

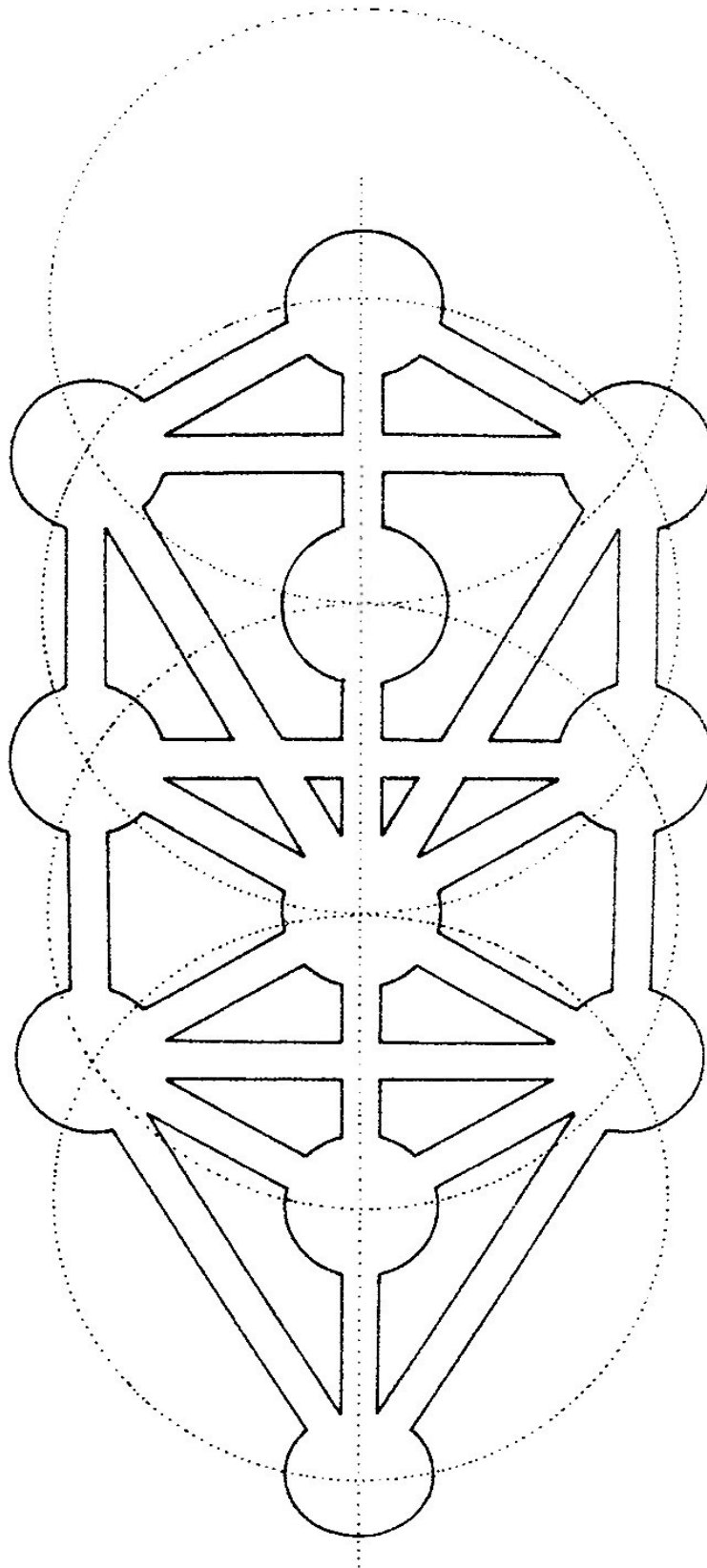
Reading Tarot & Tree of Life



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Cover: The Fool, Justice, The Hermit, Temperance, The Hanged Man, The Moon. From the *Estensi Tarot*, c. 1470.



Tree of Life Diagram

INTRODUCTION

The Tree of Life is a fundamental widespread archetype in many myths, religions and philosophies of the world.

The modern form of the Tree diagram and its system of knowledge originated in the Judaic-Qabalistic religious and mystic tradition around the 12th century, and was further refined in the following centuries.

The Tree of Life can be viewed as a matrix on which Tarot grows: its 'fruits' as *Spheres* with *Minor Arcana*, and its 'branches' as *Paths* with *Major Arcana*.

Tarot and Tree of Life are *universal* symbols of man and the universe, free from dogmas and principles of religion, alchemy, astrology, etc.

Cosmic forces are constantly streaming through nature and mankind. Tarot and Tree of Life are intermediaries for understanding and implementing these forces. They can be employed by means of reading and as memory device.

The first Tarots (*Tarocchi*) appeared in Renaissance Northern Italy in the early 1400s, and spread the following centuries via Southern France to Western Europe and the rest of the world. Hundreds of Tarot decks have been designed since. Artists (even some enterprises) are viewing Tarot as a way of inspiration and expression.

In 1909 the *Waite-Smith Tarot* appeared, designed by Pamela Colman Smith in collaboration with Arthur Edward Waite. It was inspired by the early Italian *Visconti, Sola Busca*, and French *Marseille* Tarot, combining Smith's unique artistry with a touch of Art Nouveau and system of iconography. Besides the 22 Major Arcana and the 16 court cards, she also pictured the 40 numbered cards of the Minor Arcana with scenes in which figures interact with the number of suit symbols on each card. This is why it is the most favoured and practical deck to date, serving as model and artistic expression for many Tarot designs.

Two other much favoured decks are *Thoth Tarot*, designed by Frieda Harris in collaboration with Aleister Crowley, and *Tarot de Marseille*, of which several designs were manufactured in France and Switzerland.

In this short essay on *Reading Tarot and Tree of Life* I have tried to make definitions as concise as possible for practical use, whether you are familiar with the subject or not. In this way, *together with a Tarot deck in hand*, you can concentrate fully on reading. 'Reading' in this sense means *Understanding Tarot and Tree of Life* by using the methods and tools described on page 24.

I have retained only the diagram and the traditional names of the Spheres of the Tree because they fit well and nicely in the overall pattern of definitions.

In the text a slash / between keywords means *and/or*, depending on the context of a reading.

There is a vast body of literature concerning Tarot and Tree of Life, and a huge choice of Tarot decks. In the bibliography I have mentioned only a very small, but commendable selection of books and Tarot decks for further reference.

TAROT AND TREE OF LIFE

The TREE OF LIFE diagram represents a symbol of man and the universe.

It has *11 Spheres*, *22 Paths*, and *78 Tarot Cards*.

The image of the Tree of Life is not static and easily defined. It is a concept of movement, change, and relationship.

The Tree of Life can act as a tool of philosophical contemplation, as well of psychological discovery.

The Tree of Life sets down a defining pattern on qualities of the personality, and personal development which is already in progress.

The Tree of Life can be used as a memory device - a practical way of storing information into a meditative discipline. (See *Understanding Tarot and Tree of Life*, page 24.)

The SPHERES represent universal states of energy.

The Spheres are stages of man, progressing from the unsubstantial to building of a physical vehicle in the phenomenal world.

Each Sphere represents a stage on the way which remains as a centre of force after it has established itself, and then overflows to form the next centre. (See definitions on page 7, and *The Spheres and the Minor Arcana*, page 9.)

The PATHS represent universal energy passing from one Sphere to the next. As there is a constant flow and motion within the universe, there is a constant flow and continual renewal of energy passing down from one Sphere to another, and up again.

(See *The Paths of the Major Arcana*, page 18.)

TAROT is a science of the mind.

Tarot defines and visualises stages of human development.

It represents the spectrum of human archetypal conditions and personalities, which can be used for psychological evaluation.

Tarot helps us to look within ourselves to understand our emotions, the reasoning behind our words, conduct, and the source of our conflicts.

It can extrapolate what is latent in the subconscious archives of our mind and raise that knowledge to the surface of our consciousness, helping to provide insight into the most probable outcome of our contemplated actions.

The *22 Major Arcana (trumps)* of Tarot represent spiritual, psychological, ideological concepts/archetypes, and universal life forces that govern life, affecting the human situation.

The Major Arcana depict the ingrained personality traits or external conditions influencing the matter at hand that may be out of actual personal control.

Counsel will address the (mental) changes the person must make.

The Major Arcana are defined by the Paths between the Spheres on the Tree of Life. (See *The Paths of the Major Arcana*, page 18.)

The *Minor Arcana* of Tarot represent immediate human concerns, persons, places or the material world.

The Minor Arcana represent that which we have control over, or which we are able to control, counselling the person on what kind of actual changes to make.

The Minor Arcana are defined by the Spheres on the Tree of Life. (See *The Spheres and the Minor Arcana*, page 9.)

The 56 Minor Arcana consist of *40 numbered cards (pips) - Ace to Ten*, and *16 court cards - King, Queen, Knight or Prince, Page or Princess*, together forming *4 suits*:

WANDS – energetic • willpower • creativity • inspiration • motivation • passionate • confident • assertive • individualistic • enthusiasm • leadership • career • visual/creative arts.

Vice: competitive • restless • conflictive • stubborn • exhaustion.

CUPS – emotions • feelings • sensitivity • relationships • love • spirituality • intuition • imagination • empathy • gentleness • performing/spiritual arts.

Vice: impulsive • illusions • moody • apathetic • coldness.

WORDS – intellect • rational • logic • reason • justice • communication • ambition • academic/literary arts.

Vice: aggressive • destructive • disappointment • detached • worry • paranoia.

PENTACLES – physicality • materiality • practicality • health • productiveness • stability • structure • conviction • conventions • financial/practical arts.

Vice: conservative • selfish • materialistic • neglect.

THE SPHERES

CROWN (1) – first/undefined manifestation • first beginnings • primal source • first cause • first intentions • undefined possibilities • first principle of consciousness • source of energy/activity/thought • unity (of opposites) • attainment • (return to) completion • original (higher) state of being • primal urge to action.

WISDOM (2) – masculine/vital force • mental discrimination • polarity • self-consciousness • source of dynamic/purposeful energy • creative outpouring.

UNDERSTANDING (3) – feminine/formative force • intelligence • intuitive discernment • conception/generation of ideas • source of matter/form/structure • receptive energy.

KNOWLEDGE (11) – awareness/insight • detachment • willpower • confidence • uniting/synthesising/balancing force with form and doing (action) with being (inaction) • synthesis/fruit of Spheres *Wisdom* (masculine, vital force) and *Understanding* (feminine, formative force) • bridge across the gulf between Spheres *Crown* (first/undefined manifestation) and *Beauty* (harmony/balance/wholeness) • crossing of the Paths of the *High Priestess* (wisdom/inner vision) and the *Empress* (practical knowledge).

MERCY (4) – kindness/love • magnificence/expansiveness • creative idealism • vision • comprehension of the abstract • impulse to take/build-up form/structure • potential/opportunity/planning.

SEVERITY (5) – strength • justice • discipline • resistance • setting of limits • adjustment • assessment • preservation or breaking down of form/structure.

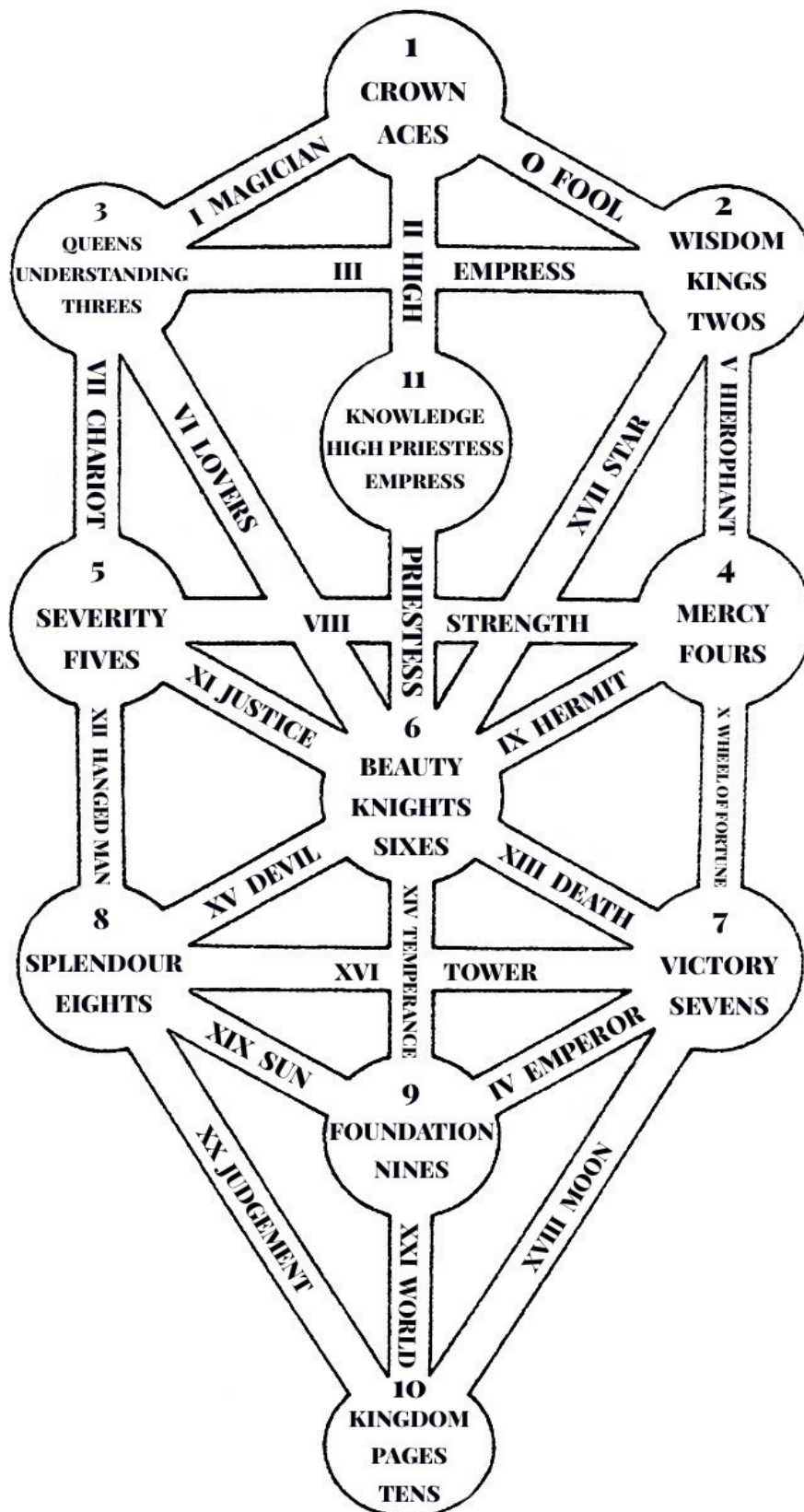
BEAUTY (6) – harmony/balance/wholeness • balance point connecting/integrating human/physical nature with higher (spiritual) energy • reconciling/converting (opposing) forces.

VICTORY (7) – generative forces of Nature • undifferentiated energy stimulating instincts/feelings/emotions/inspiration/creativity/aesthetic • endurance/firmness • coordinating principle.

SPLENDOR (8) – Nature bringing order into her work • concrete/rational mind • intellect/reason/logic • ability to abstract/conceptualise/systematise/communicate • science • philosophy • literature • commerce.

FOUNDATION (9) – universal memory/repository of energies/patterns/images emerging to consciousness/physical manifestation and supporting/shaping phenomenal reality • spiritual/immaterial principle.

KINGDOM (10) – final manifestation of energy into concrete form • physical/material world • outer reality of action • discernment.



Tarot on Tree Of Life

OUTLINE OF TAROT AND TREE OF LIFE SYMBOLS WITH DEFINITIONS

THE SPHERES AND THE MINOR ARCANA

CROWN (1) – first/undefined manifestation • first beginnings • primal source • first cause • first intentions • undefined possibilities • first principle of consciousness • source of energy/activity/thought • unity (of opposites) • attainment • (return to) completion • original (higher) state of being • primal urge to action.

The ACES – beginnings • potential • great power • pure energy • essence • opportunities • possibilities.

ACE OF WANDS – source of spirit • new undertaking • enterprise • venture • travel • opportunity • vitality • invention • birth.

Upside-down: volatility • decadence • false start • cloudy outlook • setback • indolence • delay • uncertainty • burnout.

ACE OF CUPS – source of emotion and intuition • abundance • fertility • fulfilment • beauty • health • favourable outlook • joy • pleasure • happiness.

Upside-down: instability • superficiality • inconsistency • rejection • sterility.

ACE OF SWORDS – source of mental sharpness • great determination • initiative • great strength • conquest.

Upside-down: debacle • disaster • disruption • violent temper • tyranny • chaos • anarchy • complications.

ACE OF PENTACLES – source of physicality and form • material gain • contentment • wealth • prosperity.

Upside-down: disillusionment • misused wealth • prosperity without happiness • miserliness • corruption • greed.

WISDOM (2) – masculine/vital force • mental discrimination • polarity • self-consciousness • source of dynamic/purposeful energy • creative outpouring.

The TWOS – balance • duality • cooperation • choice • decisions • diplomacy • negotiation • tolerance • equality • inner struggle.

TWO OF WANDS – accomplishment • influence • aspiration • courage • boldness • resolution • proud • generous • refined.

Upside-down: dominance • impatience • rashness • turbulence.

TWO OF CUPS – harmonious interaction • empathy • affinity • warm friendship • love • pleasure.

Upside-down: folly • dissipation • waste • imbalance • separation • misunderstanding.

TWO OF SWORDS – balanced force • firmness • concord • harmony • peace • affection • justice • negotiation • unselfishness.

Upside-down: stalemate • misrepresentation • disloyalty • falsehood • trouble • treachery • sacrifice • fearful.

TWO OF PENTACLES – harmonious/pleasant change • industrious • possibilities • prospects • material/financial decisions • writing.

Upside-down: unreliable • alternating gain/loss • strength/weakness • elation/melancholy • varying occupations • juggling.

The KINGS – masculinity • mature • authority • leader • fatherhood • initiative • purpose • generative power • commitment • assertive • outward focus.

KING OF WANDS – assertive • active • agile • authoritarian • passionate • talented • successful • self-confident • proud • generous • sympathetic • light complexion.

Upside-down: impetuous • dogmatic • excessive • fanatic • evil-minded • despotic • cruel.

KING OF CUPS – diplomatic • teacher • wise • caring • creative • compassionate • charismatic • culture-minded • charming • integrity • mediator • considerate • natural complexion.

Upside-down: untruthful • idle • indolent • distracted • prone to addictions and abuse • dishonest.

KING OF SWORDS – intellectual • analytical • stern • courageous • skillful • fierce • orderly • justice • strategic • natural complexion.

Upside-down: unyielding • undecisive • deceitful • intimidating, ruthless • perverse • argumentative.

KING OF PENTACLES – enterprising • self-control • established • reliable • material/financial business • patient • cautious • practical • benevolent • helpful • generous • dark complexion.

Upside-down: prone to corruption • unfaithful • dull • obsessive • possessive • jealous.

UNDERSTANDING (3) – feminine/formative force • intelligence • intuitive discernment • conception/generation of ideas • source of matter/form/structure • receptive energy.

The THREES – creativity • growth • development • fruition • first results • formation • procreation.

THREE OF WANDS – established strength • self-confidence • success (after struggle/waiting) • pride • realisation of hope • good fortune • expansion • enterprise/undertaking • travel/emigration.

Upside-down: conceit • negligence • delays/setbacks • arrogance • treachery.

THREE OF CUPS – fertility • abundance • socialising • hospitality • love • sensuality • pleasure.

Upside-down: indulgence • hedonism • asocial • gossip • barrenness.

THREE OF SWORDS – unhappiness • sorrow • melancholy • disruption • discord • strife • pain • hardship • heartbreak • separation • surgery.

Upside-down: weakening/avoidance/abandoning of the above negative influences • compromise • reconciliation • loneliness • mental confusion.

THREE OF PENTACLES – material/financial growth • recognition • craftsmanship • working/constructive force • teamwork.

Upside-down: mediocrity • narrow-minded • selfish/greedy • prejudiced.

The QUEENS – femininity • mature • adapting/integrating concepts/procedures • structural/executive power • motherhood • commitment • responsibility • inward focus.

QUEEN OF WANDS – adaptability • persistent energy • calm authority • great attracting power • kind/generous when not opposed • self-assured • down-to-earth • attractive/light complexion.

Upside-down: yielding/weak • obstinate • revengeful • dominant • tyrannical.

QUEEN OF CUPS – nurturing/caring • empathic • warm-hearted • imaginative/visionary • creative/artistic • tranquil • fair/natural complexion.

Upside-down: much affected/dependent by surrounding influences • manipulative • moody • insecure.

QUEEN OF SWORDS – clear perception/observation • keen intellect • analytical • confident • independent • quick • communicative • striking appearance • attractive/natural complexion.

Upside-down: narrow-minded • obsessive • deceitful • sly • malicious • cruel.

QUEEN OF PENTACLES – charitable/generous • affectionate • resourceful • truthful • well-being/prosperous • organised • practical • charming/dark complexion.

Upside-down: possessive • frivolous • (financial) dependency/loss • neglect • capricious.

KNOWLEDGE (11) – awareness/insight • detachment • willpower • confidence • uniting/synthesising/balancing force with form and being (inaction) with doing (action) • synthesis/fruit of Spheres *Wisdom* (masculine, vital force) and *Understanding* (feminine, formative force) • bridge across the gulf between Spheres *Crown* (first/undefined manifestation) and *Beauty* (harmony/balance/wholeness) • crossing of the Paths of the *High Priestess* (wisdom/inner vision) and the *Empress* (practical knowledge).

MERCY (4) – kindness/love • magnificence/expansiveness • creative idealism • vision • comprehension of the abstract • impulse to take/build-up form/structure • potential/opportunity/planning.

The FOURS – stability • nurturing • realisation • balance • order/structure/consolidation • practicality.

FOUR OF WANDS – prosperity • achievement/completion (after trouble/labour) • settlement/rest • tranquility • gatherings • concord.

Upside-down: instability • insecurity • unreliability (from over-anxiousness/hurriedness).

FOUR OF CUPS – introspection • success/pleasure/happiness blended with discomfort/anxiety (which may not continue) • dissatisfaction • injustice.

Upside-down: regeneration • new experiences/relationships • premonitions

FOUR OF SWORDS – rest/recovery from (mental) illness/sorrow/battle • solitude/retreat/quietness.

Upside-down: (pre)caution • need for or losing faith • slow recovery • lack of self-care • mental collaps.

FOUR OF PENTACLES – financial security/stability • material/earthly influence • savings/investments • frugality.

Upside-down: recession • financial/material loss/insecurity • possessiveness/miserliness • jealousy.

SEVERITY (5) – strength • justice • discipline • resistance • setting of limits • adjustment • assessment • preservation or breaking down of form/structure.

The FIVES – need for transformation/change • challenging/provoking/demanding • adversity/crisis • flexible/adaptable • competitive • active/busy • unconventional/non-conforming.

FIVE OF WANDS – conflict/commotion/quarreling • misuse/misdirection/restriction of energy • rivalry • agitating/disturbing influence.

Upside-down: reconciliation • compromise • cooperation • escalation of the unpleasant situation • internalising problems.

FIVE OF CUPS – loss (of friendship/relationship/emotional stability) • despair • grief • mourning • regret • disappointment • depression • abandonment.

Upside-down: returning (home/of a friend) • restoration • acceptance • hopeful expectations • emotional regeneration • new alliances.

FIVE OF SWORDS – defeat/failure/ruin • malice • destructive thought • unfair (dis)advantages • spitefulness • intimidation • forcefulness.

Upside-down: remorse over transgressions (maybe feigned/not enduring) • arguments /conflicts/disorders/hostilities resolving or intensifying.

FIVE OF PENTACLES – hardship • health problems • trouble with position/profession/material & financial things • sense of displacement • selfneglect.

Upside-down: improving material/financial circumstances • health improving or deteriorating • neglect/abuse of the body.

BEAUTY (6) – harmony/balance/wholeness • balance point connecting/integrating human/physical nature with higher (spiritual) energy • reconciling/converting (opposing) forces.

The SIXES – harmony/equilibrium/spiritual balance • compassion • stability/security.

SIX OF WANDS – success/prosperity in material/creative undertakings/using of energy/influence/career • victory after strife • good tidings.

Upside-down: pride • disrespectful • wasteful • delay • setback • uneasiness.

SIX OF CUPS – beginnings of success/(emotional) well-being • nostalgic/childhood memories/reminiscences/past influences • harmony of natural forces without effort/strain.

Upside-down: focus on future opportunities • period of transition • inheritance • clinging to the past • (shameful past) secrets causing emotional unbalance • vanity • boredom.

SIX OF SWORDS – appropriate/successful use of intelligence • travel (over water) • passage from difficulty/sorrow • moving on • thoughts/hopes for the future • mental stability.

Upside-down: delay (in travel) • confronting (past) pain/regret • no direct escape from/solution to present difficulties • mental instability.

SIX OF PENTACLES – success/prosperity in material/financial undertakings • influence • rank • patronage • generosity • just • liberal • inheritance.

Upside-down: purse-proud • disrespectful • wasteful • conceit • envy.

The KNIGHTS or PRINCES – masculine/feminine • young/coming of age • active • energetic • outward focus • protective • courage • vision • passion • exuberant • having mind concentrated/thought in control • bringing specific matters to effect.

KNIGHT/PRINCE OF WANDS – swift action/active progress • motivated • creative/visionary • dynamic • strong • individualistic • unconventional • assertive • just • generous • adventurous • sense of humour • light complexion.

Upside-down: competitive • intolerant • prejudiced • impetuous/violent • insecurity/hesitation/discontinuance.

KNIGHT/PRINCE OF CUPS – acting on feeling/emotion/intuition • (highly) intelligent • inspirational/artistic/spiritual • affable/charming • empathic • subtle • fierce with calm exterior • natural complexion.

Upside-down: (emotionally) insecure/unpredictable • unmotivated/bored • cunning • merciless/cruel • narcissistic.

KNIGHT/PRINCE OF SWORDS – purposeful action influencing intellectual/intuitive processes/communication/politics • swift acting/thinking • ambitions/ideas/plans • brave/just • conviction • natural complexion.

Upside-down: restless/impatient/impulsive • rude/hostile • sarcastic/cynical • intolerant • incapacity • unreliable.

KNIGHT/PRINCE OF PENTACLES – cautious action/steady progress on practical/material/productivity/financial concerns • methodical • rational/common sense • stability/security • patient • reliable • resourceful • dark complexion.

Upside-down: inertia • dullness • timidity • narrow-minded • (un)conventional • possessive • careless • idle.

VICTORY (7) – generative forces of Nature • undifferentiated energy stimulating instincts/feelings/emotions/inspiration/creativity/aesthetic • endurance/firmness • coordinating principle.

The SEVENS – challenges/obstacles to face/overcome • introspection/reassessment of goals/aims • motive for manifestation • resourcefulness • determination.

SEVEN OF WANDS – opposition • struggles • rivalry • competition • courage in meeting difficulties • tenacity • standing ground • maintaining power/control.

Upside-down: indecision/uncertainty • embarrassment • vulnerability • lacking courage/confidence.

SEVEN OF CUPS – delusion • illusory success • temptation • deception • addiction • daydreaming • imagination • superficiality.

Upside-down: determination • resolution • clarity/realisation • achieving ambitions/goals.

SEVEN OF SWORDS – untrustworthy/unreliable • partial success • unstable/vain effort • evasion • impulsiveness • betrayal • wavering • fascination with display.

Upside-down: cunningness/scheming • dishonesty • theft • advice/warning ignored • requital.

SEVEN OF PENTACLES – harvest/profit/reward/hard work beginning to take fruit • reflection/review of goals/ambitions • perseverance/tenacity.

Upside-down: little gain from much labour • promise of success unfulfilled • hopes deceived • disappointment • financial instability • wrong (over-)investment.

SPLENDOUR (8) – Nature bringing order into her work • concrete/rational mind • intellect/reason/logic • ability to abstract/conceptualise/systematise/communicate • science • philosophy • literature • commerce.

The EIGHTS – organisation • evaluation • (inner) strength dealing with/overcoming challenges/difficulties • progress/success in business/finance.

EIGHT OF WANDS – swift (progressive/resolute) action • vigour • courage • energy through focussed force • clarity of thought • goals/projects reaching conclusion/solution • forthcoming communication/message.

Upside-down: rashness • regression/stagnation/delay • hasty decisions/advancement quickly passed/expended • (too) much force applied (too) suddenly • jealousy.

EIGHT OF CUPS – abandonment (of success/previous plans) • detachment • search for (higher) emotional/spiritual meaning/strength • decline/loss of interest • shyness • travelling.

Upside-down: aimless/drifting • stagnation • searching home • indulgence • boldness.

EIGHT OF SWORDS – mentally/unjustly/temporarily bound/confined/restricted • misperception • waste of energy in details causing neglect of important things • blind to situation at hand.

Upside-down: release or worsening of restrictions • emancipation • clemency • clarity of mind • recovery or deterioration of mental health.

EIGHT OF PENTACLES – skill • apprenticeship • aspiration/determination for (financial) growth/cultivation (of land) • intelligence applied to material affairs • industrious/productive • attention to health.

Upside-down: waste of talent • lack of ambition/commitment • squandering • hoarding • idle • cunning • neglect of health.

FOUNDATION (9) – universal memory/repository of energies/patterns/images emerging to consciousness/physical manifestation and supporting/shaping phenomenal reality • spiritual/immaterial principle.

The NINES – approaching positive change • idealism • optimism • reviewing/reflecting of actions/thoughts/efforts/situations • preparation for a new stage/cycle.

NINE OF WANDS – defensive • protective • strength • stamina • competitive • cautious • wary • resigned • acquiescent.

Upside-down: inclined to fight • unyielding • stubborn • suspicious • pride • negative repetitive patterns • exhaustion • weary • withdrawal.

NINE OF CUPS – coming to fruition • wish fulfilled • inner/outer happiness • high-minded • success/comfort/luxury • recognition • well-being.

Upside-down: overindulgence • wish unfulfilled • self-praise • vanity • foolish • self-loathing.

NINE OF SWORDS – despair • agony • loss • grieving • suffering • desolation • troubled • malice • cruelty • haunted • insomnia.

Upside-down: recuperation • easing/improvement or intensifying/worsening of a situation • worries/fears unfounded or confirmed.

NINE OF PENTACLES – prosperity • material/financial well-being • accomplishment • independence • refinement • good health • restrained/disciplined • retirement • inheritance.

Upside-down: dissatisfaction • depression • materialistic • covetousness • conceited • theft.

KINGDOM (10) – final manifestation of energy into concrete form • physical/material world • outer reality of action • discernment.

The TENS – completion of a cycle/project • conclusion to a situation/circumstance • goals reached • potential realised • climax • matter thoroughly/definitely determined.

TEN OF WANDS – overburdened • oppression • selfishly applied/overbearing force/energy • being immersed in/taking on other's problems • unable to see clearly • losing sight of original plan/goal • temporary tribulation.

Upside-down: reassessing priorities • alleviating burdens • generosity • self-sacrifice • being taken advantage of • deceit.

TEN OF CUPS – great (inner) happiness/joy • genuine love • emotionally balanced/fulfilled • lasting success/contentment • strong intuition • peacemaking • generosity • good family life.

Upside-down: domestic discord • dysfunctional family • emotionally unfulfilled/unbalanced • disillusionment • alienation • delayed success.

TEN OF SWORDS – disaster (yet not without hope) • death (but not necessarily so) • retaliation • treachery • defeat • failure • ruin of plans/projects • curse of prominence • mental breakdown.

Upside-down: (slow) recovery • comeback • endurance/survival • (temporary) improvement • change • (spiritually heralded) end of delusion.

TEN OF PENTACLES – (material) prosperity/riches • pinnacle/manifestation of success • family matters/heritage/alliances/business • financially stable/secure • good ancestry • inheritance • domesticity • faithfulness.

Upside-down: dullness of mind, yet with acuity and profit moneywise • family disunion/strife • family outcast • detached/cold/unfulfilled homelife • slothfulness • (financial) loss/insecurity.

The PAGES or PRINCESSES – feminine/masculine • young/coming of age • playful child • innocent • sometimes naïve • spontaneous • assimilating knowledge • adventurous • ambitious • bringing energy/intentions/goals into manifestation • reception/transmission of news/messages.

PAGE/PRINCESS OF WANDS – youthful energy • confident • enthusiastic • creative imagination • resourceful • exploring the unknown • motivated • passionate • assertive • tendency to perfectionism • individualistic • news/message regarding career/(creative) project • light complexion.

Upside-down: (re)acting immaturely/impatiently • extravagant • competitive • superficial • theatrical • insecure • passive • vulnerable • cruel • intolerant • unreliable • bored • problem child.

PAGE/PRINCESS OF CUPS – imaginative/intuitive/psychic • loving • tender-hearted/sensitive • romantic • poetic • artistic • embracing emotions • pacifistic • compassionate • news/message having emotional/spiritual impact or regarding relation-/friendship • gracious • attractive/fair complexion.

Upside-down: dreamer • indolent • withdrawn • emotionally instable/immature • unrealistic expectations • too impulsive • moody • addiction/abuse • indulging in luxury.

PAGE/PRINCESS OF SWORDS – active • wary • dexterous/judicious/acute • bright intellect • discrete • discernment of confidences/of the less obvious • pursuit of study/writing projects/forms of communication • news/message regarding ambitions/politics • graceful/natural complexion.

Upside-down: cunning • inhibited • unprepared • frivolous • indiscrete • defensive • aggressive • mentally immature • mental health issues.

PAGE/PRINCESS OF PENTACLES – practical • scholarly • aesthetic taste • purposeful • persevering • resourceful • generous • kind • benevolent • reflective • conscientious • health/environment concerns • news/message regarding finance/property • elegant/dark complexion.

Upside-down: materialistic • superficial • wasteful • neglect of health • lack of commitment/practical application • low sense of dignity • (financial) insecurity.

THE PATHS OF THE MAJOR ARCANA

THE FOOL (0) – connects Spheres *Crown (1)* and *Wisdom (2)* – undefined/unrealised energy/potential • true innocence/joy/freedom • openness to life • spontaneity • new beginning/adventure/opportunity • spirit searching for experience • courage • clear conscience • optimism • no expectations/plans • fearless • shaking up settled order/habits • eternal child • flamboyant.

Upside-down: naiveté • not following instinct/intuition • lack of proper response/thinking/discipline • unrealistic (ideals) • taking risks • foolish • reckless/careless • superficial • impulsive • stepping into danger • immaturity.

THE MAGICIAN (I) – connects Spheres *Crown (1)* and *Understanding (3)* – concentrated/active/creative power (of the spirit/mind) • harmonisation of humankind and nature • mastery/use of (psychic) energy • disciplined/determined • secrecy • willpower • (occult) wisdom • translating ideas into manifestation • realisation of abilities/talents • mental clarity • clear judgment • inspiring • powerful (male) presence • ambitious • convincing • ingenuity.

Upside-down: trickster • weakness of will • powerless • lack of imagination • abuse of power/skills for selfish gain/destructive purposes • untapped potential • deceit • manipulation • mental disquiet/anxiety.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS (II) – connects Spheres *Crown (1)* and *Beauty (6)* through *Knowledge (11)* – receptacle of cosmic memory/spirituality/psychic energy/intuition • wisdom/inner vision • balance between passivity/mystery and action/consciousness • high/pure intellect • loving/forgiving moral conscience • benign/gracious presence • abiding inspiration • retreat/reflection • moderation • modesty • clairvoyance/premonition.

Upside-down: lack of spirituality • not accessing intuition • ignoring inner call • emotional/mental imbalance • superficial • impatience • end of isolation • (re)turn to social life • break of trust/confidence • busy/restless.

THE EMPRESS (III) – connects Spheres *Wisdom (2)* and *Understanding (3)* through *Knowledge (11)* – formative energy • sustenance/growth of life/nature • penetrating matter through practical knowledge • pure/positive force of emotion • fertility • femininity • maternity • love • sensuality • sexuality • family • material abundance • prosperity • beauty • innovation • stability • charity • dignity • benign.

Upside-down: barren • preventing/delay of fruition/result • imbalance/insecure • inactivity • conflict/strain/disharmony in relations • unhealthy • neglect • demanding • superficial.

THE EMPEROR (IV) – connects Spheres *Victory (7)* and *Foundation (9)* – structures/laws of the universe • dominating intelligence/reason over emotion/passion • organising/editing of phenomena/information • authority/leadership • order/clarity • control/self-mastery/stability • civilisation imposing its will on nature •

social force • (spiritual) visions/thoughts influencing decisions • high aspiration/ambition • masculinity • paternity • maturity • practical.

Upside-down: indecisiveness • weakness • immaturity • tyranny • cowardliness • lack of independence • dogmatic • injustice • rigidity • irresponsible • lack of skill • inexperienced • resenting rules/regulations • cruel • disloyal.

THE HIEROPHANT (V) – connects Spheres *Wisdom (2)* and *Mercy (4)* – mediator/translator of higher knowledge/consciousness enabling the mind to put this into practice/action • aspiration/search for attuning to higher/spiritual realms and receiving inspiration/initiation • accumulated wisdom of the ages • sagacity • intuition • stability • caution • judicious advice • reverence for traditional/conventional knowledge/belief/law.

Upside-down: blind adherence to dogma • stubborn • inflexible • tricky • intolerant • intellectual sterility • presumptuous • withholding truth • pressure to conform • persecution • unconventional • existentialist • revolutionary.

THE LOVERS (VI) – connects Spheres *Understanding (3)* and *Beauty (6)* – primal dual force of Nature • union/harmony/attraction of opposites • power of love/relationship • integration of mind and heart • making responsible decisions/choices • sexuality • adolescence • intellectual/moral independence • passion/romance.

Upside-down: sexual problems • romantic immaturity • destructive love • inconsistency within oneself • temptation • discord • lust.

THE CHARIOT (VII) – connects Spheres *Understanding (3)* and *Severity (5)* – using understanding and strength for mind and body to subdue/control/reconcile opposing/contradictory forces • skill in maintaining inner and outer balance • willpower • self-confidence • accomplishment/triumph • maturity • journey/quest towards acquiring a rewarding (spiritual) goal.

Upside-down: incapacity • lack of talent/tact/willpower • misconduct • emotional trouble • ceasing of forward momentum • avoiding true confrontation.

STRENGTH (VIII) – connects Spheres *Mercy (4)* and *Severity (5)* – pure strength/tenacity and unstoppable forces of Nature • strength by mastery/balance of instinct over intellect, or intellect over instinct, employed for the best outcome • spiritual power over physical force with a sense of mercy/kindness/love • patience/courage by integrity/inner strength • courage in lifting personal limitations • irresistible gentle/subtle feminine strength • evil-tending forces changed into useful energies • beneficent fortitude.

Upside-down: destructive energy; quick-tempered • impatience • exhibitionism • insensitivity • roughness • abuse of power • weakness/powerless.

THE HERMIT (IX) – connects Spheres *Mercy* (4) and *Beauty* (6) – balanced expression of peace/wisdom/mercy • seclusion/withdrawal for introspection/awakening/inner strength • lightening the path of compassion/non-violence • sublimation of sensuality/emotionality • transcendence of personal limitations • insight/spiritual/higher knowledge shared for counsel • discretion • prudence • modesty • maturity • being alone • re-evaluation • transition.

Upside-down: narcissism • rigidity • alienation • fear towards life • unreasoned caution • concealment • ill-tempered • not heeding (wise) counsel.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE (X) – connects Spheres *Mercy* (4) and *Victory* (7) – balance/integration of polarities forming Nature's cycles of life: creating-preserving-destroying, ebb-flow, seasons, birth-death, rise-fall, growth-decay • perpetual change • destiny/fate • new beginning • transformation • opportunities seized at the right moment • awareness of present circumstances • observing patterns in (our) life.

Upside-down: struggle against (unexpected) turn of events • outside influences not contemplated • standstill • denial of chance • unstable situation • failure.

JUSTICE (XI) – connects Spheres *Severity* (5) and *Beauty* (6) – fair/impartial adjustment to achieve balance/harmony protecting the weak and constraining the powerful • fostering calm/stability to evaluate (inner) contesting forces • cutting through barriers to reach a just conclusion • fair/judicious weighing of a matter/legal problem • law of karma relating to good/evil and understanding the true nature of cause/effect • mediating between idealistic expectations and earthly feasibility.

Upside-down: dishonesty with yourself/others • unwilling to see the meaning of events • missing understanding of yourself/your life • unfair actions/treatment/decisions (by others) • suggesting unfairness as excuse for denying one's own responsibility • injustice • hypocrisy.

THE HANGED MAN (XII) – connects Spheres *Severity* (5) and *Splendour* (8) – self-sacrifice/unselfish (cooperative) effort for the greater good of the whole • major change/transition/readjustment/reversal to a new (spiritual) experience/condition/attitude • sacrifice willingly made for a spiritual goal • initiation • insight into one's own limitations • non-conformistic • reconciliation with reality as it is • self-examination.

Upside-down: inability to get free of social pressure • loss of position • standstill • selfishness • unwillingness to make a necessary effort • unappreciated sacrifice.

DEATH (XIII) – connects Spheres *Beauty* (6) and *Victory* (7) – self-renewing/rejuvenating cyclic power of Nature • perception of temporary/illusory nature of personality • psychological reorientation • final release of the mask of habits/repressions/self-images making up the personality • clearing away rigidity/old habits allowing new life/opportunity to emerge • end of previous activities/process of development/partnership • meaningful change involving emotional crisis •

maintaining the essential/giving up the superficial • inevitable/abrupt end of something.

Upside-down: stuck in old habits • inertia/boredom/lethargy/depression in life • fearfully resisting change • stagnation • repeating negative patterns in life • loss • disorder • catastrophe.

TEMPERANCE (XIV) – connects Spheres *Beauty* (6) and *Foundation* (9) – harmonising psychic/spiritual forces by intelligence/resoluteness/tact and pure intent in dealing with the external/physical world • using moderation/patience/calm/clarity in thought/feeling/action • controlling oneself through willpower • ability to combine spontaneity with knowledge • mixing dissimilar elements and blending activities/feelings to produce a sense of harmony/peace • synchronicity • healing.

Upside-down: lacking awareness of what is appropriate to a situation • fragmentation of life • going to extremes • conflict in personal/business/spiritual affairs creating scattered energies • excessive preoccupation with oneself/one's inner processes • overindulging causing health problems.

THE DEVIL (XV) – connects Spheres *Beauty* (6) and *Splendour* (8) – force of illusion/deception/indoctrination/oppression • passions/fears to be courageously faced before passing through (advanced) levels of psychic/spiritual development/awareness • narrow materialistic/superficial view of life • loss of identity • spiritual regression • misused power/strength (to influence others) • behaviour motivated by temptation/desires/selfishness/wrong thinking • disregard for spirituality • misperception of reality • limited capability/achievement/personal growth • unrest/discord/destruction/chaos.

Upside-down: weakness/fear/indecision may be evident, but seeking higher forces leads to release from (psychological) bondage • change has occurred but sadness/anger/depression may remain • overcoming nearly insurmountable handicaps • divorce/release from abusive/controlling relationship, but caution remains.

THE TOWER (XVI) – connects Spheres *Victory* (7) and *Splendour* (8) – disruptive/destructive force of man's arrogance/pride/prestige/striving • unforeseen/sudden change/catastrophe • false security by building materialistic concepts/structures against nature/fellow men • satisfying selfish demands of wealth/fame/physical pleasure • ignoring introspection/spiritual beauty of the universe • lacking integration between aspects of emotion/mind/spirit • failure/loss of relationship/career/business/finance • breaking down rigid/old beliefs/principles • abrupt but purifying/enlightening transformation (may be discomforting/unsettling) • shattering of illusions.

Upside-down: re-evaluating/recovering/overcoming the above influences • the above influences in lesser/milder/modified degree • humbleness/moderation.

THE STAR (XVII) – connects Spheres *Wisdom (2)* and *Beauty (6)* – universal/inexhaustible life energy conveying purpose/continuity/renewal of existence • wisdom/beauty as force of inspiration/creativity/love • sense of order/freedom/clarity • knowledge/vision of higher (spiritual) intelligence • clairvoyance • liveliness/good humour/hope/courage bearing the trials of life • adaptation to necessities • contentment • nurturing growth • generosity/charity • mental health • new opportunities restoring hope • inner (spiritual) guidance.

Upside-down: pessimism/disappointment • hidden/denied talents • lack of confidence/imagination/spontaneity • mental/physical health problems.

THE MOON (XVIII) – connects Spheres *Victory (7)* and *Kingdom (10)* – feminine/fertilising force of Nature manifesting into concrete form • time of resting and preparation • imagination/reflection/vision of inner/subconscious experience (can be distorted/filled with emotion/fear) brought to outer/conscious perception • disillusionment creating deep yearning for security/fulfilment • psychic/hidden abilities • attention to important messages/guidance in dreams • deceptive appearances.

Upside-down: uncertainty • confusion • instability • misunderstanding.

THE SUN (XIX) – connects Spheres *Splendour (8)* and *Foundation (9)* – nurturing/maintaining/arranging force of Nature • providing light/warmth/cosmic energy • illuminating/inspiring the mind in quest for growth/spirituality • contentment/confidence through generosity/reconciliation • freedom from restraints • happiness/sincerity in relationship • youthful joy • pleasure derived from simple things • clarity • revealing reality of things without veil of illusion • sensing the beauty of life • achievement • optimism • liberation/enlightenment • vitality • artistic taste/talent.

Upside-down: weakening of the above influences • unhappiness • loneliness • disoriented/clouded.

JUDGEMENT (XX) – connects Spheres *Splendour (8)* and *Kingdom (10)* – universal energy transforming into the web of life • coming to terms with/going beyond past experiences • meeting/joining of opposites/things separated • inward calling to make/recognise important change/transformation (built up over a long period) • accomplishment/realisation of mystic/spiritual goal/higher consciousness/new experience of life • perception/liberation of concealed abilities • rising above negativity and resolving related problems.

Upside-down: false identification • self-delusion • failure to face facts • indecision • resistance to change • postponing action.

THE WORLD (XXI) – connects Spheres *Foundation (9)* and *Kingdom (10)* – universal energy infusing consciousness into the web of life • expanding-contracting-pulsating cosmic energy manifests as the universe of becoming and passing in space-time • unification of inner being with outer manifestation • transcending duality • achievement of enlightenment/(spiritual)

goal/project • completion • climax of development • returning/homecoming • conscious self-regulating power allowing us to act socially and emotionally • maintaining (international) contacts/travel • happiness in life/relationship • lasting success.

Upside-down: imperfection • failure (completing a task) • lack of vision • delay • skepticism • deceptive world of appearances.

Note. In most cases, the first line of definitions states the force or energy flowing on a Path between two Spheres.

‘Nature’, ‘universal’ or ‘cosmic’ are viewed as similar and interchangeable expressions.

UNDERSTANDING TAROT AND TREE OF LIFE

Reading Tarot and Tree of Life is a powerful meditative and creative method, serving also as a memory device - a practical way of storing and remembering information. Calling on the powers of will, imagination, and visualisation, it reaches directly into the subconscious archives of our mind and develops our intuition.

This practice involves *right intention*, which means studying and implementing the given information, thereby using the means of divination, meditation, concentration, contemplation, and mediation:

Divination: interpreting the meanings and how they relate to the inquiry.

Meditation: interacting with the pictures and their components in order to gain inner experience and intuitive understanding of the depicted forces.

Meditation involves *concentration* and *contemplation*.

Concentration: absorbing and attuning to the symbolism and thereby establishing a link with the depicted forces.

Contemplation: reflecting upon the meanings, relationships, attributes, and applications of the depicted forces.

Mediation: translating and transferring the inner experience and intuitive understanding of the depicted forces to outer reality.

Three readings and spreads (out of many) are offered here.

Be specific about the enquiry and avoid questions requiring yes or no answers.

There is no fixed way of shuffling the cards.

Continue shuffling until you feel the intuition to stop.

(Cutting the cards - making small stacks - is an option, but not necessary.)

During reading only those definitions are used which are considered relevant for the situation and context of the enquiry.

(One may observe the upside-down definitions as an 'alert' in a situation or behaviour. Using them in a spread and reading is optional, but not really necessary.)

When more cards are used while interpreting a specific card, it is important *to look at the neighbouring cards to get a balanced view.*

ONE-CARD READING

While meditating on a question thoroughly shuffle the cards.

A single card is then pulled from the deck and interpreted.

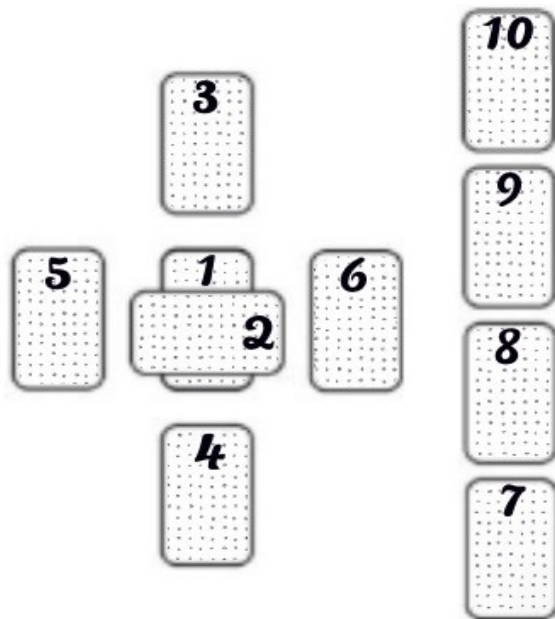
THREE-CARD SPREAD

While meditating on a question thoroughly shuffle the cards.

Three cards are pulled out and placed horizontally from left to right.

In this order here are three examples for reading, representing: past–present–future, or body–mind–spirit, or external conditions–present situation–obstacle.

CELTIC CROSS SPREAD



While meditating on a question thoroughly shuffle the cards.

First card: “*This covers you*” – general present atmosphere/nature pertaining to the question • conditions/influences affecting the person/situation • outside influences surrounding the matter.

Second card: “*This crosses you*” – crossing the first card it shows the nature of forces opposing to the situation, affecting it for good or evil • nature of the problem/obstacles experienced by the seeker • positive forces opposing the problems as an aid.

Third card: “*This crowns you*” – hopes/aspirations/ideals pertaining to the question • the best achievements expected under present circumstances • message from seeker’s subconscious in relation to the question.

Fourth card: “*This is beneath you*” – foundation of the matter • what the seeker has already experienced in relation to the matter • in most cases pointing to a learning lesson/constantly reoccurring theme in seeker’s life • seeker’s subconscious view regarding the matter.

Fifth card: “*This is behind you*” – recent passing or past influence and evaluated in regard to the first two cards, whether it is a motivational or deterrent force.

Sixth card: “*This is before you*” – an upcoming situation • influences coming into action in near future; allow intuition/insight to reveal a specific future time frame.

Seventh card: “*This is you*” – seeker’s attitude/inner nature/conscious view toward the matter and its effect on the situation.

Eight card: “*This is your house*” – atmosphere of living/workplace/position/energy surrounding the seeker • environmental factors relating to influence of family/friends.

Ninth card: “*These are your hopes and fears*” – hope/fear through positive/negative meaning of the card • may indicate fear of seemingly positive influences as intimacy/personal authority/success.

Tenth card: “*This is the outcome*” – potential future; allow intuition/insight to reveal a specific future time frame.

In case of unclear conclusion/understanding of the outcome, this card can be used as significator (representing the matter) for a second reading. The remaining cards are shuffled and laid out as before.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tarot decks with 78 cards. Only a very small selection is presented here.

In general, a deck of cards has a booklet with basic information inside the box.

Decks marked with an asterix have the numbered Minor Arcana depicted with scenes.

– **Waite-Smith Tarot* (“Rider-Waite Tarot”, 1909, 12x7cm) - The first Tarot since the Renaissance which has the numbered Minor Arcana also designed with scenes.

A variety of small to large decks are available, with or without(!) Pamela Colman Smith’s original hand-lettered typeface. Colour and printing variations are noticeable between editions.

In 2020 the *1909 Art Restoration Deck* appeared. It is a wonderful, carefully and faithfully restored facsimile edition of the very first edition of the Waite-Smith Tarot printed in 1909. It is also called the ‘Roses and Lilies’ deck after the back image. This edition can be now viewed as the reference deck. DriveThruCards.com.

In 2009 a beautiful *Centennial* reproduction of the original cards with the handlettered typeface has been printed, but the card back is not original; US Games, Stamford. Since 1992 there is a ‘giant’ coloured version (“printed in Belgium”!) viewed as simulating in size the lost original b&w pen and ink drawings (17x10cm).

– *Thoth Tarot* (1943, cards 1969, 14x9,5cm) - A number of small to large decks are available. Colour and printing variations are noticeable between editions.

Closest to the original, though unfortunately smaller (10,3x7cm), is a beautiful limited German edition: *Original Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot*; box includes extensive booklet; Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)/AGM AGMüller Urania, New York/Neuhausen, 2008. A fine recent set: *Aleister Crowley Deluxe Tarot*; original sized cards with gilded edges and book by Akron & Hajo Banzhaf; US Games, Stamford, 2019.

– *Marseille Tarots* - designs have appeared since the 1500s, and some are reproduced.

--- *Jean Noblet Tarot* (c.1650) - Beautiful Marseille-style deck (9,8x6,1cm) restored by Jean-Claude Flornoy; Editions letarot.com, 2007, 2014.

--- *Pierre Madenié Marseille* (1709) - Beautiful authentically recreated reproduction by Rachel Clowes; set with cards (16,5x9,3cm) and book by Mary Packard; The Book Shop/Race Point Publ., New York, 2015.

--- *Nicolas Conver Marseille* (1760) - Fine restored reproduction: *CBD Tarot de Marseille* (12x6,2cm) by Yoav Ben-Dov, Leela Ganin, Nir Matarasso, 2010; additional book: Yoav Ben-Dov - *Tarot the Open Reading*; 2011/13; cbdtarot.com.

– **Salvador Dalí Tarot* (1970s, cards 1983/84, 14x8cm) - Beautiful recent edition: *Dalí Tarot*; set with cards and book by Johannes Fiebig; Taschen, Köln, 2019.

– *Visconti Tarots* (1400s) - some original designs were printed, but none survived complete to date.

--- *Visconti-Sforza/Colleoni-Baglioni* (c.1450, 17,6x8,7cm) - Beautiful authentically recreated reproduction by Rachel Clowes entitled *The Golden Tarot*; set with 78 cards (16,5x9,3cm) and book by Mary Packard; The Book Shop/Race Point Publ., New York, 2013.

--- *Visconti di Modrone* (c.1442, 18,9x9cm) - Beautiful authentically reconstructed and recreated deck of 89 cards by Mattia D'Auge; Lo Scarabeo, Torino, 2019.

– *Estensi Tarot* (c.1470, 18,1x8,9cm; incorrectly entitled “Charles VI Tarot”) - Beautiful authentically reconstructed and recreated edition (12x6,7cm, 78 cards) by Jo Dworkin in collaboration with Giordano Berti, entitled **Golden Tarot of the Renaissance*, with the numbered Minor Arcana also designed with scenes; Lo Scarabeo, Torino, 2004.

– *La Corte Dei Tarocchi* (2013, 13,2x5,2cm) - Design by Anna Maria D’Onofrio. Beautiful limited edition - no booklet!; Il Meneghello, Milano.

– **Aquarian Tarot* (1969/70, 11,9x7,6cm) - Wonderful Art Deco-style design by David Palladini; numbered Minor Arcana also designed with scenes; recent edition US Games, Stamford. One of the favoured decks.

– **The Light and Shadow Tarot* (1997, 14x10,8cm) - Black&white block prints designed by Michael Goepferd in collaboration with Brian Williams; numbered Minor Arcana also designed with scenes. Wonderful graphic set with cards and book; Destiny Books, Rochester.

Note. The beautiful **Sola Busca Tarot* (c.1491, 14,5x7,6cm) is the oldest known complete deck which has also the numbered Minor Arcana depicted with scenes. But, unfortunately, its very different iconography does not apply to the definitions in this essay.

Books. Only a very small, but commendable selection is presented here.

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