

Neutral electricity can be turned into ' + electricity' and into ' — electricity' by friction; no one can forbid us to think of half-shadow in the terms of full-shadow partially lightened by a source of light. A child manifests in itself, on one hand the *passive elements* of attraction which it uses when being fed and nursed; while on the other it also displays some *active elements* by taking objects, and so on. Both poles or properties are united in the child; but we can mentally separate them if we wish. Then we obtain the second kind of ternary as depicted in Fig. 4. It is called the *ternary of the Great Arcanum*.

Now we may say something about the *creation of ideas*. In this lesson we used analogies, that is similarities, and so arrived at symbolical ideas.

But what is a symbol? It is a method like the one just mentioned, that is, that of similarity. Let us again take a ternary: LIGHT—HALF-SHADOW—SHADOW. Under its extreme elements let us write down a few of the non-neutralized binaries like that of:

1. LIGHT	—	HALF-SHADOW	—	SHADOW (darkness)
2. Higher Region	—	Middle Region	—	Lower Region
3. Essence	—	Nature	—	Substance
4. Spirit	—	—	—	Matter
5. Life	—	—	—	Death

If I compare all of these lines with the first, then I will find that the elements of all of them are symbolized by those of the first one. Moreover, if I am able to *neutralize* both of the poles in one line, for example (3), it has probably happened only because I was looking at the first line as if on a principal idea. This is an example of the *power of realization of the symbols* in the metaphysical-logical plane or world.

If in the fourth line I am not yet able to neutralize Spirit and matter, then it means that the realization of the symbol has not yet emerged and there is only the opportunity of a limited comparison. If we liken Spirit to light and matter to darkness, then the term I am seeking will correspond to that of half-shadow.

But now we will return to the picture of the First Arcanum.

LESSON 3

In this picture we see an individual, a man. This means that this arcanum of Unity is also an arcanum of individuality. When a number of beings or things are united, then this group has its own individual life.

A single cell lives; a group of cells are united into an organ, and the organ lives its own individual life; organs group themselves into an organism, which again lives an individual life. Similarly, all the organic kingdoms of a planet, as well as the mineral ones, represent another individual, and together are called the planet. *And it lives!* A group of planets form a *system*, and so on into infinity (all is contained in the Unity).

Small wonder then that a cell might well consider itself as absolutely free, and can fight with other cells without any regard for the organ or organism, looking on both of them only in relation to the condition of its own little life. There is no need to be concerned when, in these days, an 'official scientist' acts just like that cell, and therefore cannot be the equal of the Earth and Solar System, as he refuses them any individual existence and merely guesses that they are only lifeless surroundings, in which passes the life of such a gentleman. We may not be very interested to know that the Earth might well look on his little life with contempt in just the same way as he is looking at the life of his steadily renewing cells.

This arcanum reveals to us, that these great Individualities really exist, and that not only a group of atoms got its individualization in the form of a cell, but even an artificial group of men, united into a society, by this fact alone individualize a new unit and begin to live a common life, reluctantly considering the personal interests of each of the members.

This universal idea was best formulated by Christ when He said: 'For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I

in the midst of them' (Matt. 18, 20). There is no realized life apart from the Logos, so the words 'in my name' mean exactly: *in the name of Life*.

Returning to the picture of the arcanum, we see that the man in it is in a *standing position*, which stresses his active posture. This will serve us as a hint for the title of the First Arcanum of the Tarot. Esoterists call it 'the Magician' (in Latin Magus), but in vulgar language some call it 'the Juggler': for us it is essentially **AN ACTIVE INDIVIDUAL**.

If you feel a burning desire to establish the so-called Theosophical Ternary of the basic units (which means that, in the Universe or Cosmos, you recognize just three elements, that is the Archetype, Man and Nature), then you may give the arcanum the triple titles of:

1. The **ACTIVE PART OF DIVINA**
THE ARCHETYPE — ESSENTIA — (GOD'S BEING)
2. The **ACTIVE POLE OF**
HUMANITY—MAN — VIR — (PERSONALITY)
3. NATURE'S NATURA (NATURE
ACTIVITY — NATURANS — IN ITSELF)

In this course we will first occupy ourselves with the meaning of the **MAN** of the First Arcanum, and will try to describe the constitution of his individuality in the realm of his activity.

First, in Man there is a great *binary* which attracts our attention. It is: **SPIRIT—MATTER**. Spiritually, Man is living in a world of ideas. On the other hand, he manifests himself in the material, physical world. Our first effort in our task of self-initiation will be just trying to neutralize this binary image.

But *what is it* that could bind together Spirit and matter, to offer a transition from the plane of ideas to that of manifested, material objects? The answer is:

A PLANE IN WHICH ENERGY DEFINES THE FORMS.

Here then is our ternary:

SPIRIT — ENERGY — MATTER
IDEAS — FORMS — MATERIAL OBJECTS

This transitional plane is called Astral, and the extreme poles Mental and Physical. The passing from the mental plane to the astral one is accomplished by a process of grouping and of arrangements, to sum up briefly—by a process of progressive condensation and formation of ideas according to the aforementioned great Law of the collective individuality.

Imagine a *general idea* of a polygon. Add to this the idea of evenness of its linear and angular elements and you will obtain a new conception of a regular polygon, much more compact than the first one. *So it is with the transition from the astral to the physical plane*. Fix a tin disc to a spindle. Its edge will not cut a diamond because it is too soft; but let the disc rotate at a very fast rate, which means an increase in its kinetic energy, or accumulation of some astral properties, and under such conditions its edge will cut through a diamond. As you may see, because of the condensation and accumulation of the astral, you were able to effect a change

in a purely physical thing, that is the hardness of the disc's edge. This means that the transition has been performed, even if only partially.

Concentrate strongly in a room with the desire to call a man (*subiectum*) from another, ordering him to come to you. Intense concentration leads to the condensation of the idea into an imaginary form. By making the effort with your imaginative power, that is *condensing the astral*, you may reach the *fulfilment* of your aim, which *belongs to the physical plane*. Movement from the astral has been transformed into movement on the physical plane. This is just the *realization of the transition*. Think deeply and in full inner peace about this, and you may understand the secret meaning of these deliberations as just given.

No doubt some people would like to argue, that in the *first example*, the disc already possessed the physical property of hardness, and by condensation of the astral we only augmented that hardness, while in the *second example* the magnetist was working, not only at concentrating and condensing the astral with his imagination, but was also directing his breathing according to the special methods valid for his purpose, and perhaps, in addition allowing himself to use a lightning-like rhythmical movement of his body. Yes! It is possible, but I would like to answer such questioners with an alchemical aphorism: 'IN ORDER TO CREATE GOLD ONE MUST HAVE GOLD.'

This is the law which works with the majority of processes for the *realization of things*. In material life we often take some ready-made realizations as our starting point. Then we act like a person who throws some more crystals into a saturated solution in order to accelerate its crystallization.

The overwhelming majority of magic operations possess such a characteristically wise chosen *starting point*.

So in the whole universe as well as in its every individual part we should try to discriminate—even though only approximately—between the realms of the three planes: *mental*, *astral* and *physical*, which are mutually interpenetrating and which we can also consider separately.

Accordingly, in *Man*, we will distinguish between three components: *Mental* (Mens), *Astral* (anima or soul also often called '*astrosome*') and finally, physical body (corpus).

When a man is occupied with intellectual work, we can say that his *mind and soul* are more active than his body. When some kind of sentimental life or pure imagination, active or passive prevails in him, we may consider that the *soul* is the acting principle, and so on.

We can accept that human spirit—mind, when manifesting itself, formed the soul, and that this soul, taking for a starting point on the physical plane some materialized elements provided by the parents, creates a physical body for itself, for an interior as well as an exterior life. We can accept that the soul supports the functions of that body according to plans prepared in advance.

That is what I wanted to explain in this lesson. It can be added, that nobody can forbid you to replace our schematic division of the Universe and Man alike—on three planes—with another conception, perhaps more

particularly by one in which our three planes may be divided into sub-planes. We will do this ourselves later or in this course.

The First Major Arcanum contains the idea of *Unity and Activity*.

‘All beings are in unity and are returning to that Unity,
which is their true aim.’

Unity comprises Unity, that is *Everything is contained in Everything*.

For those who are acquainted with Eastern conceptions, related to the idea of the First Arcanum of the Tarot, I can state, that the Vedantic idea of the Atman is very close to the Man (Adam-Kadmon) symbolized on the card of this arcanum. Do not forget the sign of infinity over the head of the Man. Look at his right (active) hand showing the Ultimate Goal, high above. To this arcanum belongs Raja-Yoga, as you probably sensed when you commenced to study this chapter.