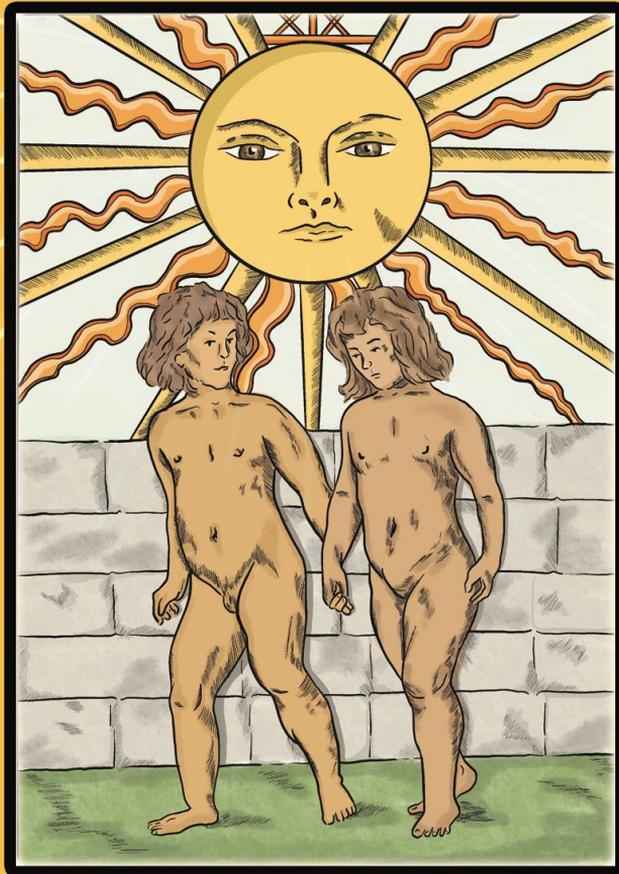


THE TAROT

A Contemporary Course of the
Quintessence of Hermetic Occultism



MOUNI SADHU

Foreword by

JOHN MICHAEL GREER

THE TAROT

BY MOUNI SADHU

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THE TAROT

A CONTEMPORARY COURSE OF THE
QUINTESSENCE OF HERMETIC OCCULTISM

By

MOUNI SADHU

Peu de science éloigne de Dieu

Beaucoup de science y ramène

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

AEON

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This book is dedicated to all
Masters of Hermetic Philosophy
of the past, present and future

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Foreword: A Forgotten Classic of Hermeticism

BOOKS on occultism are easy to find these days. Books on occultism that deserve close reading and careful study? That's quite another matter. In occult literature as in everything else, you generally have to wade through a great deal of product to find something worth serious attention. Books that deserve the label "classic" are rare, and usually well known to students of the occult. Every so often, however, a classic work drops out of print for reasons unrelated to its quality, and its rediscovery throws open the door to forgotten branches of occult knowledge. The book in your hands is one of these.

Mouni Sadhu was the pen name of the Polish-born Australian occultist Mieczyslaw Demetriusz Sudowski. As a young man, he fought in the First World War, and his wartime experiences led him, like so many other people of the period, to the study of occultism. After a few years in the Theosophical Society, he encountered the Hermetic tradition. He spent most of the years between the two world wars as a member of a circle of young Polish students of Hermeticism. The classic works of the French Hermetic tradition had a central role in their studies, but they had another resource of equal importance: a collection of printed lectures by the Russian occultist Grigori Ottonovich Mebes.

Mebes was one of the leading lights of the occult community in St. Petersburg before the Russian Revolution, an active Freemason and a member of the Russian branch of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose + Cross, one of the leading European Rosicrucian orders of the time. In 1912, his lectures on the tarot were published by his students as *An Encyclopedic Course of Occultism*. When the Russian Revolution came and the new Communist government set out to impose its atheist and materialist beliefs by force, Mebes tried to continue teaching Hermeticism secretly. In 1926 he was arrested by the Soviet secret police and sent to a prison camp in Siberia where he died, one of countless victims of the Communist regime.

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Between the outbreak of the Revolution and Mebes' arrest, several of his students fled from Russia with copies of his book. One of them reached safety in Poland in 1919, and passed on the book to Sudowski and his friends. It became their most important source of information about Hermetic occultism. They continued studying Mebes' lectures until the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 made further work impossible.

In the wake of the Second World War, Sudowski emigrated to Brazil and then to Melbourne, Australia, where he spent the rest of his life. Beginning in the 1950s, he wrote a series of valuable books on mysticism and occultism. *The Tarot* is one of these. Originally published in 1962, it stayed in print for more than three decades, attracting a small but enthusiastic body of students and readers, before it finally went out of print. Interest in the classic teachings of Hermetic occultism simply was not widespread enough to keep it available as the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first. Fortunately, that has changed.

Readers used to the sort of occult literature that hands out tidbits of knowledge a little at a time may want to brace themselves before opening *The Tarot*, because the experience of reading Mouni Sadhu is more like drinking from a fire hose. Each of the 101 lessons contained in this volume is packed with occult philosophy, symbolism, and hints for practice. (The practices themselves are elsewhere, in his books *Concentration*, *Meditation*, and *Theurgy*, which should be studied in that order along with this book.) Those students who want to get the most out of this volume should plan on devoting a week to each lesson, reading it several times and making sure that a thorough grasp of the important concepts has been gained. Two years devoted to this study will result in a thorough understanding of Hermetic occultism.

The symbolism and correspondences found in *The Tarot* are not the ones most familiar in occult writings in the English-speaking world. They derive from the main European tradition of modern Hermeticism, which starts with Eliphas Lévi's groundbreaking *Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic* and proceeds through the works of Stanislaus de Guaita, Paul Christian, Papus (Gerard Encausse), and Oswald Wirth, among others, to Mouni Sadhu. Readers who are used to the current of Hermetic teaching set in motion by the Hermetic Order of the Golden

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Dawn, which lies behind most occultism in the English-speaking world, may find themselves surprised and baffled by the very different approaches Mouni Sadhu presents here and elsewhere in his works.

It is worth getting past that initial reaction, however. *The Tarot* is a forgotten classic of modern Hermeticism, and it provides a thorough grounding in the philosophy, symbolism, and practice of occultism. Those who give it the time, patience, and study it deserves will come through the experience much the richer for it.

John Michael Greer

Introduction

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

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

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

The Tarot is a truly philosophical machine, which keeps the mind

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

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

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

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

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

Papus, in his *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, a classical book about the mystery of the Major and Minor Arcana, tells us in a legend, that the whole initiatory wisdom of Ancient Egypt was recorded in the symbols of the Tarot cards as a last attempt to preserve this wisdom for future generations, and was made just before Egypt was invaded and destroyed by the advancing hordes of the Persian king.

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

As I have said, many eminent occultists have written about and led intensive investigations into the Tarot’s philosophy and symbolism. Several of them are mentioned in the Bibliography included in this

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the present time, there is no adequate and original work in English dealing with the Tarot, and the last major works in other languages are

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more than fifty years old. Only one of these, the previously mentioned encyclopaedic course by Prof. G. O. Mebes seems to satisfy—to a certain extent—what I would term a ‘practical exposition’ of the subject. Anyway, as far as I know, that eminent work is not available and can hardly be consulted. Therefore, when I finished *Occultism and Spiritual Paths* (other books being: *In Days of Great Peace* and *Concentration*), the idea occurred to me to make use—now that I have the time—of material collected many years ago. Before he begins to work with this book, the reader is strongly advised to study *Occultism and Spiritual Paths* because many introductory and technical points relating to the present work have been extensively explained in it and therefore cannot be repeated here.

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

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

I am not a believer in sterile lecturing, which is rather like learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

But this theory—which requires the Arcana to be studied in pairs—does not find any support among the foremost of the authoritative writers on the Tarot. Moreover, the actual interpretation of the Arcana as given by Ouspensky is more poetical than scientific or logical. A peculiar property of the East-European mind manifests itself in Ouspensky, when, in his interpretation, he very often allows himself to yield to the 'feeling of fear'. Some of the Arcana is 'terrifying' for him. I

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cannot agree with such an attitude, and as far as I know, neither does any other author.

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

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

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

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

Therefore, in this introduction, there must be given everything

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which does not belong directly to any one of the 22 Major Arcana. This brings us firstly to the *great central idea* of the whole construction of the Tarot. It is the Tetragrammaton.

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) If there is any manifestation in time and space (this does not necessarily mean only the three-dimensional physical space), then there must be *first, the acting element* or power which initiates (or begins)

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the process. We symbolize it by the figure one (1), and letter 'Yod' ך. This element is POSITIVE, DYNAMIC AND ACTIVE. The picture of the *First Arcanum* (or Trump) of the Tarot represents a Man, standing with one leg crossed (sometimes covered by long robes). He is also called a *Magician*.

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

- 2) Apart from the active primary principle (or as some would prefer 'creation') there is still a second element necessary for manifestation, which element being the receptacle, a screen, something to serve as a basis or fulcrum for the active ך (Yod). This element is passive, negative and material. Its number is, of course, (2), the Hebrew letter is 'Hé', ה, and the picture on the card is of a seated woman.
- 3) When ך acts upon ה, the third principle appears, having the number three (3) and letter 'Vau' ם. It is the result of the action, it is neutral, reflecting in itself the qualities of the first and second Trumps of the Tarot, just like a child depending upon its parents.
- 4) The primary 'THREE' as a whole forms a new unit, the 'first family', metaphysically conceived on the most subtle plane of being, next after the Unmanifested, Immaterial Absolute.

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

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

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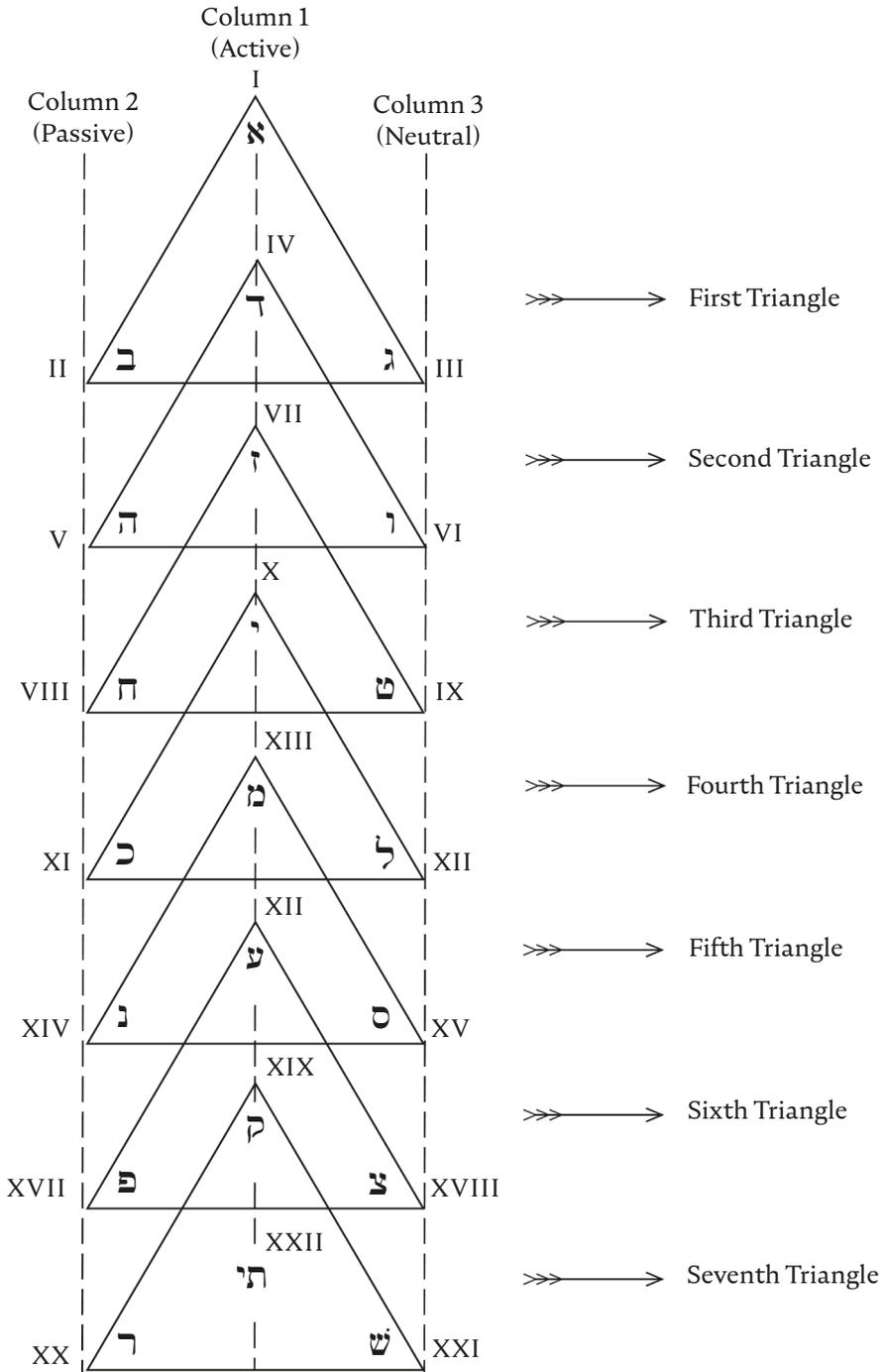


Fig.1 General Scheme of the Tarot (Major Arcana—I to XXI)

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This Law works on every plane of existence. In the abstract realm, we already had a look at it. On the astral plane, for example, it can be expressed as: Impulse (׳) Yod or (1) plus astral surroundings (2) creates emotion (3). The whole will form what we call ‘experience’ or the emotional process in man. Man (׳ Yod), wife (ן Hé) and child (ו Vau) are a unit (Second ן) of a new quality and of extended activity (4) able to repeat the primordial process in a wider field.

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

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

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

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

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

So now, when studying each of the Arcana separately, we can always remember WHICH IDEA is its basis, for each Major Arcanum has its

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

Now we will analyse the Minor Arcana. Actually, they are almost equivalent to the usual set of playing cards, with the difference that there is an additional ‘figure’ in each suit. It is the ‘Knight’. The traditional explanation of the Minor Arcana—unchanged by most competent authors—is as follows:

We already know that, within it, the Tarot includes four elements of occult wisdom: Alchemy, Astrology, the Kabbalah and Magic. I deliberately say ‘includes’ and not ‘is composed of’, as is erroneously stated by some people: for the Tarot is much more than just these sub-divisions

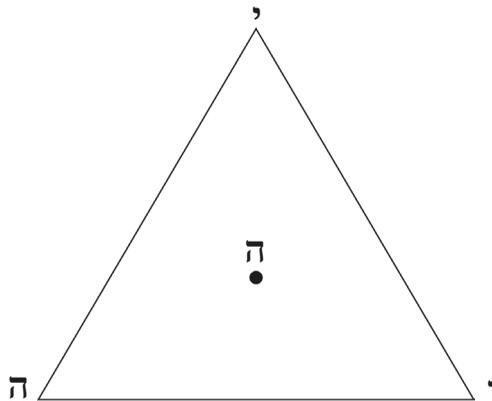


Fig. 2 Triangle

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of occultism. This we can recognize if we remember the definition of the Tarot which describes it as a 'philosophical machine'.

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

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

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

The *figures* have the following meaning:

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

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

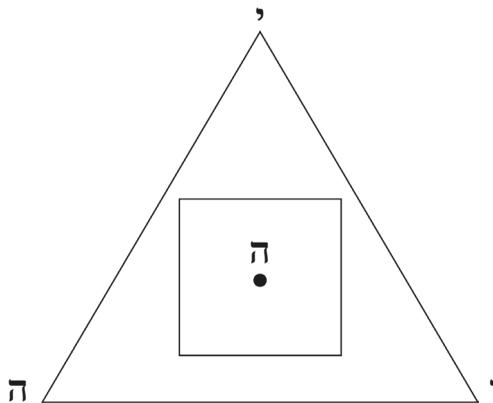


Fig. 3 A Square in a Triangle (Symbol of the Tarot)

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As we know, the *first cycle*, through its last element (or Second Hé) is the seed of the next, the *second square* (or cycle) in which five is the second element 𐌒 (First Hé), six the third 1 (Vau), seven the fourth 𐌒 (Second Hé). Similarly, seven is the first principle of the *third* or the last square, eight the second principle of the same; nine the third, and ten the fourth. In the same way, the last side of the triangle is completed. This triangle may be presented in two ways, as is shown in the general symbol of the Tarot. It can be placed inside the SQUARE, or it can contain the SQUARE (See Fig. 3).

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

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

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

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

For a *full understanding of every combination* of the Minor Arcana, an extensive study of their meaning and symbols is essential, plus a certain necessary amount of intuition. This does not come without long years of hard work, providing one is really interested in this subdivision of Hermetism. 'Le Maitre' ETTEILLA (his proper name was

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Alliette) the famous French fortune-teller and commentator on the Tarot (in its divinatory conception), is said to have developed and possessed such a knowledge and ability of intuitional synthesis, that it was sufficient for him to take only a quick look at the series of cards set out for his client in order to see the past, present and future fate of the person. Papus in his *Divinatory Tarot* widely uses Etteilla's conceptions and explanations of the significance of the Minor Arcana.

Nevertheless, the main philosophical value and usefulness of the Tarot lies in its 22 Major Arcana, or Trumps. Actually, they are the basis of the present book. Their symbols are at the same time so exact and flexible, so inspiring and yet leaving one so much liberty in their interpretation, that many writers have found it profitable to use the Tarot as a basis for their works, often without even mentioning its name.

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

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

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

- 1) If the student works properly and realizes the meaning of the symbols given, he will easily extend them, if he finds this useful for his mental processes. So, for example, the special unfolding of Solomon's Star

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and of the Pentagram, as sometimes encountered in old works about the Tarot, may be found independently and therefore may yield certain profit for an occultist.

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

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

Many people have an unquenchable thirst and curiosity to know mentally much more than recognized philosophical or psychological studies can offer them. Some want to systematize the degree of occult knowledge that they already possess, while others are keen to unveil

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certain secrets, which lie hidden behind the 'security walls' surrounding the main occult problems.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anyway, every occultist knows about this unwritten but very efficient law. *Now, on the other side of the coin*, we have, for example, a primitive native of Central Africa or New Guinea who certainly does not know anything about the manufacture of firearms or even of the physical laws which determine the functioning of a rifle or revolver. But once a weapon is placed in his hands and it is explained how to insert the cartridge and pull the trigger, he is capable of using the weapon to kill without the need for any other knowledge about it.

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

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

In two of my other books, *Concentration* and *Occultism and Spiritual Paths*, I have spoken extensively about this, that is about some

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

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

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

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

In spite of all this, there have been some books published which reveal sufficient data to give the 'keys' to some occult experiments. I had them about thirty years ago and learned quite a few things from them. Fortunately, they are no longer available. But there remains a large volume by Papus about the practices of Ceremonial Magic, in which enough material is given to enable a persistent and strong-willed person to perform some 'real' experiments, which sometimes seem to be harmless for those around them, but not necessarily so for the performer (see *In Days of Great Peace* the chapter 'My Path to Maharshi'). A special 'magic book' is required which must be a purely '*personal*' one, compiled and written by the operator himself at certain hours of the

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day and night according to astrological conditions, and which takes several months to prepare.

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

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

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

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

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

The Copper-Serpent: or the redemptive cliché of the middle astral, has

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

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

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

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forbidden to reveal anything about it, although his deep concern shows through his sad words at the conclusion of the chapter. In all these visions, the Egregor of France had the form of a cock, while the others were represented by different birds and animals as mentioned before.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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of Ruah with its own dim awareness, thereby sapping the evolutionary impulses.

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

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

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

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

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

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Ternary: this is essentially a neutralized *binary*. A ternary, contrary to a binary, is constructive and has multi-lateral uses in Hermetism. The number '3' is a sacred one, especially in some religions. The symbol of the ternary is a triangle. Depending on the action connected with the triangles, they may be involutory or evolutionary.

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

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

Mouni Sadhu
Melbourne, December, 1959

The illustrations of the 22 Major Arcana in this book were made by a Welsh artist—Phoebe Young of Cardiff.

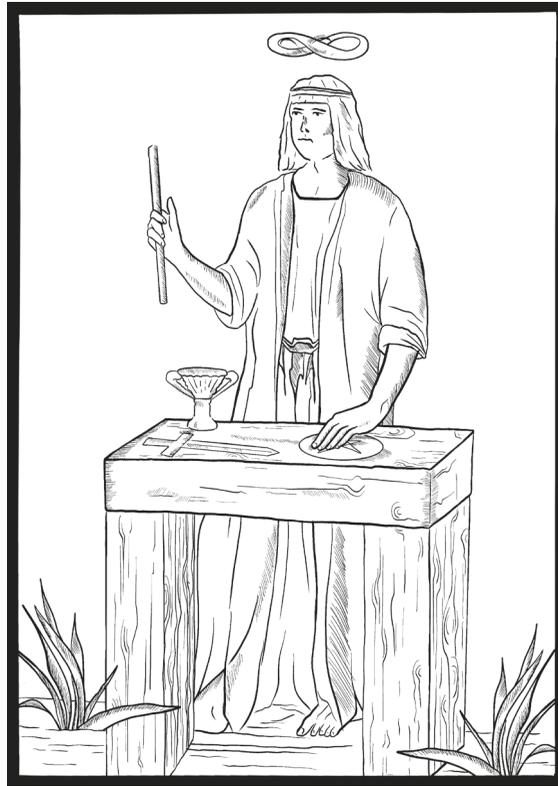
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THE HEBREW ALPHABET AS USED IN THE KABBALAH

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



Arcanum I
MAGUS
THE MAGICIAN



Aleph –
Letter = Mother

DIVINA ESSENTIA
VIR
NATURE NATURANS

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EXPLORING THE HIDDEN DEPTHS OF MAGIC AND THE WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION

In his defining masterpiece, Mouni Sadhu offers an encyclopaedic exploration of the Western esoteric tradition and magical philosophy with the Major Arcana of the Tarot as a guide. Complete with new illustrations, each of the one hundred and one lessons contained in this volume are packed with occult philosophy, symbolism, and hints for practice.

To discover the full value of this volume, students are advised to devote a week to each lesson, reading the text several times to ensure a thorough grasp of the important concepts contained within. Two years devoted to this study will result in a thorough understanding of hermetic occultism.

“Books that deserve the label ‘classic’ are rare, and usually well known to students of the occult. Every so often, however, a classic work drops out of print for reasons unrelated to its quality, and its rediscovery throws open the door to forgotten branches of occult knowledge. *The Tarot* is one of these classics. Sadhu provides a thorough grounding in the philosophy, symbolism, and practice of occultism. Those who give it the time, patience and study it deserves will come through the experience much the richer for it.”

John Michael Greer, author of *The Occult Philosophy Workbook* and *The Sacred Geometry Oracle*

Mouni Sadhu (1897–1971) is the pen name taken by Dymitr Sudowski, an occultist, spiritual teacher and author. The word ‘mouni’ means silent and ‘sadhu’ refers to a wandering holy man. The author studied many paths on the route to self-realization, from Western magic and hermeticism to the bhakti yoga teachings of Ramana Maharshi. His writings are a wealth of practical and useful information and advice. His books cover subjects such as concentration, meditation, spiritual growth, the higher consciousness, Theurgy and the Tarot.

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