

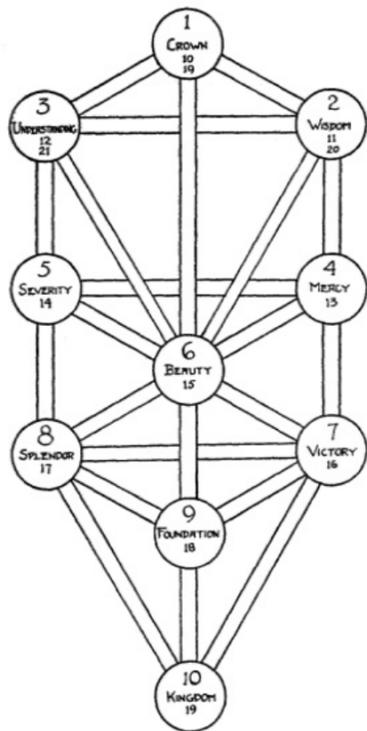
An Introduction  
to the  
Study of the Tarot

by Paul Foster Case

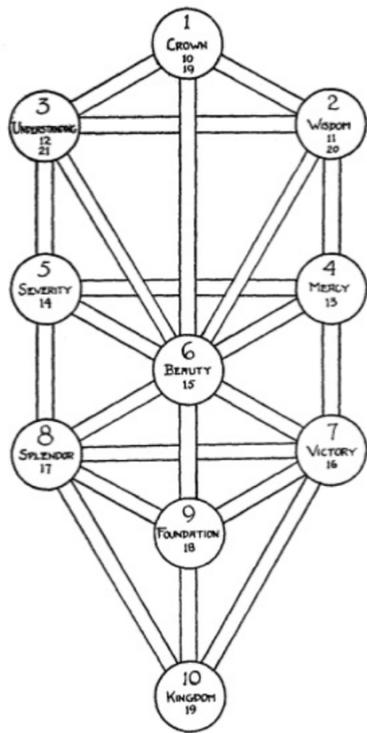
*As an erudite book, all combinations of which reveal the harmonies  
preexisting between signs and numbers, the practical value of the Tarot  
is truly and above all marvelous - Eliphas Levi*

*Originally published in New York, 1920*

THE TREE OF LIFE  
 and the  
 TWENTY-TWO PATHS OF THE SEPHER YETZIRAH



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### Preface

This book aims to show how to use the Tarot cards for the purpose of evoking thought, and thus bringing to the surface of the student's consciousness those great, fundamental principles of Occult Science which lie hidden in the hearts of all mankind. All these principles are based upon a single truth, and knowledge of that truth is innate in every human being; but not until it has been found and brought into the light of consciousness is it available for use. Hence the portals of ancient temples bore the motto, "Know Thyself;" hence Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, which is within you;" and Eckhartshausen declared: "As infinity in numbers loses itself in the unit which is their basis, and as the innumerable rays of a circle, are united in a single center, so it is also with the Mysteries; their hieroglyphics and infinitude of emblems have the object of exemplifying but one single truth. He who knows this has found the key to understand everything, and all at once."

Its rich symbolism and ingenious construction make the Tarot the best of all instruments for true occult education, i. e., for "drawing out" the wisdom hidden in the heart of man. Proper interpretation of these symbols, however, requires sonic knowledge of the elements of the Qabalah. The student will find these essentials in the first four chapters of this book. In connection with them, the frontispiece should be studied very carefully, for it is, in very truth, a key to all things occult.

The circles are the ten Sephiroth. Their numbers are printed above their names, and these are also the numbers of the Tarot trumps from the Magician to the Wheel of Fortune. Below the Sephirotic titles are the numbers of the major trumps which also correspond to those Sephiroth.

To those critics who may complain that my interpretations of the Tarot differ widely from most of those published hitherto, I would point out the fact that nearly all the explanations of the Tarot that have found their way into print have been based upon the false attribution of the cards to the Hebrew alphabet, used by Eliphaz Levi. He undoubtedly knew the true attribution, but for reasons which probably seemed to him sufficient, deliberately concealed it.

This is not the place to discuss those reasons; but for the benefit of any who may question my wisdom in publishing this attribution, let me say that I received it from no one. Following Court de Gebelin, who makes the zero card head the series of major trumps, and Levi, who says the cards illustrate the occult meaning of the Hebrew alphabet, I worked out this system some twelve years ago; and I believe that its results in the interpretation of the symbolism are sufficient evidence of its accuracy.

Finally, I have said nothing of the divinatory uses of the Tarot, not because I agree with those who deprecate its application to the art of divination; but rather because it is my belief that the best results in foretelling the future with the Tarot can be obtained by none who are not thoroughly grounded in the philosophy of the cares. Familiarity with their astrological meanings is practically indispensable for accurate divination. I hope, at some future time, to publish a work devoted exclusively to the astrological and divinatory uses of this remarkable alphabet of symbols.

New York City, December, 1919.

PAUL FOSTER CASE.

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CHAPTER I

For five centuries or more Tarot cards have been used in Europe, ostensibly for games and fortune-telling, but really to preserve the essentials of a secret doctrine. They form a symbolic alphabet of the ancient wisdom, and to their influence upon the minds of a few enlightened thinkers we may trace the modern revival of interest in that wisdom.

This revival may be said to date from 1854, when Eliphas Levi published *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, the first of a series of occult books in which he named the Tarot as his most important source of information. His influence appears in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky; it pervades the teachings of the French occult school, headed by Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse); it is developed for English readers in the works of S. L. MacGregor Mathers, A. E. Waite, Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, and others; it enters the New Thought movement in various ways, notably through the essays of Judge Troward, and it even extends to Scottish Rite Masonry in the United States, by way of Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma*, which repeats verbatim passage after passage from Levi's *Dogme et Rituel*.

Levi's opinion of the Tarot was very high. He recommended it to occult students as a key to all mysteries. "A prisoner devoid of books," he declared, "had he only a Tarot of which he knew how to make use, could in a few years acquire a universal science, and converse with an unequalled doctrine and inexhaustible eloquence."<sup>1</sup>

My aim is to show my readers how to use the Tarot. An exhaustive treatment of this subject would fill many volumes; but I hope to fulfill the promise of my title by giving a concise explanation of the general plan of the Tarot, and a brief interpretation of its emblems. Let it be understood, however, that this is merely an outline, which the student must complete with the results of his own observation and meditation.

A Tarot pack contains seventy-eight cards. Fifty-six - minor trumps, or lesser arcana - are divided into four suits: wands (clubs), cups (hearts), swords (spades) and pentacles (diamonds). Each suit includes four court cards - king, queen, knight and page - and ten spot cards, numbered from ace to ten. The spots, usually grouped in geometrical designs, are sometimes combined with pictures illustrating the divinatory meanings of the cards. The rest of the pack - major trumps, or greater arcana - is a series of symbolic pictures. Each has a special title, and bears a number.

The doctrine behind these symbols has assumed many forms. The Vedas are its oldest literary expression, but it was known, and transmitted orally from generation to generation, long before the Vedas passed into writing. In one sense it is that true Christian religion which, according to St. Augustine, always existed, and only began to be called Christian after the time of Jesus. It is the truth taught by such organized schools as the Rosicrucians and Craft Masonry, and by the Great School from which these and other similar societies have proceeded. It is veiled also by the symbols of alchemy and astrology. Hence the Tarot speaks many languages, and its emblems are full of meaning to every student of the ancient mysteries, no matter by what path he

<sup>1</sup> *Mysteries of Magic*, London, 1897, p. 285.

may have approached the truth which is at the heart of them all. Yet, though its symbolism is catholic, because it expresses universal ideas, the Tarot also represents a particular version of the sacred science. It is a symbolic alphabet of the occult philosophy of Israel—an emblematic synthesis of the Qabalah.

Its major trumps illustrate the occult meaning of the twenty-two Hebrew letters, as given in the Sopher Yetzirah. Much depends, therefore, on making sure that each is assigned to the letter. The numbers of the cards enable us to do this. Twenty-one are numbered consecutively, beginning with one. Obviously, they must follow each other in the order of their numbers. The whole problem, therefore, hinges upon the disposition of the other card, which sometimes has no number, but usually bears the zero-sign.

Eliphas Levi, probably to mystify uninitiated readers, puts it between the trumps numbered twenty and twenty-one. Others make it follow the twenty-first card. But if we ask, "What comes after twenty-one?" the answer is "Twenty-two," while if our question be, "What precedes one?" the reply is, "Nothing." Logically, then the zero card should be first in the series of major trumps, preceding the card bearing the number 1. It corresponds, therefore, to the first Hebrew letter, Aleph, and the rest of the major trumps are assigned to the remaining Hebrew letters in the natural order of their numbers.

Turning our attention to the minor trumps, let us begin with the symbolism of the four suits. They represent the four worlds, or planes of existence, which, in the Qabalah, are said to constitute the universe. Each world has its own characteristic activity, and is the abode of a principle of the human constitution, is typified by one of the "living creatures" mentioned in Ezekiel and Revelation; and as each creature represents one of the four cardinal signs of the zodiac, the suits are also symbols for those signs and for the occult elements" to which they correspond. The complete meaning of the suits is as follows:

WANDS: Atziluth, archetypal world; spirit; lion; Leo; fire.

CUPS: Briah, creative world; soul; eagle, Scorpio; water.

SWORDS. Yetzirah, formative world; astral body; man; Aquarius; air.

PENTACLES: Assiah, material world; material body; bull; Taurus; earth.

In each world are manifested ten "numerations," or Sephiroth, emanations from the Inscrutable Source of all existence (אין סוף), Ain Suph "No Limit." Each Sephirah has a name, and is the seat of a particular manifestation of intelligence.

They are:

1. Kether (כתר) Crown; Hidden Intelligence.
2. Chokmah (חכמה) Wisdom; Illuminating Intelligence.
3. Binah (בינה) Understanding; Sanctifying Intelligence.
4. Chesed (חסד) Mercy; Measuring Intelligence.
5. Geburah (גבורה) Strength; Radical Intelligence.
6. Tiphareth (תפארת) Beauty; Intelligence of the Mediating Influence.

7. Netzach (נצח) Victory; Occult Intelligence.
8. Hod (הוד) Splendor; Perfect Intelligence.
9. Yesod (יסוד) Foundation; Pure Intelligence.
10. Malkuth (מלכות) Kingdom, or Realization; Resplendent Intelligence.

These emanations are symbolized by the numbered cards of the minor trumps. Each suit of spot cards represents the Sephiroth or one of the four worlds. The court cards denote the four principles of the human constitution. Kings typify the spirit; queens represent the soul; knights correspond to the astral body; and pages symbolize the physical body. There are four of each, because each principle manifests simultaneously in all four worlds. Such is the general outline of the correspondence of the Tarot to the main points of the Qabalah. The student in whom this introductory chapter has aroused a desire to learn the deeper meanings of the Tarot should get the pack designed by Miss Pamela Coleman Smith, under the supervision of Mr. A. E. Waite. It is by far the best, and I shall make it the basis of the interpretations to be given in later chapters. It may be had from the publishers of AZOTH. Having procured the cards, let the student consider the various attributions, with the corresponding Tarots before him. Thus he will discover many things I have no space to mention in these pages. Let him, in particular, write out the full meaning of each minor trump, as indicated by its number and suit. It is really surprising how soon the fundamental propositions of the Qabalah may be memorized by this method. After finishing this preparatory work, the student will be ready to use the great key to the Tarot—a key mentioned by Eliphas Levi, which Papus attempted to use in preparing his Tarot of the Bohemians, but failed, because he employed an incorrect attribution of the major trumps to the Hebrew alphabet. This key is the sacred name, commonly rendered Jehovah in English. An interpretation of its meaning, and an explanation of its application to the Tarot will be found in the next chapter.

