

The Fool's Secret Journey

THE HIDDEN TAROT, THE ZODIAC, AND THE GODDESS

– A MAP OF DEATH AND REBIRTH –

by

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Part 3 – The Fool's Journey

The way in which you may approach what you want may be too long a way to suffice you before you are too late. – Rumi

[Those] who *really* amount to something in the initiatic order can be recognized by their extreme reluctance to theorize and argue. If these people discern a sincere aspiration in you, they will tell you only this: “This is the problem, and these are the means: go ahead.”¹

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FOOL'S TAROT

Originally the Trumps were not numbered at all. The true and absolute numbering of the Tarot is one of the great unsolved questions ...²

The Tarot trumps are extraordinary symbols that encompass an enormous range of meanings, both individually and as a set. Playing cards were common in Medieval Europe, but the exact origin of the Tarot trumps—the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana—is unknown. The Tarot was introduced into Europe around 1379, likely by the Sufis through Moorish Spain. Since then, they have gone through many versions and many artists, who may or may not have known the original components that each card was meant to symbolize, so we may or may not understand the original intent and significance of the trumps, either as a set of twenty-two images, or as individual archetypal symbols.

If we wish to recover their original meanings, we must attempt to trace modern decks back to the originals. Unfortunately, many of the earliest decks were lost or destroyed; some are undoubtedly completely unknown. The earliest known decks³ were painted for King Charles VI of France (died 1422) by Jacquemin Gringonneur. One version is the Marseilles deck; a similar deck was probably painted by Andrea Mantegna around 1450, of which several trumps are missing from the full twenty-two. But there is no guarantee these were the earliest decks, or even that they convey the original meaning of the twenty-two cards we today call “trumps,” a name which came from the word “triumph.”

A triumph is a parade of ancient origin. In ancient Rome, when a conquering general would return to the city, a triumph would

be arranged down Appian Way. The parade was organized from the lowest to the highest, starting with the captives and ending with the general himself. The organizing principle in this heroic triumph was that each participant trumped the one who came before, until all of the participants are trumped by the hero in his chariot.⁴

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the triumph was revived in Italy and spread across Europe to celebrate both religious and secular events such as weddings. It is argued by some Tarot researchers that the cards were developed to portray certain aspects of the triumph. The Fool came first with the lowest rank. The Magician triumphed over or trumped the Fool, and so on through the traditionally last card, the World. Even so, various decks had different numbers of trumps in differing orders.

But was the original purpose of the Tarot to portray a moral, religious or social parade? Might it be that assigning this meaning to the Tarot is a case of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*—after it, therefore because of it? In other words, perhaps the Tarot trumps were ordered and assigned meanings based on popular sentiments and practices that did not actually correspond to the original intent of the cards, which was kept hidden from popular view. Some authors speculate that the Tarot developed in Italy, in which case these traditional assignments might make sense. We will see next, though, that they originated elsewhere, so the idea of a triumph was later grafted onto these trumps, which may originally have had quite different meanings. Eventually, the cards were made into popular Renaissance card games. Much later they were used for divination, but again this might not have been their original intent.

We get further insight into the origins of the Tarot, and its form today from Idries Shah, who was the foremost proponent of Sufism in the West until his death in 1996:

The Tarot cards ... were introduced into the West in 1379 ... the game of cards, which comes from Saracenia and is called ... Naib. Naib is an Arabic word meaning “deputy,” and the material from which the Tarot cards were copied is still extant. It is “deputy” or substitute material, forming an allegory of the teachings of a Sufi master about certain cosmic influences upon humanity. This [material] is divided into four sections, called the *turuq* (four Ways), the word from which “Tarot” is undoubtedly derived ... The Tarot now known in the West had been influenced by a

Cabalistic and Judaizing process, designed to bring it into line with certain doctrines not implicit in the original. Superficial attempts to link these cards with those in use in Persia or China have not succeeded because the essential cipher element contained in the meanings of the suits and the trumps is still a Sufi property.⁵

It is amazing that few modern Tarot authors mention this. Instead they get swept up in more modern associations with the Hebrew alphabet, the Jewish Kabala and other more recent flotsam and jetsam that have been hooked on to the original Tarot images. Here, we are going to ignore all this and try to find the meanings the original Tarot archetypes were intended to convey.

We will return later in detail as to how the trumps might represent certain “cosmic influences” on humanity. For now, we will observe that if the trumps were not numbered originally, we cannot be certain their modern ordering is correct, or even if there might be more than one “correct” ordering. Robert Place tells us⁶ that most of the early Tarot decks were not only unnumbered but unlabeled as well. Only in the early sixteenth century did the manufacturer of the Marseilles trumps establish a numbering and add French titles to the cards. So all that is certain is that each trump contains an image (or sometimes different images in different decks) that is symbolic of something. The twenty-two cards may represent a process, or as it has turned out, many different processes, and even stories, depending on the use of the cards at a certain time, or (especially) the orientation of the interpreter.

Being archetypal symbols, though, each Tarot image will admit of different interpretations, that being the nature of symbols. It is easy for Place, for example, to see a moral interpretation of the Marseilles sequence, where each card beginning with the lowly Fool “trumps” the next card in line. In this view, the standard sequence represents the triumph of virtue over vice. Another author, Margaret Starbird in her excellent book *The Woman in the Alabaster Jar*⁷, using the same early decks, sees a sequence of heretical symbols that encode the abuses of the Medieval Church, and an inner, hidden tradition of the Lost Bride and the Holy Grail. Later, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Tarot was integrated into the Kabala, Jewish mysticism. The cards were linked with the Hebrew alphabet, giving us the milieu, albeit a confused and contradictory one, that we find in most Tarot commentaries since then. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, for

example, linked the trumps not only with the Hebrew letters, but also with the paths on their version of the Tree of Life.

Which interpretation is the correct one? They all are partially correct. Such is the nature of universal symbols. But they all follow the order established for the early Marseilles deck, which as we have seen, was arbitrarily based on a hierarchical parade order. Since no author seems to know where the Tarot trumps originated (other than perhaps Idries Shah), no one can say the Marseilles order was the preferred or even intended order. What I am suggesting is that if we abandon the assumption of one "correct" order we might see if other orderings suggest or support other uses and interpretations for the trumps. As we will see shortly, there is indeed another interpretation, one which may be much closer to the original intent of the Sufis who introduced the cards into Europe in the first place.

It is certain that some of the trumps concealed hidden meanings so as not to give away too many secrets to the Inquisitorial Church that flourished at the time they were introduced into Europe; certainly the meaning of many of the cards has been veiled or altered during most of their existence. This may, in fact, be one reason the trumps were ordered as in the Marseilles and all subsequent decks: to conceal precisely these meanings. If the Church thought the cards were about popular parades, they would not ban them, and would never suspect their real meanings. In addition, the symbols and meanings now commonly attributed to each of the cards may be misleading or even incorrect. Idries Shah adds:

The pack, as it stands today, is only partially correct, because there have been transpositions of the significances of some of the *atouts*, the trumps or emblematic figures of the pack. This error has been caused by a mistranslation from Arabic of certain words, due to literal conversion into a different culture system. Another factor may be substitution of one picture for another one. This is not a subject upon which I may be much more explicit. Temperance is incorrectly portrayed and interpreted; so is the fifteenth trump [The Devil]; the meaning of the sixteenth trump [The Tower] is a classic case of misunderstanding of a word; the twentieth [Judgment] is wrongly emphasized. Many of the attributions, however, are still in use among the Sufis, though in the West the essential associations with Sufi texts have been lost.⁸

Regarding the sequence of the modern cards, we can consider the lowly Fool as an example. Should the Fool be assigned a number? Is its number properly zero? Some decks give it no number at all. Others place it next to last, just before the World card. Where exactly should this card be placed among the other twenty-one cards, if anywhere? As another example, Alistair Crowley interchanged the trumps Strength and Justice, saying the sequence then current was wrong. Clearly, at least some resequencing has happened.

Crowley leads us further back to the founders of the Order of the Golden Dawn, A.E. Waite and Macgregor Mathers who lived over a century ago. The Waite/Rider deck, painted by Pamela Coleman Smith, has been the most popular deck for nearly a century, but its well-known Waite disguised many elements as they were considered proprietary secrets of his Order. The Golden Dawn developed a complex system that, in addition to the Tarot, included the Hebrew alphabet, the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, and the signs of the Zodiac. Since then, Crowley, Paul Foster Case and many others have augmented the Golden Dawn Tarot in various ways. There are dozens of new decks that have abandoned, altered or “reinvented” the original symbolism in attempts to popularize the Tarot, especially for divination. Since we will not be interested in divination, and wish to rediscover something new about the *original* Tarot, these newer, non-traditional decks will not be of any use to us. So let us return to the issue of the numbering of the original cards.

What if the numbering sequence Waite adopted, which was nearly the same as the Marseilles deck, was incorrect? Or suppose there are other different, equally valid, sequences that yield different insights and truths? If the Tarot trumps were merely signs—marks that signify a single meaning, like traffic signs—then possibly there would be one preferred ordering. But the trumps are *symbols*, which admit of many different meanings simultaneously, none more “correct” than the others. So we might expect that different orderings are possible, and none would necessarily be the primary one. A different ordering might, though, reveal new or differently emphasized meanings for the Tarot symbols.

Recently, a completely different ordering of the trumps was suggested by Don Miguel Ruiz. In his book *Beyond Fear*, he briefly mentions a different ordering; in fact, he divides the trumps into several different groups, leaving the cards ordered but unnumbered. Amazingly, although his scheme is given in the context of the ancient Toltecs of Mexico and Central

America, it describes and illustrates the Gnostic and Alchemical processes of initiation taught in Western Mystery schools for at least the last 2500 years. I have derived a new ordering similar to this one in many ways that gives the Tarot cards an entirely new dimension and meaning that is either missing or only fragmentary in the traditional numbering.

As we proceed, the usual ordering of the trumps must be completely set aside, although many of the fundamental meanings of each trump remains, and are, in fact, clarified by this new arrangement. From a few of the cards, though, as well as from the deck as a whole, entirely new meanings emerge. To help us see beyond the goals of any one Tarot author, especially A. E. Waite, a familiarity with different decks helps uncover the full meaning of each trump, as each author and artist necessarily chose certain elements for each card, and left out others. The Marseilles deck, in particular, although quite plain, retains some of the earliest images and so is quite valuable. The Crowley deck, on the other hand, is nearly useless for our purposes, as it incorporates too many of his personal idiosyncrasies and weaknesses—especially of the sexual and pharmaceutical kind—to be of much value.

The Symbolism of the Images

The secret language is a language of pictures.⁹

These days, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of Tarot decks, each with a theme or emphasis the designer wishes to present. Since the Tarot trumps represent universal, archetypal ideas, there are many different interpretations of each archetype which are usually complementary and not conflicting. So the natural question arises, which aspect of each archetype best illustrates the stages of the Fool's journey? Finally, is there one Tarot deck that contains the most pertinent images?

For many years I used the Waite/Rider/Smith deck to the exclusion of all others. Back then, my major goal was divination, which I took seriously for a while in attempts to answer questions about my life situation at the time. Looking back now, this may have been because almost all the available books on Tarot also used this deck. One alternative was the Paul Foster Case deck, but the differences between these two are minor. In both cases, one has to buy into the Golden Dawn attributions of each of the cards derived by cross-breeding the Tarot with the Jewish Kabala, a marriage I

was never comfortable with. In this system, each major trump is matched with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet and the suits of the minor cards are matched with the ancient elements Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Finally, the whole edifice was erected on the Kabalistic Tree of Life. To each path of the tree was attributed a Tarot trump, there being twenty-two of each. These attributions served to illuminate the meanings of each of the cards as the Golden Dawn saw them. Or at least that was the theory, which had originated with Eliphas Levi in the mid-1800s, who thought that the Tarot was created by Jewish Kabalists.¹⁰ Had this been the case, the Hebrew letter associations might be warranted, but as we have seen, the Tarot was most likely created by the Sufis. Further, there are several versions of the Tree of Life, some with more or less than ten Sephiroth and some with more or less than twenty-two connecting paths. Which version is correct?

The lesson for me here was that none of them were absolutely correct for all purposes, even though all of them were partially correct. In my mind there were always inconsistencies and contradictions among the twenty-two cards that left me feeling that many of the attributions and assigned meanings were forced to fit an external system, like the Kabala and the esoteric meanings of the planets. (Seven or nine? Or now eight?).

From the start the Golden Dawn system seemed arbitrary and forced. Some parts seemed to make sense, but others were a stretch—and even seemed to be so for the commentators. But as true archetypal symbols, the Tarot trumps are infinitely mutable and adaptable; they always yield some aspect of their full meaning however they are used. The impression never left me, however, that although much seemed correct in the Waite-Smith deck, much seemed incorrect.

For the Fool's Journey, I studied several decks, but kept coming back to the older Marseilles deck, from which Levi and then the Golden Dawn designed their decks. Many authors state that the Marseilles deck is merely exoteric—consisting only of mundane meanings, while the Waite-Smith deck is esoteric, in which many secret and inner meanings are contained or concealed. This idea, which served to boost the reputation of (and enrollment in) the Golden Dawn and its various offshoots, turns out not to be true. The decks are more similar than different, and where the same archetype is depicted differently, that difference is instructive. Only when the intent of each archetype is discovered, in the context of a personal, spiritual journey, can the intent of each card become clear.

In the West, after centuries of suppression and secrecy, any metaphysical system besides the Church's own became garbled and fragmentary. Every traditional culture lost some of its spiritual symbolism. At times, even the symbols that survived sometimes lost the essence of their meaning, at least to casual eyes. On the other hand, perhaps the missing or scrambled symbolism was initiated on purpose to lead the unready down the wrong paths. This was clearly the case with alchemy, where the same symbols, such as sulfur or mercury, for example, had different meanings in different contexts, or where the exact same concept was denoted by many different symbols. Such resulting confusion appears many times on the same written page of nearly every alchemical treatise; the alchemists themselves admitted that only one who already possessed the keys to the symbolism could understand the detailed alchemical descriptions.

As an example, consider the idea of the sun. The sun has many physical attributes which have filled many astrophysics books and scientific papers. The NASA satellite SOHO (Solar and Heliospheric Observatory) was put into orbit just to study the sun and solar phenomenon. But this doesn't begin to cover ideas, past and present, that have been associated with and have constellated around the Sun. There are many solar gods in mythologies from around the world. In Greek myths, both Apollo and Hercules were considered solar gods. It is the Sun that lights and heats our world; there would be no life as we know it on Earth without the Sun.

The Genesis of the Fool's Tarot

The view presented here is that the twenty-two cards of the Tarot Major Arcana together were an artifact injected into Medieval Europe, probably by Moorish Sufis, to keep alive certain traditional teachings that had by then been completely lost due to the ravishes of the Black Death, from which Europe was just recovering in the 1380's, or the nearly as destructive depredations of the Catholic Church in its Inquisitorial zeal to suppress all heresy, of which the Tarot material would surely be at the top of their list were its true meaning known. The Sufi's intent was to hide, or rather disguise, a symbolic journey of the utmost—yet in those days dangerously heretical—importance.

Symbols, being universal and timeless, retain their meanings even when the people who use them quite publicly, as the Tarot symbols were used in Italian and French “triumphs,” have no knowledge of these meanings.

The people thus preserve, without understanding them, the debris of ancient traditions sometimes even reaching back to a past too remote to be determined and which is therefore consigned to the obscure domain of ‘prehistory’ [This], in short, is the only way to save what can, at least in some measure, be saved; and, at the same time, the natural incomprehension of the masses is a sufficient guarantee that whatever possesses an esoteric character will not be despoiled in the process but will remain as a sort of witness to the past for those in later times who may be capable of understanding it.¹¹

So we can see that certain important, even primary, meanings of a set of symbols such as the Tarot cards may remain hidden for a very long time, even 700 years up to the present day, if it is only now we are capable of understanding them and using them correctly without fear for our very lives. Further, symbols are not arbitrary, nor are they invented, certainly not by any agency at the merely human level. The central meanings remain intact even if the symbols are obscured, or if “pointless details” are introduced that are designed to mislead the “profane” or, in this case, the Church.

Archetypal symbols are also universal. They can pop up in very unexpected places, as we’ll see next.

The Tarot of Don Miguel Ruiz

If the accepted sequence of the Tarot trumps isn’t the original one, how might one discover it? By looking outside the reach of the Church where so much knowledge was not lost or suppressed.

I discovered the clues for a new Tarot sequence from two sources. First was my dissatisfaction with the disjointed and confused meanings I had found in the traditional Tarot sequence. The progression from one card to the next by the familiar numbering made no coherent sense and seemed forced at best, at least on the level of a journey that I was seeking to understand. If, as now seems likely, the traditional sequence derived from medieval morality pageants, this was quite different from a depiction of a spiritual journey, which I felt was their original purpose, especially if, as I believed, the cards had a Sufi origin. Many other authors on the Tarot apparently felt the same, for there are many ways the twenty-two trumps have been organized to try to make better sense of the inner meanings of these cards; rarely did two authors have exactly the same arrangement,

much less the same interpretation. None of these, including placing the trumps on the paths of the Tree of Life, seemed to have unlocked the inner meanings I was seeking.

The second clue that sent me in the right direction came from an unexpected source. In *Beyond Fear*, Don Miguel Ruiz gave brief mention of a different way of arranging the Tarot trumps that was inspired from a lucid dream, whereby he connected the Tarot trumps with *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* and the Avenue of Death at Teotihuacán, where he traveled with students as a method of teaching Toltec wisdom.

Since this book is germane to our interest in the Fool and the world we all find ourselves in, it will be useful to look briefly at what Don Miguel has to say about fear and what he calls The Mastery of Love. Don Miguel Ruiz

was born into a family of healers in rural Mexico and later attended medical school and taught and practiced as a surgeon. He rediscovered the ancient teachings of his youth, following his own near-death experience. A *nagual* in the Toltec tradition, he lectures, holds workshops, and leads groups on transformative journeys to Teotihuacán, in Mexico. His works include the *New York Times* best seller *The Four Agreements* and *The Mastery of Love*.¹²

According to Don Miguel, we live in a world bereft of peace, harmony and inner spiritual communication—a world of illusion, misery and suffering. In short, he says we live in Hell. His book *The Four Agreements* is a good place to start understanding the predicament each of us share in the world. The first steps toward recovering Heaven on Earth are the four agreements themselves:

1. Be impeccable with your word.
2. Don't take anything personally.
3. Don't make assumptions.
4. Always do your best.

It is easy to underestimate the depth of our predicament, or to deny it altogether. We don't wish to acknowledge many of the unpleasant facts of our existence. Reading the first twenty pages of *The Four Agreements* over and over, with one's own life in mind, helps us see clearly the reality of our lives and the lives of others. Don Miguel says,

If we compare the dream of human society with the description of hell that religions all around the world have promulgated, we find they are exactly the same. Religions say that hell is a place of punishment, a place of fear, pain, and suffering, a place where the fire burns you. Fire is generated by emotions that come from fear. Whenever we feel the emotions of anger, jealousy, envy or hate, we experience a fire burning within us. We are living in a dream of hell.¹³

In the later book *Beyond Fear*, he teaches

... the concept that earthly life is hell. Hell is the combined dream that all humans share. Both individual and collective dreams are actually nightmares. Every individual has a dream of reality, and likewise, so does each family, each community, city, state, nation and the whole of humanity. We all contribute to the dream that is characterized by fear.¹⁴

Don Miguel is not the only one who has talked about this, of course. This was the fundamental idea of the Christian Gnostics and the Cathars during the early Middle Ages, before they were forcibly suppressed by the Catholic Church. Indeed, Gnosticism predates Christianity by many centuries. In the same vein, in the last century, Gurdjieff talked about an Evil Magician, who is not God, but who runs the universe, creating a hell for us, and about how one might alter one's consciousness to escape his influence. Such a condition is also the central tenet of the Sufi Way, of genuine alchemy, and of Don Juan Matus, another Toltec *nagual* Carlos Castaneda wrote about extensively. In certain Christian traditions, it was also the central teaching of Jesus before it was distorted by translators and "clarifiers"—the Roman Catholic Church. The essence of all this is that to escape this hell, the personality and all its mental constructs has to literally die and be born again with entirely new perceptual facilities to enter the kingdom of heaven, which is different terminology for the same concept. Our purpose as human beings is to transform ourselves from a life in hell to one in heaven, where we are connected to and aware of the spirit of the universe.

Most recently, the popular movie *The Matrix* has repeated the same basic idea once again: we are living in a dream, an illusion, and very little of what we believe to be true and important really *is* true or important. We are trapped and controlled in ways we do not see and can hardly comprehend. We do not believe any of this can be so, unless, it seems, our suspicions

become aroused by personal events that shock us into wider realizations of ourselves and our world. Many more of us have had these shocks than admit it, because their implications are too disturbing: it is not comfortable to realize that all one's life has been a lie, or has missed the point, and that one must fundamentally change in response. Like the character Cypher in the movie, we would rather not know about the Dream or the Matrix; we'd rather be as happy as we can until the end.

However, there are some of us who do wish to escape. (How Foolish!) We would like a road map, or a set of procedures that will aid us in the process of waking up. Short of becoming a student of Don Miguel's or Don Juan's or of a Sufi master, the Tarot trumps in a layout similar to the one Don Miguel describes can be of great help, even though the exact order of the cards he described turned out to be incorrect, at least for our purposes here. Nevertheless, his arrangement was a trigger and a guidepost for me. In the next section, we'll look at how the operational Fool's Tarot layout came to be. Then we'll look at the new relations among the cards the layout reveals, and the light it sheds on escaping the dream and the hell in which we live.

Resequencing The Tarot Trumps

As described in *Beyond Fear*¹⁵, Don Miguel learned about *The Book of Thoth* in an eight-hour trance he experienced during his apprenticeship. According to Don Miguel, this book, also called *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, was the source for the present-day Tarot card decks, none of which, according to Don Miguel, are completely accurate. In this, he is in agreement with Idries Shah and the Sufis. For example, in his book Don Miguel changes the cards Judgment to Resurrection, World to Universe, and Strength to Courage.

Mary Carroll Nelson, who co-wrote the book with Don Miguel, relates the story as follows:

The Tarot illustrates *Genesis*, and by arranging the cards in a certain order, one can see a similar structure to that of the Avenue of Death at Teotihuacán, which is the source of Toltec wisdom. You can try this arrangement yourself:

FIRST ROW

The World (Universe)

SECOND ROW	The Magician
THIRD ROW	The High Priest The Hierophant (Adam and Eve)
FOURTH ROW	The Emperor The Lovers (Paradise) The Hermit
FIFTH ROW	The Empress The Chariot Temperance Death
SIXTH ROW	Strength (Courage) Judgment (Resurrection) Justice
SEVENTH ROW	The Star The Moon
EIGHTH ROW	The Sun
NINTH ROW	The Fool

Miguel ... says the Fool is Everyman dreaming that he does not know where he is going, while carrying all his attachments in his hobo bag. But, in his hand, he also carries the lotus of divine consciousness.

Outside the Avenue of Death, four cards represent hell. These are the Devil, the Tower, the Wheel of Life and the Hanged Man. Inside the Avenue, the Sun is the archetype of perfection as in Ra, Horus, Hermes, the Christ, Krishna. Caught within the pattern are four cards that represent the Archangels. Ariel is the Lovers, and this stands for Fire. Temperance is for Raphael and Earth. The Chariot is both Michael the Warrior and Water. The Messenger is Gabriel and also Air. If the pattern is looked upon as a glyph, it becomes the Eye of Ra, which is the doorway to Infinity or the Doorway to God. The outer row alone is the double snake of Teotihuacán.¹⁶

This is all that is said about the Tarot in this book, but it gave me the valuable clue that all twenty-two cards need not be fit into a single sequence; Don Miguel split off four cards that represent hell, and another four which he said represent the archangels. He regarded the four “hell” cards as entirely

separate from the rest, and this was the clue I had been looking for.

I laid out the cards as indicated, keeping the four “hell” cards separate. The other cards formed a diamond shape, or, as I preferred to see them, the shape of an oval or an eye, which I soon began thinking of as our third eye, the opening of which according to many esoteric traditions meant spiritual awakening. If the Fool was to traverse these cards in some sort of experiential way, he or she would certainly have an awakening. In fact, the shape of this “eye” exactly corresponds to the “I” that undertakes the journey.

I drew these cards over and over on large pieces of poster board and worked with them for many months, trying different arrangements in an attempt to integrate their meanings into a coherent whole. I soon realized that the Fool had to be detached from the eye layout. Before his journey begins he belongs with the four “hell” cards; his determination to escape from their influence is a choice. For hell is where most of humankind—the group I call the Many—reside. As I will explain in greater detail below, at this point we are each represented by the Hanging Man, one of the four hell cards. Only by conscious choice do we take up the role of Fool and begin our journey.

In a similar manner, I separated the World or Universe card from the others. Although in a certain way it permeates the entire layout, and so properly belongs at the center of the eye, it appears at the far right of the map as the Fool's final transformation. It represents the culmination of the journey. One of the mysteries of this card is that it “wraps around” the map and overlays the Hanged Man; this is a secret of the Tarot trumps even Waite didn't veil; the position of the limbs of the Hanged Man, when turned upside down, is congruent with the figure on the World card. The Hanged Man is transformed into a being that is aware of, and lives in, the spiritual domain represented by the World card. In other words, the journey of the Fool transforms ordinary men or women into spiritual beings, leaving the realm of hell behind. By placing the World card at the end of the layout, I hoped to express the idea that it is present, but latent, in the outer world. In fact, it is from the World archetype as source that MouraviEFF's “B” influences emanate, and it is these influences that invite the Fool to embark toward that source. In so doing, the spiritual realms are consciously made manifest what in our ordinary world is only latent.

I now had four groups of cards: The Fool, The World, the four “hell” cards (The Hanging Man, The Tower, The Wheel of Life and Death, and The Devil), and the remaining sixteen cards that formed the eye. In this

latter group, I soon also separated the twelve cards on the perimeter from the four so-called “archangel” cards in the interior. This last step would provide a new clue to unlocking the secrets of the Fool’s journey. It would also prove to be a different, but related, path from the one Don Miguel had described.

I have no first-hand Toltec training and have never been to Teotihuacán. So from this point on I make no assumption that the Fool’s Journey, as expressed in the substantially different Tarot layout I have derived, has any connection to Toltec wisdom or to Don Miguel’s teachings. They are related paths to the same end, perhaps, but not identical paths. How Don Miguel may interpret each card will surely differ from my interpretation, yet his isolation of the four “hell” cards succinctly describes the world we find ourselves in. We will look at my own view of these cards in the next sections. For now, to continue the story, I needed to discover the relations among the cards in the eye.

Absent knowledge of a Toltec interpretation, I tried to relate this layout of the eye to other systems I was familiar with. I first concentrated on the twelve cards around the perimeter. An interesting problem in esoteric studies is reconciling the number twelve with the number seven. There are twelve months in a year, twelve signs of the Zodiac, Jesus was said to have twelve disciples, and twelve knights sat at Arthur’s Round Table. There are seven days of the week, seven planets visible to the ancients (counting the Sun and Moon), and so on. How could twelve and seven be reconciled geometrically? The twelve perimeter cards neatly reconciles the two numbers, because, as is apparent, there are seven columns (and seven rows) in the figure. Since the figure was to represent a journey from left to right across the figure, each column would represent one stage of the journey. After much fiddling, I arrived at a name for each stage in the journey. These are indicated at the bottom of the map, and we’ll discuss each in turn.

I discovered much more. Many of the cards have traditional associations with signs of the Zodiac. For example, Justice equates with Libra, Strength with Leo, and Death with Capricorn. I made tentative assignments to the twelve perimeter cards and examined what I had so far. Some assignments seemed correct; some seemed unsatisfactory.

I worked with this layout for months, trying to uncover a meaningful sequence that would describe the journey I was seeking. Parts of the diagram made sense, but other parts did not. One glaring problem was that the sequence of the cards around the perimeter did not match the sequence

of the Zodiac in the sky. These problems became so acute I decided to rearrange the cards to match the Zodiac, at the risk of drastically modifying Don Miguel's sequence. By making these changes, however, I was able to unlock the remaining secrets of the Fool's journey, which was my goal. At first, I was dismayed; disorder had apparently increased. What, for example, was The Empress of summertime doing in the same stage with Death? I had assigned Scorpio to this card for reasons that seemed compelling, so I was loathe to switch her around again just because I didn't immediately understand her placement. This was a key decision for me, because in finally understanding The Empress and Death in these positions, I was able to make sense of the journey as a whole. In a significant sense, these two cards, correctly understood, are the two most important cards of the twenty-two.

I also spent a great deal of time with the four central cards: Temperance, Judgement (as it is traditionally spelled with the central "e"), The Chariot and The Lovers. I found these to be among the most complex individually and in their relationships with the cards that surround them. I didn't find the attributions of these cards to the archangels too helpful. Certainly Gabriel and his horn would be associated with the figure with the horn on the Judgement card (which I have renamed Awakening). The others archangels are less-known, and especially in the case of Michael, any original meanings have by now been diluted by conflicting use. In a word, archangels as archetypes, aren't as relevant in modern times as they were in the Middle Ages, so I have omitted them in my interpretation.

The Zodiac and Galactic Alignment

I now had two sets of twelve archetypal symbols that I was attempting to pair up with each other: twelve Tarot trumps and twelve Zodiacal signs. I had gone through several iterations, swapping the cards around attempting to find twelve matches, each with a good "fit." The pairings I now had are shown in Table 1. The question was, how did I know these were the right pairings? I had not yet reached the depths of meaning in many of the symbols; too many of the associations just seemed arbitrary. Gemini and The Sun, for starters. The physical Sun does not belong in such a table; The Sun's apparent path as seen from Earth marches through each sign during the course of a year. But the Sun card didn't represent the physical Sun—the card is much more subtle than that, so I would have to make this assignment

tentatively until I could either justify it or disprove it. The other glaring problem was pairing The Empress with Scorpio—a scorpion in most interpretations. First The Empress was no longer alongside The Emperor. Was this important? It seemed to be an error. But worse, the beautiful symbol of summertime, flowers and the beauty of the natural world was somehow associated with scorpions? I remembered a family vacation to Florida when I was a boy. We were visiting some friends of my parents and the man took us to his garage to show us a long row of scorpions he had killed over the years and nailed up to a rafter in order of increasing size—a truly vivid picture I couldn't square now with The Empress. There were other problems I thought I saw with these pairings—and even with the idea of pairing them

Zodiacal Signs	Tarot Trumps
Gemini	The Sun
Taurus	The Hierophant
Cancer	The Moon
Aries	The Emperor
Leo	Strength
Pisces	The Hermit
Virgo	The High Priestess
Aquarius	The Star
Libra	Justice
Capricorn	Death
Scorpio	The Empress
Sagittarius	The Magician

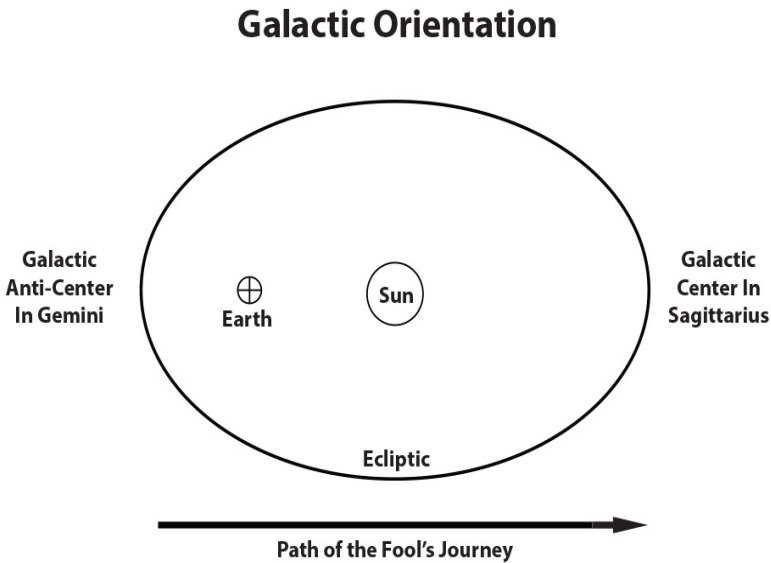
together at all—so I realized I needed something else to confirm that I either was or wasn't on the right track. Wasn't there some third system I could find to orient these twenty-four symbols so as to provide independent justification for my arrangement?

There was.

Our Solar System has a definite orientation in our galaxy, the Milky Way. The *ecliptic* is the name of the Sun's apparent path through the stars and constellations during a year. The Zodiac is the set of twelve constellations through which the ecliptic passes. It happens that one particular point on the ecliptic passes very nearly through a line between the Earth and the exact center of the galaxy. This point is in Sagittarius. (As an aside, this is a remarkable fact in itself; the Earth's orbit could have any random orientation to the galactic center, but it doesn't. Whether this is happenstance is a topic for another day.¹⁷) In other words, on the Winter Solstice, December 21 or 22, the Earth, the Sun and the galactic center are in a

straight line.

If you look at the map of the Fool's Journey, and superimpose the Solar System and Galaxy on it, with our vantage point on the Earth at the center of the diagram, a line from the diagram's center through Sagittarius on the right side would run to the galaxy's center. In fact, the figure of Sagittarius is a centaur, half man and half horse. But this centaur is also an archer whose arrow points to the center of the galaxy. Our map is now oriented accurately with the actual stars of the zodiacal constellations in the larger galaxy. So here was a confirmation that I was on the right track, but it wasn't the only one. In fact, more seemed to tumble out everywhere I looked.



If a line through Sagittarius points to the galactic center, then extending the line in the other direction points to the galactic anti-center: through Gemini. Therefore, since the Fool's journey is across the diagram from left to right (as will become clear as we proceed), it is also a symbolic journey from the cold depths of intergalactic space to the bright galactic center. This is an exact parallel to the journey we are describing: one from the darkness of spiritual isolation to the loving, bright spiritual heart of our existence.

There were still problems with this arrangement, although I felt I was

getting closer. One apparent problem was the position of the Sun card. Although this card doesn't directly represent the physical sun, here it was on the left side of the diagram, far from the central brilliance of the galactic center with its millions of stars very near each other; there would be no dark nights on a planet located there. We will see, though, that this enigma will resolve itself beautifully as we learn more about the journey itself and what it means. To look ahead briefly, the end of the journey involves a return to the starting place, which is a chance for the Fool who has successfully completed the journey—or anyone who completes a substantial part of it—to return to the outer world with a *sunny* “lightness” of being that wasn't there before.

There is other traditional evidence that Gemini and Sagittarius are two symbolic portals. Gemini represents the Summer Solstice and Sagittarius the Winter Solstice. The word “solstice” means stopping point, more especially, the points when the Sun stands still. As winter approaches the Sun rises lower in the sky each day until December 21 when it sensibly stops its descent for about three days, which are the shortest days of the year. It then begins to rise higher in the sky each day for the next three months until the Summer Solstice in June—the longest day of the year. A stopping place is a place to get on or off a journey. According to René Guénon, the Summer Solstice corresponds with the “door of men,” and the Winter Solstice with the “door of the gods.”¹⁸

The Fool's journey had now gained a cosmic association, if not a cosmic significance, but there were two more discoveries that would convince me that I had indeed found a valid map of spiritual development. The first involved the figure of the Fool itself; the second would resolve the Empress-Scorpio problem.

The Galactic Fool

Today the Fool is represented as the joker in an ordinary deck of playing cards. Formerly, though, in the Middle Ages, he was the court jester. His other roles were sometimes a juggler, minstrel, bard or other type of performer. An archaic word for him is a *droll*, meaning a pleasant rascal, a jester again, or a prankster. There was a more serious side, however, since it was only the king's official jester—in all of his court—who could say what he really thought to the king's face. In this sense he was often the monarch's most useful adviser. He was referred to as a licensed fool

who could ridicule and insult everyone, speak in riddles, and act mad. His *madness* was his cover, so to speak. The fool was often the only person from whom the monarch could get a straight or honest answer; he had no rank, therefore he could afford to lose it.

Following the etymology of the word *jester* we find the related early French word *jongleur*, which comes from the Latin word *joculator*, which again means Court Fool. Now it is curious that an ancient manuscript illustrates a sky group in the constellation Sagittarius called *Joculator*.¹⁹ But we are here describing a journey taken by a Fool that begins in Gemini and ends in Sagittarius, the exact spot where a star formation exists that is called Fool in Latin! The stars and galaxy in the “heavens” exactly echo the path of a spiritual journey here “below.”

Perhaps this is just a coincidence. A little joke. A cosmic pun. An enigma that transcends logic.

Perhaps.

The Empress Is Revealed

I was now comfortable with most of the twelve correspondences in Table 1 between the twelve trumps and the signs of the Zodiac. Except The Empress and Scorpio. Also, I was vaguely uncomfortable with the meaning of the journey as a whole. What did it *mean*, in practical terms? What was it a journey toward? What, exactly, happened to you on this journey?

At some point I again picked up Margaret Starbird's book *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* to research some now-forgotten detail, when I happened upon her reproduction of Georges de la Tour's *The Penitent Magdalen*. (There is a reproduction of this painting in Chapter 19.) A beautiful woman is sitting with a human skull in her lap. The essential element of the painting, however, is that she is pregnant. Suddenly I saw not only the connection between The Empress—for she and the Magdalene in this painting depict the same archetype—and Scorpio, but I also saw the meaning of the entire journey of the Fool and the transformation that is required of him or her before it is over.

The Empress is pregnant.

I already knew an essential part of the Fool had to die on this journey and then be reborn as a transformed being, but here de la Tour had drawn an exact picture of the moment just before that rebirth. The seated Magdalene holds the skull of the “deceased” Fool on her lap, juxtaposed with the

soon to be reborn—and transformed—Fool still in her womb. The position of The Empress/Mary Magdalene in the map depicted the context of it: what had to occur before such a birth was possible, and what necessarily had to occur once it was accomplished.

The idea of such a transformation is foreign to us moderns, but it wasn't always so. To see this strange and unfamiliar picture in its entirety needs a map. We must stand back and view the journey as a process with several stages. The map of the Fool's journey does exactly that, and only when I discovered that the Empress figure was pregnant did I see the whole integral picture. Researching Scorpio in more depth I found the symbol has two levels. One lower level indeed depicts a scorpion, but there is a higher, less-well-known level which has a phoenix or equivalent eagle as a symbol. The phoenix bird dies in fire and is reborn from its own ashes; the fool dies and is also reborn. In fact, the scorpion itself has a secret to reveal: in the sky, the stars that form its tail point at the galactic center in the next sign, Sagittarius. Associated with that sign is The Magician who represents the transformed Fool.

I had finally achieved an integrated, coherent picture of the Tarot trumps that clearly portrays the ancient journey of spiritual transformation stage by stage.

This book describes this journey of transformation in detail. Deconstructing the symbols of the Tarot trumps and the Zodiacal signs allows us to reconstruct this transformational journey step by step. Since these symbols are all archetypes, we will be able to trace the same universal journey in different traditions. We will pick two such traditions to help us keep our bearings: Western Alchemy and Eastern Kundalini Yoga, two different paths that lead to the same destination (keeping in mind that Sufic knowledge subtends both traditions). The terminologies may differ, but at the deepest level, all true paths are the same path. Such triangulation is the final means whereby we can validate that the Fool's journey is indeed one of them.

A Note on the Trump Names

I have changed several of the card titles to better bring out their esoteric meanings and to make the more obscure names from former times more familiar and useful to modern readers. Thus The Hanged Man becomes The Hanging Man to emphasize our present, ongoing state—which we can

change—rather than The Hanged Man, which implies some permanently established state which we cannot change. Judgement becomes Awakening, which is not nearly as misleading. For other cards I will suggest synonyms that help denote their full meanings. For example, Strength and Courage both apply to that card, as it has a dual aspect.

An early blind in the Tarot deck was the card called Temperance. At first I modified this to Tempering to indicate a process that pertains to the journey, but finally settled on Transference which best expresses the function of this card from the Fool's point of view.

In this analysis, nearly all of the cards are emphasized differently than their traditional interpretations, especially in books of Tarot divination. Here, we are not concerned with how someone should react to a situation, but rather by what stages a human being may be transformed into a spiritual being. For it is not the Fool's business to react to situations, but to ultimately manufacture them proactively. Being infinitely flexible symbols, the Tarot archetypal images admit of different interpretations for different situations; seeing how they describe and guide the Fool on his or her journey is not difficult to discern once an accurate sequence and set of relationships among the cards has been made.

We're now ready to look at an overview of the entire journey and so introduce each of the Tarot trumps in turn.

ENDNOTES

Part 3 - The Fool's Journey

1. Julius Evola and the Ur Group, *Introduction to Magic*, p. 28.

Chapter 9 – Introduction to the Fool's Tarot

2. Tyson, *New Millennium Magic*, p. 155.
3. Certain esoteric decks from this period may exist privately for various kinds of work.
4. Robert M. Place, *The Tarot: History, Symbolism and Divination*, p. 109.
5. Shah, *The Sufis*, p. 449
6. Place, Robert M., p. 6.
7. Starbird, Margaret, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar*.
8. Shah, *The Sufis*, p. 449
9. Mark Hedsel, *The Zelator*, p. 52.
10. Place, Robert M., p. 72.
11. René Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred Science*, p. 24ff.
12. From the back cover of *Beyond Fear* by Mary Carroll Nelson with Don Miguel Ruiz.
13. Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*, p. 14.
14. Nelson, *Beyond Fear*, p. 23.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 14ff.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.
17. See my book *The Universe Is Fake (and what to do about it)* for much more on this topic.
18. René Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred Science*, p. 129.
19. Richard Allen, *Star Names*, p. 353.