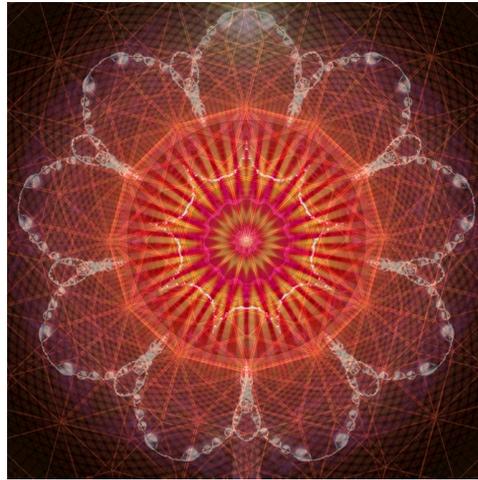


Spring 2017, Volume 12, Number 4



# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

*An independent publication dedicated to the trans-disciplinary investigation of the esoteric spiritual tradition.*

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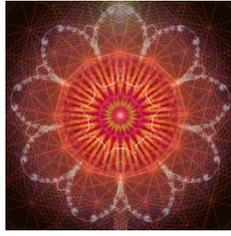
**Esoteric philosophy and its applications  
to individual and group service and  
the expansion of human consciousness.**



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# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

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The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric traditions. We also encourage feedback from readers. Comments of general interest will be published as Letters to the Editor. All communications should be sent to: [editor@esotericquarterly.com](mailto:editor@esotericquarterly.com).

## Personal and Planetary Healing

---

Esoteric philosophy places an emphasis on creative meditation, study and service as a way of life. Together these three enable us to become one with the soul or higher self, to acquire spiritual knowledge, and cooperate with Hierarchical intent by healing ourselves, humanity and the Planet. Broadly speaking, we are expected to become “points of contact” for the healing forces of the Planet as well as “channels for distribution.”

We are enjoined, therefore, to focus on the subjective dimensions of spiritual work in addition to serving outwardly as practical agents of change in the world who can heal the divisions existing within humanity and its many fields of human expression. During this current period of global crises and chaos such a charge is needed now more than ever to help ameliorate the many challenges we face and to bring the new and sustaining seeds of hope for the future.

David Borsos contributes the first in a series of articles that addresses the current global crisis and the disciple’s response to the world’s unsettled fate. The article is a “call to action,” urging esotericists to shake free from any complacency or false sense of security with respect to the Externalization of the Hierarchy and the coming New Age. Part One provides an assessment of the challenges that threaten human and planetary survival. As such, it serves as a context for Borsos’ ideas on the need for a bridge between the teachings of Djwhal Khul, as they are expressed in the writing of Alice A. Bailey, and academia that might facilitate planetary healing and reconstruction. The objective of this first article “is to encourage an examination and self-reflection within and between Bailey organizations, and students, and among students themselves regarding the work that has been done over the past seventy years, the effectiveness of these efforts, and possible directions for future work.”

Our next offering is from Zachary Lansdowne who contributes an article on the seven ray causes of inharmony and disease. Lansdowne’s focus is on the Third Ray, and he provides a verse-by-verse elucidation of the Third Ray Stanza as given by Djwhal Khul in *Esoteric Healing*. Before beginning his analysis, the author explains that the seven ray energies—the great informing Lives of the planets within our solar system—are limited and imperfect. Hence, all that comes within the range of their influence must necessarily share in this imperfection, with inharmony and disease being the inevitable result. In individuals who are conditioned by the Third Ray, this deficiency expresses as “the manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines,” which manifests in turn as endocrine and digestive problems. A better understanding of the connection between the rays and disease, as Lansdowne maintains, can lead to healing as well as greater compassion.

The final full-length article in this issue is from John Nash. In this article Nash explores the complex origins and evolution of the Tarot and its various uses. The article begins with an introduction of the significance of the Minor and Major Arcana. A brief history of the Tarot Decks is included beginning with the earliest playing cards and extending to the more modern Tarot decks, such as those associated with Golden Dawn, the O.T.O and the Builders of the Adytum. Nash discusses methods of production and the important role of aesthetics and color as carriers of energy or vibration as well as their use for purposes of meditation, healing and divination. He then turns to the article’s primary thesis, which is the Tarot’s use as talismans in Hermetic and Neo-platonic magic. The article provides examples of cards from various decks showing the differences in symbolic references, theme variation and color as they progressed over time.

Included in this issue is a review for a new book on the Tarot and the accompanying deck from Harry and Nicola Wendrich titled: *A Sephirothic Odyssey: A Journey in Consciousness with the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot, and Golden Dawn Temple Tarot Deck*. Our review for this article views the Wendrichs' book as "a good summary of traditional and more recent work on the Tarot, as interpreted in the Golden Dawn tradition. The authors' description of their spiritual adventures during creation of the Tarot deck is interesting in its own right."

In addition to these features, we have included two poems from the English poet Christopher Roe, titled *Sentinel of Silence* and *If Time were Mine*. Roe's poems are at once personal and universal. His innermost feelings resonate with ours. His words are words of clarity, of serene beauty and spiritual reflection in which we can all share. The two works offered here are from a collection of 45 poems titled, *In Search of Silence*. The collection is available at: [www.silentflightpublications.co.uk/](http://www.silentflightpublications.co.uk/).

Our "Pictures of the Quarter"—*Entwined*, *The Beginning* and *Un:named*—are from Jetter Green, a San Diego native. Green describes his geometrical works as having been inspired by "the concept of math as a universal language, the complex patterns found in nature, vivid colors, energetic properties and the infinite space" within us all. His work, which is "designed to heal, expand and explore life experience," is spontaneous and arises from the "free flow of consciousness." For more information on the artist and his work visit: <http://jettergreen.com/Jetter-Green>.

We also want to draw your attention to our advertising pages, which, among other things, includes a coupon for our readers from *Forgotten Books*. The coupon provides free online access to *Forgotten Books* online esoteric library of over 500,000 books.

An announcement for the *School for Esoteric Studies* annual Subjective Group Conference is also included. The theme of this year's conference is "Unity in Diversity: Science of Right Relationships." The conference is open

to all members of the worldwide esoteric community.

Donna M. Brown  
Editor-in-Chief

### **Publication Policies**

Articles are selected for publication in the *Esoteric Quarterly* because we believe they represent a sincere search for truth, support the service mission to which we aspire, and/or contribute to the expansion of human consciousness.

Publication of an article does not necessarily imply that the Editorial Board agrees with the views expressed. Nor do we have the means to verify all facts stated in published articles.

We encourage critical thinking and analysis from a wide range of perspectives and traditions. We discourage dogmatism or any view that characterizes any tradition as having greater truth than a competing system.

Neither will we allow our journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, groups, institutions, or nations. This policy applies to articles and features as well as to letters to the editor. In turn, we understand that the author of an article may not necessarily agree with the views, attitudes, or values expressed by a referenced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that an author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

An issue of concern in all online journals is potential volatility of content. Conceivably, articles could be modified after the publication date because authors changed their minds about what had been written. Accordingly, we wish to make our policy clear: We reserve the right to correct minor typographical errors, but we will not make any substantive alteration to an article after it "goes to press."

Additionally, we expect authors to disclose any prior publication of an article, adapted from a book or any another source, at the time of its submission.

## Letters to the Editor

---

I wish to commend John Nash for his fascinating and well-researched article on the *Origins and Evolution of the Tarot*. It is a special pleasure to read such a scholarly and thought-provoking article on a subject that has received little attention in certain esoteric circles due to its perceived use as a simple prognostication device. This article does much to mitigate concerns about the Tarot as an unworthy or even unwholesome form of esotericism.

I found the article to be thoroughly engaging. Especially appreciated was the author's in-depth discussion of what talismans are and how and why they are used, all of which adds significantly to the reader's understanding of their importance.

The possible link between the Tarot and Sensa was also quite interesting. It is certainly possible to view the Major Arcana as "one of the seven dialects or forms" of Sensa. Indeed, some theosophists have speculated that one of these sacerdotal languages could be the non-linguistic language of painting or pictographs.

While the connections to India, Egypt, the archetypes and Hermetic and Neo-platonic magic, as outlined by the author, certainly have merit, it is my understanding that the Tarot and the Major Arcana of the Marseille deck in particular, began as illustrations of the Sumero-Babylonian myths that were preserved in the cylinder seals and were either distorted or poorly copied by people who had little understanding of their significance. Helena Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. III, p. 108, Blavatsky supports this view by saying that:

The real Tarot, in its complete symbology, can be found only in the Babylonian cylinders, that anyone can inspect and study in the British Museum and elsewhere. Anyone can see these Chaldean, antediluvian rhombs, or revolving cylinders, covered with sacred signs; but the secrets of these divining "wheels," or,

as de Mirville calls them, 'the rotating globes of Hecate,' have to be left untold for some time to come.

Indeed, comparisons between the images on the cylinders and the Marseille deck are, in this writer's opinion, quite convincing. That said, it is the case that some cylinder seals and images were used as amulets and talismans as Nash claims, in addition to being used in formal contracts and for decorative purposes. But, to my mind, that seems not to have been their original purpose.

Blavatsky distinguishes between the two different Taros or Tarots: the purely Esoteric Tarot, and the Western or the Kabalistic Tarot "that was remodeled by the Shemites." "This Taro," she claims is "but the distorted echo of the Secret Doctrine of the Chaldeans, and the real Tarot is found in the Book of Numbers now in possession of some Persian Sufis." (Collected Writings, Vol. 14, p.174.) In fact, some Sufis, view the seals and their corresponding depictions in the Marseille deck as allegories representing various states and stages of psychological and spiritual development (see for example, Nicolas Swift's *Mirror of the Free*). Furthermore, as Swift and other researchers have shown, the wisdom they contain corresponds closely with the teachings of Ibn al 'Arabi and others.

The origin and meaning of the word "Tarot" is also quite revealing. The theosophist, Mayananda, who dedicated his book on the Tarot to A.A.B., says that we have to consider the word in its complete form "Tarota or "Taro-Rota," which means the Wheel of the Law or the Law of the Wheel, as a symbol of universal life or the "wheel of samsara" (*The Tarot for Today*, p. 11.)

Mayananda is responsible for developing the Horus arrangement, a circular arrangement of Triads with the Fool or 0 at the center. The arrangement also depicts the Three Gunas and the Seven Rays as they manifest through the Major Arcana.

Others point to a different etymology. Jean Alexandre Vaillant, for example, in a history of the Roma or Gypsies, connects “Tarot” to the Babylonian Goddess *Ashtaroth* or As-tarot (also Astarte, the morning star and the chief female deity worshiped in ancient Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan), and to the *Inda-Tartar* or Tan-tara (Zodiac). The link to the Zodiac further strengthens its relationship to the Chaldean “Book of Numbers.” McGregor Mathews maintained that “Taro” comes from the Egyptian *taru*, which means, “to consult.” Another figure, Antione Court de Gebelin, in his *Study on the Tarots*, says that there are several ancient Egyptian words preserved in the Tarot, one of these is *taro*, derived from *tar*, meaning road, and *ro*, *ros* or *rog* meaning royal, which means royal road or kings highway. There are plenty of other associations, such as *Taro* (law) and *Troa* (door in Hebrew), and *Rota* (wheel) and *Orat* that which speaks), both in Latin.

Finally, as Mayanada points out, the Tarot represents a synthesis of the chief symbolic languages. These diverse languages or systems are:

Numerical;  
Geometrical  
Astrological  
Mythological  
Theosophical

Nash’s article suggests as much by stating that Hermeticism is “a blend of magic, astrology, divination and alchemy.” As such, the Tarot can be said to epitomize the prime Hermetic Sciences—the Qabalah, Alchemy, Astrology, Numerology and the various divisions of Magic. Such a synthesis of systems would certainly be useful in the creation of talismans or in magic rituals, but it also suggests a superior usage.

All these considerations point to the Tarot’s ancient origins, and to a more profound purpose having to do not only with magic talismans and divination, as the author so eloquently argues, but to a timeless method of spiritual instruction in which the cards serve as mandalas for spiritual transformation.

Donna M. Brown  
Washington, DC.



**T**hank you to the EQ and Donna Brown for her informative, insightful, and provocative introduction to the profound mysteries of Sufism.

Although Ms. Brown’s reference to “the Central Asian Sufi tradition where Gurdjieff allegedly obtained his teachings” is in keeping with conventional interpretations, I believe it is a subtle, but significant misrepresentation; one which further complicates consideration of the history of universal Sufism. In his book, “Struggle Of The Magicians,” William Patrick Patterson, a contemporary Fourth Way scholar, notes several authors put forward the idea—that Gurdjieff cobbled his teaching together from numerous esoteric sources, including Sufism and Tibetan mysticism—in many of the books that appeared in the first two decades following Gurdjieff’s death. But, as

Patterson points out, P.D. Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff’s claim that there were four principal lines of esoteric teachings: the Hebraic, the Egyptian, the Persian, and the Hindu. In contrast to those lines, Gurdjieff stated unequivocally that the Fourth Way “is completely self-supporting and independent of other lines and it has been completely unknown up to the present time.” [“In Search Of The Miraculous,” p. 286]

I believe the confusion about the sources of Gurdjieff’s “teaching” reflects, in part, a conflation of the term’s two distinct meanings: as a body of knowledge; and a method of instruction. While the details of his twenty-year searching are unknown, it is most likely Gurdjieff had been an initiate of a Sufi order, which resulted in him subsequently incorporating various Sufi practices and

disciplines into his method of instruction. Moreover, there are many significant aspects of the Fourth Way which are strikingly congruent with Sufi psychological and cosmological theory. But if we grant credence to Gurdjieff's claims about the Fourth Way being an ancient independent teaching—unknown until he introduced it in its latest form—it may be that it is the source of the universal line of Sufism. I submit this idea only for the purpose of identifying a potentially significant factor in considering Sufism's origins.

Nevertheless, Donna Brown's caveat—that “the inner, oral and initiatic dimensions of Sufism ... are veiled from the uninitiated”—is an essential qualification which significantly delimits outsiders' discussions of Sufism's essential aims and truths, as well as its hidden history. For example, in “Memories Of A Sufi Age,” Sirkar van Stolk recalls a conversation he had with Hazrat Inayat Khan after the master had given a series of lectures in Stockholm—which had been received with various degrees of appreciation. Inayat Khan addressed van Stolk's confusion about the purposes of his lectures by asking: “Did you think that my whole work consists of the giving of lectures?” He went on to explain that the lectures were but “a screen” for his real work which “lies in the higher spheres.” Khan explained: “One of the most important tasks I have to fulfill is the tuning of the inner spheres in the different countries I visit, to a higher pitch of vibration. That is why I have to travel so much.” [p. 62]

With respect to that travel, there is a fascinating correspondence between the places Hazrat Khan and G.I. Gurdjieff travelled. My

admittedly cursory examination indicates that, in the early part of the twentieth century, they were in Russia in 1914 and London in 1922, visited New York and other American cities in the 1920s, and lived and worked in Paris and environs during the 1920s. Moreover, both Khan and Gurdjieff stated their teachers had sent them to the West in order to disseminate Eastern esoteric knowledge and understanding. In the context of Ms. Brown's discussion of universal Sufism, the parallel lines of these two masters' profound works suggest a tantalizing commonality of purpose. Hazrat Khan's comment about the importance of him being physically present in order to ‘tune the inner spheres’ of the places he visited suggests that, in addition to providing different paths through their teachings, he and Gurdjieff were carrying out work which was dependent upon their being. While that suggestion is at odds with the assumptive framework underlying most Westerners' thinking, it gives pause to those who recognize the importance of esoteric teachings—as it serves as a reminder that the meaning and purpose of any esoteric master's teaching remains hidden from all but those who have been initiated into its inner circle.

Finally, in considering the significance of teachers and teachings, Hazrat Khan's observation—that the quality of the disciples influenced the murshid's own insights and awareness—provides an important reminder of the dynamic and malleable nature of the teacher-pupil relationship in the transmission, promulgation, and evolution of any esoteric teaching.

James Moffatt  
Toronto, Ontario

## Poems of the Quarter by Christopher Roe

---

### *Sentinel of Consciousness*

From the first prayers,  
And dreams of my journey,  
A silent voice  
Has stood sentinel  
Within my soul.

No answers given,  
No miracles offered.  
No blinding light  
To penetrate the darkness.  
No dogma or creed,  
No sectarian vision,  
Only silent prayer,  
Through times of joy and pain.

This silent voice,  
This sentinel of conscience,  
Has been my shadow,  
Has shared my life,  
Has given reason enough  
To continue my journey  
Through darkness,  
And on, into the light.

### *If Time Were Mine to Give*

Your love is the space  
In which I exist.

Your truth and inspiration  
Drives light  
Into the darkest corners  
Of my life.

If time were mine to give,  
I would give it all to you.

## Pictures of the Quarter by Jetter Green

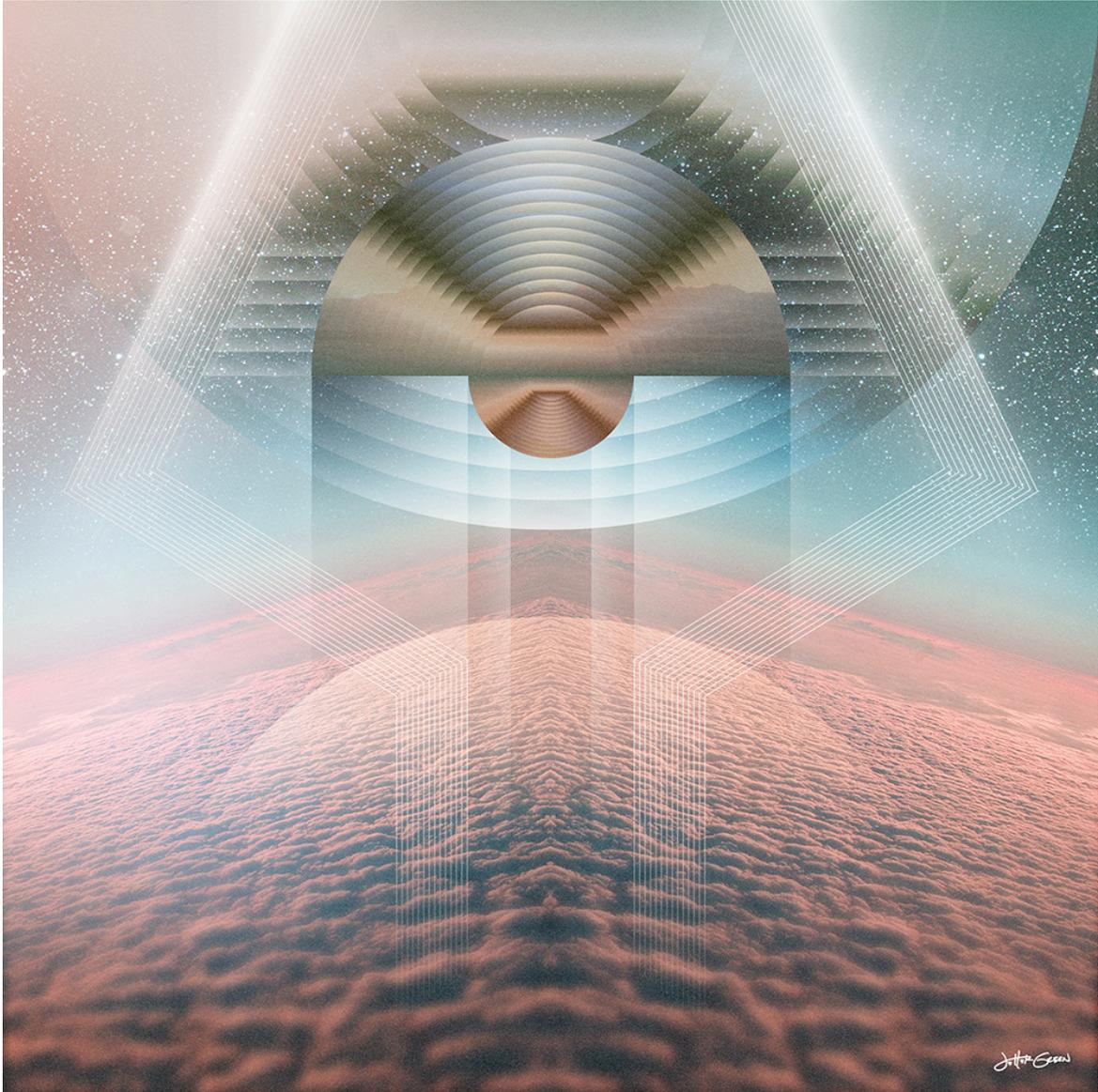
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Entwined | by Jetter Green | 2014



The Beginning | by Jetter Green | 2012



Un:named | by Jetter Green | 2016

## Quotes of the Quarter

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A spirituality that is only private and self-absorbed, one devoid of an authentic political and social consciousness, does little to halt the suicidal juggernaut of history. On the other hand, an activism that is not purified by profound spiritual and psychological self-awareness and rooted in divine truth, wisdom, and compassion will only perpetuate the problem it is trying to solve, however righteous its intentions. When, however, the deepest and most grounded spiritual vision is married to a practical and pragmatic drive to transform all existing political, economic, and social institutions, a holy force – the power of wisdom and love in action – is born. This force I define as Sacred Activism.

Andrew Harvey, *Institute for Sacred Activism*, <http://www.andrewharvey.net/sacred-activism/>

This emphasis on spirituality in our day is no accident. In the 1950's or 60's, the distinction between religion and spirituality was virtually unheard-of. But the very historical forces, which are splintering our societies, has also fed the mushrooming of spiritual interests. Historians know that a tumultuous age provoke intense spiritual concern, a rethinking of basic issues, a new mining of religious sources.

Daniel A. Helminiak, *Spirituality for Our Global Community* (London: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), xv.

I am deeply convinced that [the answer] lies in what I have already tried to suggest – in that spiritual dimension that connects all cultures and in fact all humanity. If democracy is not only to survive but to expand successfully and resolve those conflicts of cultures, then, in my opinion, it must rediscover and renew its own transcendental origins.... Planetary democracy does not yet exist, but our global civilization is already preparing a place for it: It is the very Earth we

inhabit, linked with Heaven above us. Only in this setting can the mutuality and the commonality of the human race be newly created, with reverence and gratitude for that which transcends each of us, and all of us together. The authority of a world democratic order simply cannot be built on anything else but the revitalized authority of the universe.

Václav Havel, *Stanford Lecture 2009*, Stanford University Video Collection.

The premise behind this idea of universal responsibility is the simple fact that, in general terms, all others desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering. If we, as intelligent human beings, do not accept this fact, there will be more and more suffering on this planet. If we adopt a self-centred approach to life and constantly try to use others for our own self-interest, we may gain temporary benefits, but in the long run we will not succeed in achieving even personal happiness, and world peace will be completely out of the question.

His Holiness, the Dali Lama, *A Human Approach to World Peace* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1985), 7.

Healing is, by definition, taking a process of disintegration of life and transforming into a process of return to life. The mind alone cannot accomplish such a task. Only the Soul had the power to bring the body back to life.

Caroline Myss, *Defy Gravity: Healing Beyond the Bounds of Reason* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2009), xiii.

We can attain the greatest perfection in the description of disease, we can know precisely what happens in the organism in terms of modern physiology and physiological chemistry; and yet we may still not be able to heal the disease at all. In healing we must proceed not from the histological or microscopic

diagnosis, but from the great universal connections.

Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture* (Revised ed.; London, ENG: Rudolf Steiner, Press, 2004), 96.

The primary medicine of the future will be rays, the vibratory nature of which is more compatible with the molecular atomic nature of the human body. Healing rays can reach into the atomic disorder of cells in chronic diseases. There is also much healing energy in the sun's rays, though the harmful effects of overexposure must be avoided.

Paramahasna Yogananda,  
<http://www.yogananda.com.au/gurus/yoganandaquotes05b.html>.

The healer in the New Age does not and will not work directly with the physical body at all: being an occultist, he will regard the body not as a principle. He works practically entirely with the etheric body and the vital energies, leaving those energies to make their impact on the automaton of the physical body according to directed intent: they will then produce their effect according to the response of that body, conditioned as it will be by many factors. The healer has to think clearly before he can bring about the desired results, but the energy poured into the patient's vehicle is not mental energy, but one of the seven forms of pranic or life energy. This travels along the line of force or the channel which relates and links all the centers and connects those centers with the glands.

Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis Trust, 1951), 538.

We find ... that the Tarot is closely related to the Great Pyramid, to prophecy, philosophy, to the secret schools of initiation of the ancient world and to the priesthood of Egypt, Persia and Babylonia in particular. We find the Tarot to be intimately related to astrology, chiromancy, spiritualism and the Bible. This last connection is so close the Tarot has been thought to be nothing less than the long sought key to a true interpretation of the Bible, an interpretation in

accordance with the thinking men who produced it.

Rudolfo Benavides, *The Prophetic Tarot and the Great Pyramid* (Mexico: Editores Mexcanos Unidos, 1974), 9.

The esoteric teaching of the Tarot is a body of knowledge based on material that was revealed orally because it could not have been communicated in any other way. It addresses the zone in which the soul hovers between the body and spirit, thus bridging the inner and outer worlds. I believe that the main theme in the major arcana is the development, step-by-step, of humankind. It depicts our spiritual cosmic background, its condensation and descent into matter; it then describes what is encountered at the individual level, as one attempts the journey to reconnect body, soul and spirit.

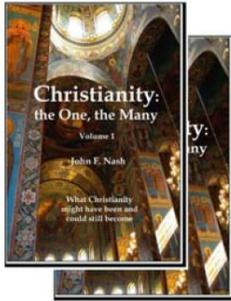
Dr. Irene Gad, *The Tarot and Individuation* (York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hays, Inc., 1994), xxvi).

The well-known series of medieval designs for the Trumps as affixed to the playing cards and even today largely used abroad both for prognostication and as an ordinary game, is here claimed to have a much earlier origin and uses of an entirely different kind. It certainly shows the symbolic arrangement which implies the basics of such diverse systems as the following: Numerical; Geometrical; Astrological; Mythological; Theosophical and, summing them up, its own basic Ontological. In this arrangement Symbolism is seen to infuse all Mantric Art as the manifest form of the "Universal Law of Equilibrium." Such appears to be the underlying aim and theme of the Tarot design..."

Mayananda, *The Tarot for Today* (London: The Zeus Press, 1963), 11.

The tarot is an outer oracle of which the inner oracle is the source.

Philippe St. Genoux, *Tarot* (London: ENG: Black Dog Press, 2015), 5.



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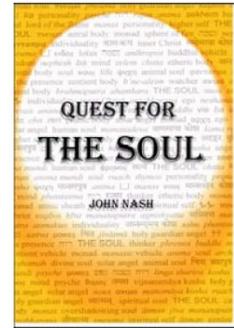
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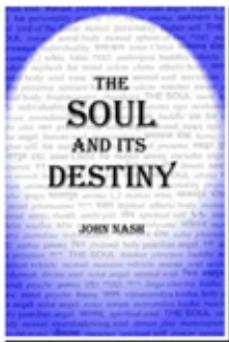
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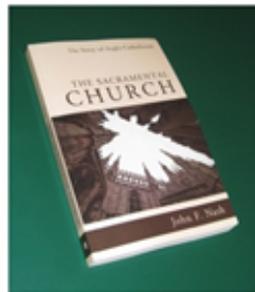
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# Cosmic Fire Studies and Academia – A Manifesto

## Part I: The Need

David C. Borsos

### Abstract

This article suggests a practical plan of action for transforming our global crises and inaugurating a new age of solidarity, cooperation, and right human relations. The plan entails building a bridge between the wisdom expressed in the writings of Alice A. Bailey (Cosmic Fire Studies) and academia, an effort that will in turn precipitate greater understanding and help mobilize the forces of goodwill within humanity. In Part I, “The Need,” context for this plan is established by describing our current global crises in light of Bailey’s analysis of the global crises of 1914–1945 and her allied calls to action. The question as to whether or not such a bridge should be built is explored in depth. In Part II, “The Work,” an argument is made that Bailey’s published writings should serve as a singular model for illuminating academic research. Examples are offered where Bailey’s ideas may contribute to the fields of religious studies, philosophy, and science. The article closes by offering practical suggestions for undertaking this work and by acknowledging some of the many challenges it will face.

*“And though the past has its share of injustice  
Kind was the spirit in many a way  
But its protectors and friends  
have been sleeping  
Now it’s a monster and will not obey”*

“Monster”

Written by Jerry Edmonton and John Kay -  
1969  
Steppenwolf

### Introduction

Ten years ago Nancy Seifer published an article in *The Esoteric Quarterly* alerting disciples to the warning issued by the Tibetan

teacher Djwhal Khul regarding the possible “total destruction of mankind.”<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan asserts that this catastrophic outcome can only be avoided if fundamental changes in human thinking and action are brought about through three recognitions by the year 2025—recognition of the world of meaning, of the Hierarchy, and of the Plan. He states that these recognitions should be the focus of all educational work to be undertaken by students of his teachings until that time and he further asserts that this endeavor will only be successful against the impending forces of destruction “provided . . . that the inertia so prevalent among spiritual people is overcome.”<sup>2</sup>

As students of the Tibetan’s teachings and in light of the enormous crises facing humanity today we must ask ourselves with complete honesty if we have overcome inertia, the force of habit, and spiritual pride. Are we adaptable and creative in recognizing new and effective modes of education? Do we embrace a humble attitude and endeavor to understand the complex worldviews and languages of science, religion, and philosophy that express the

### About the Author

David C. Borsos, PhD was founding director of Light on the Bay (1982-2001), a World Goodwill Unit of Service. In the early 1990s he served briefly as a faculty member of the University of the Seven Rays. His dissertation (California Institute of Integral Studies, 2012) reconstructs Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative rationality in the light of Alice Bailey’s esoteric philosophy. More recently he has published “Communicative *prajñā*: Cultivating solidarity and establishing right human relations” in a special issue of *The International Communication Gazette* (2015). He lives in Oakland, California and can be contacted at: dborsos2@gmail.com.

“newest mind” through which we must translate esoteric teachings for the public?<sup>3</sup> Are we fearless and willing to sacrifice everything in the endeavor to educate public opinion with regard to the Soul, the Hierarchy, and the Plan on the scale necessary to avert global disaster? Or are we sleeping—quietly doing our subjective work, talking amongst ourselves, and offering modest programs for the interested public while the “Monster” grows steadily in power?<sup>4</sup>

Seifer noted that after sixty years of opportunity there was little evidence that the three necessary recognitions had been brought to public awareness. Now, ten years later, it appears that Seifer’s urgent call as well as the Tibetan’s numerous warnings have been largely ignored by the community of Bailey students. Seifer’s article generated little or no discussion<sup>5</sup> and “the three recognitions” have *not* been brought to public attention on the scale necessary to avoid the total destruction toward which humanity and the planet are rapidly heading. Writings published by students of the Tibetan’s teachings and website information provided by most Bailey organizations contain little sense of urgency and offer few innovative suggestions that might help avert this possible destruction. Rare is the voice within the Bailey community that calls for new thinking and immediate practical action. In addition to Seifer, esoteric scholar Phillip Lindsay stands as a prominent exception. In his monthly writings he consistently focuses light on the prevalent activity of “the Forces of Materialism,” the forces of evil that contribute to our world crises. He asserts, “The urgency and immediacy of the problem is now so pressing that radical and swift action must be taken.”<sup>6</sup>

Most Bailey students and organizations offer an optimistic interpretation of our global situation by acknowledging our current crises in a cursory manner and by attributing the underlying causes to events such as “crises of initiation,” (either human or planetary) or to “descending energies” originating from outside our planetary life.<sup>7</sup> This traditional approach finds the solutions to our apparent crises to lie in a redoubling of our efforts to fulfill tasks outlined by the Tibetan (such as promoting the

use of the Great Invocation on a wide scale) and in offering modest experiments with new forms of organized service activities. According to this perspective, everything is working out according to the Plan and the imminent “Reappearance of the Christ and Externalization of the Hierarchy” is assured, as is the ultimate triumph of good over evil.<sup>8</sup>

There is another interpretation of our current situation based in part on readings of the Tibetan’s teachings that acknowledges the possibility that humanity and the physical planet earth are doomed to destruction, either through divine “intervention in the form of widespread cataclysm”<sup>9</sup> or as the result of a cosmic initiation undertaken by our planetary Logos. In light of an esoteric interpretation of the *Book of Revelation*, suggestions made by Rudolf Steiner, and ideas found in the *Terra Lucida* teachings, esoteric scholar Dorje Jinpa suggests that as conscious life is transferred to higher dimensions of Being through this initiatory process and as the accompanying “alchemical transformation” or “spiritualization of the ethereal body of the Earth” takes place, humanity, excluding “the elect,” may suffer annihilation—rapidly for many in ongoing cataclysms of war, poverty, and natural disasters, and for those surviving, over an enormous period of time in “the fire of karmic retribution” as the planet slowly disintegrates.<sup>10</sup>

As one example of the Tibetan’s many warnings regarding the likely catastrophe awaiting humanity if necessary actions are not undertaken he asserts:

It [the spiritual Hierarchy of the planet] is primarily interested in humanity, realizing that the steps taken by humanity *in the immediate future* [1947] will condition the new age and determine man’s destiny. Will it be a destiny of annihilation, of a planetary war, of worldwide famine and pestilence, of nation rising against nation and of the complete collapse of all that makes life worth living? All this can happen unless basic changes are made and made with goodwill and loving understanding.<sup>11</sup>

A decade earlier he noted the importance of organizing the human mind so that new ideas

could be understood and he emphasized “that *today is the day of opportunity . . . a period of immense cyclic importance.*”<sup>12</sup> Knowing that his students needed to be aroused from their apathy he further emphasized that it is “*the day*” of opportunity, not “*a day.*” It is a moment of opportunity that will not last. Now, seventy or more years later, it appears that the day of opportunity may have passed as we are in fact facing “a destiny of annihilation, of a planetary war, of worldwide famine and pestilence, of nation rising against nation and of the complete collapse of all that makes life worth living.”

Between these two widely divergent perspectives depicting assured triumph or likely catastrophe I offer an alternative interpretation and plan of action. This approach is based on statements found in Bailey’s writings that emphasize the human causes of our current crises, the encroachment of evil, and the need to combat this evil with unremitting effort both subjectively on the plane of mind and objectively on the physical plane in the “hard arena of daily and public life.” The situation today is arguably more difficult than it was during World War II because evil is not now focused in specific nations and armies that can be confronted directly but rather penetrates all aspects of our so-called civilization—political, economic, educational, and most others. I suggest that a primary reason for our current crises is the same as that given by the Tibetan seventy years ago:

The reason for the corrupt politics and the greedy ambitious planning of so many of the world’s leading men can be found in the fact that spiritually minded men and women have not assumed—as their spiritual duty and responsibility—the leadership of the people. They have left the power in the wrong hands and permitted the selfish and the undesirable to lead.<sup>13</sup>

As these conditions of greed and corruption remain true today it seems clear that a central aspect of addressing our current crises effectively is for students of the Tibetan’s teachings to assume their spiritual duty and responsibility by taking active leadership roles in educating the public and the intelligentsia. The Tibet-

an goes on to state not only that “an intelligent and cooperative public opinion must be developed in every land” but that this work, “a major spiritual duty,” could be accomplished in twenty-five years “*if the spiritual people of the world will become genuinely active.*”<sup>14</sup> As Seifer notes, the Tibetan’s many optimistic pronouncements are often conditional—the Plan is not unfolding inexorably but rather depends upon the work of aspirants and disciples to successfully mobilize the goodwill inherent within humanity. It seems obvious that this work has not been accomplished in the past seventy years because “the spiritual people of the world” have *not* become sufficiently active in educating public opinion. I am cautiously optimistic that disaster can be avoided but only if effective, immediate action is taken to oppose evil and to activate the potent goodwill within humanity. Efforts to establish “the three recognitions” and to engender “the divine idea” in human consciousness will help redirect human thinking and action, manifest the potencies of goodwill, and transfer power to those intent on establishing right human relations.

Building a bridge to the academic community is an important and necessary approach for manifesting the light, love, and power of the Soul within humanity. It is through the intelligentsia that we will most quickly and effectively reach the wider public and the women and men of goodwill who must be mobilized if we are to have any success in resolving the enormous crises confronting us today. As the Tibetan stated long ago, in words that are still applicable yet unfulfilled,

The world today is in the throes of agony . . .  
 . . . To those of you who have the inner sight and intuitive comprehension comes *the opportunity to aid that apprehension and to lead a despairing world*—deep cast into darkness and distress—one step nearer to the light. *The work you have to do is to take the knowledge which is yours and adjust its application to the world’s need so that recognition of the truth may be rapid.* In the heart of every man lies hid the flower of the intuition. On that you can depend, and no eternal or cosmic fact *clothed in a suitable*

*form* will fail to receive its meed of recognition and understanding.<sup>15</sup>

In light of this stated opportunity and directive to demonstrate leadership by translating esoteric truths into suitable forms that will be recognized and applied, I offer this manifesto, this call to action.

This article is structured as follows. In Part I, “The Need,” I first relate my experience of awakening to the prevalence of evil and perceiving the need for immediate, effective action. This is followed by a description of our current global crises and numerous statements made by the Tibetan regarding the previous global conflagration (1914–1945)—statements referenced to demonstrate the similarity of both the causes of these crises and the necessary responses. The fundamental question as to whether or not Bailey students should attempt to build a bridge between the esoteric and academic communities is then addressed. Five possible reasons not to undertake this proposal are considered and counterarguments are given. Reasons why we should attempt this effort are then put forth, reasons based on implicit and explicit injunctions found in Bailey’s writings. In Part II, “The Work,” I clarify that I am focusing this project specifically on Bailey’s writings and I distinguish these writings from related teachings and traditions. I then ground the project by suggesting several areas in religious studies, philosophy, and science wherein Bailey students might initiate dialogues with the intelligentsia working in academia. Finally, some practical suggestions for how these dialogues might be undertaken are offered and some of the many challenges that will confront this effort are addressed. Throughout the article I provide numerous references to both support my arguments with direct statements from the Tibetan and to offer Bailey students and academics some resources for entering each other’s respective domains.

### **Our Current Global Crises**

This article is neither an abstract presentation regarding some esoteric topic nor a scholarly analysis offered from an objective third-person point of view. Rather, it is a personal assessment based on thirty-five years of

experience working within the Bailey community and a fervent call to action. As noted, this article follows upon Seifer’s intelligent, heartfelt, and urgent plea sent forth ten years ago. As her article did not generate the response I think it deserves from the community of Bailey students I believe that her original plea, and many of the Tibetan’s as well, need to be again enunciated clearly and forcefully, as the crises we face today demand new thinking and courageous action.

### ***Awakening to the Prevalence of Evil***

The methods we select for responding to the current crises confronting humanity and the planet will depend in large part on our perceptions and assumptions. For decades my own political, social, and environmental perceptions and assumptions were fairly inchoate and quite naïve. I was awake to the fact that humanity faced serious challenges but did not give specific issues much thought. I simply assumed that good would ultimately triumph over evil and that humanity would undoubtedly be able to solve its problems and inaugurate an era of peace and cooperation. I assumed that humanity’s problems were under control, that they were being addressed by a multitude of divine forces, and that we, as agents of these forces, would eventually solve them. Success appeared inevitable because I believed that the Reappearance of the Christ and the Externalization of the Hierarchy were imminent; the evolution of consciousness and social progress were assured; and the potent force of goodwill within humanity would be effectively mobilized as we strode forth into the New Age.

In fact, however, I was asleep. I no longer believe these assumptions are necessarily true. Holding these benign and hopeful assumptions allowed me to avoid facing the reality and growing strength of evil in today’s world—the “Monster”—an aspect of Humanity’s Shadow/Dweller as Lindsay has described it. In essence, I held one “simple” interpretation of evil that presumed its cosmic defeat and the certain slow death of its planetary Lodge.<sup>16</sup> I subconsciously blended this rather innocuous understanding of evil with mainstream rational sensibilities to distance myself even further from it. Aside from philosophical and theolog-

ical musings on questions of theodicy, rational agents rarely speak of evil in today's modern and postmodern world aside from rhetorical statements occasionally hurled by world leaders (e.g., "evil empire;" "axis of evil;" "the Great Satan") or espoused by members of the punditocracy. What we are actually confronted with, according to the mainstream view, is not evil *per se* but rather systemic problems or anomalies that will eventually yield to rational analysis, technological solutions, pragmatic legislation, and political will. Not willing to face the reality of evil or its implications, I averted my eyes and numbed myself to it while assuming that the "will-to-good" would somehow triumph. I kept my head down and simply got on with my "esoteric work."

I received a wake-up call a few years ago during a public lecture given by Brian Swimme and Richard Tarnas, two professors at the California Institute of Integral Studies. These usually ebullient scholars appeared subdued, almost morbid, in their presentation, as they seemed to be suggesting the likelihood that we were rapidly approaching, if we hadn't already passed, the tipping point of environmental destruction. Although vaguely aware of such arguments I had not taken them seriously until confronted with their somber analysis. The likely reality of what had seemed a remote possibility dawned upon me—humanity and the planet may be facing imminent total destruction, just as the Tibetan forewarned in many instances. And we, his students, to whom were given the responsibility for ensuring that fundamental changes in human thinking and action were to be brought about, have

as of yet failed to exemplify the world leadership demanded of us.

The purpose of the following section is to describe these global crises and draw attention to relevant statements found in the Tibetan's teachings to sound a wake-up call that may be

*. . . in light of the enormous crises facing humanity today we must ask ourselves with complete honesty if we have overcome inertia, the force of habit, and spiritual pride. Are we adaptable and creative in recognizing new and effective modes of education? Do we embrace a humble attitude and endeavor to understand the complex worldviews and languages of science, religion, and philosophy that express the "newest mind" through which we must translate esoteric teachings for the public?*

necessary for the community of Bailey students. I believe it is imperative for us to reflect critically on these crises, achieve new understandings, and provide new responses as the Tibetan implored us to do. In early 1949 he expressed doubts concerning the leadership and effectiveness of the fifty-one senior esoteric students with whom he had been closely working. He continued by discussing the work to be carried on after Bailey's passing as follows:

Young workers must be chosen who may not see things as all of you see them, and in that

lies the hope of the work's persistence, for most of you are too old for the work of reconstruction and too crystallised; you can, however, form a strong foundation and give courage to the young ones. Most of you are too anxious to see the old methods and modes of work perpetuated . . . The principles of the Ageless Wisdom must be preserved, but all outworn forms must go.<sup>17</sup>

Can we awaken from crystallized habits, assumptions, and modes of work? What new and necessary forms must we create to embody the available transformative energies? I support the urgent calls made by Seifer and Lindsay and suggest that radically new forms of service must be manifested if we, as working disciples, are to respond effectively to our current global crises and avoid total destruction.

## Growth of the Monster 1949-2016



“Armageddon”  
1935-36  
Nicholas Roerich<sup>18</sup>

Following the horrors of the Great War (1914-1945) the Tibetan was optimistic that humanity had learned necessary lessons and was prepared to work toward human unity and the establishment of right human relations. This was to be undertaken through group work and organizations such as the recently created United Nations. However, he expressed his concerns and doubts as well, as in the following statement:

The Forces of Evil are still active [June 1947]; they may have been driven back, but they are still powerful; they are still subtly working and are still striving for a firmer foothold; they are still cleverly feeding world anxiety and world insecurity in order to create another point of world tension.<sup>19</sup>

Regrettably, it appears that the Forces of Evil *have* achieved a firm foothold and a pervasive influence. What could not be achieved by the ideologies and armies of the Axis Powers has been accomplished “cleverly” and “subtly” as the Tibetan forewarned, while the majority of those who could oppose this “Monster” were exhausted, apathetic, hopeful, passive, fearful, preoccupied, or otherwise “asleep.”

After the war capitalist and communist nations intensified their antagonistic positions, soon bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war. They thereby fueled “the outstanding human weakness, the great sin or heresy of separateness . . . [which] is responsible for the entire range of human evil.”<sup>20</sup> Nationalism and fear flourished, forcibly overshadowing voices that called for mutual understanding and international cooperation. Rather than a new age of peace and stability being established as the Tibetan hoped, the Great War continued in Palestine, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, the War on Terror, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and in innumerable conflicts around the globe to the extent that today we speak of “Endless War.” It should be remembered that the major *required* preparation for the Reappearance of the Christ and the Externalization of the Hierarchy is a world at peace.<sup>21</sup> The United States has bombed, invaded, and occupied countries in Southeast Asia, in the Middle East, and elsewhere, either directly or through its proxies, under the pretexts of defending national security and of establishing “freedom” and “democracy” in the regions. In recent years the United States has legitimated torture, or “enhanced

interrogation techniques,” for use on supposed “enemy combatants” and has resorted increasingly to targeted assassinations through drone strikes. These attacks have not only killed many innocent civilians but have also created incalculable levels of post-traumatic stress and terror, adding to the widespread hatred directed toward America and its allies from many populations throughout the world. It is regrettable that the general public is learning of the Law of Karma, understood today as “blowback,” in such a horrendous manner. And yet those in power and the uninformed (or mis-informed) masses refuse, or are unable, to learn the necessary lessons.

Separativeness has manifested for decades in various neo-Nazi movements, continuing racial divides, and anti-immigration fears and policies. In America we have campaigns declaring “Black Lives Matter!” in response to incontestable facts demonstrating that, for many, they do not. The industrial prison system has grown exponentially in the last century and has become institutionalized as a form of social and racial control.<sup>22</sup> It is well known that the United States, “the land of the free,” has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. The number of refugees fleeing from conflict today is more than 60 million according to United Nations estimates and yet once again, as most infamously in 1939, American politicians are clamoring to reject them.<sup>23</sup> America’s second ray soul, potentially expressive of love and wisdom, appears yet to be overshadowed by its separative and nationalistic sixth ray personality.<sup>24</sup>

Greed and corruption are rampant and directly contributed to the most recent global economic disaster of 2008 and yet the perpetrators have not been punished but have actually been rewarded by politicians. The thoughtform of “possessive individualism”<sup>25</sup> continues to dominate throughout the “developed world” while much of humanity suffers increasing poverty, unemployment, and homelessness as a result of ruthless capitalistic forces. Entire countries are being crushed by enforced austerity measures. For many of those who are fortunate to have jobs, they must often work under inhumane conditions and for wages that keep them under

the poverty threshold. The advances achieved by the labor movement through enormous struggle in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been rolled back; labor unions are under attack by politicians and the conservative forces of neo-liberalism; workers are shifted increasingly to part-time employment to further reduce wages and benefits; and the use of efficiency metrics and time-control methods, or “telematics,” increase stress and the likelihood of injury, virtually reducing human beings to automatons—all this to improve “the bottom line” and corporate profits as necessitated by the capitalistic system. The labor movement—which, according to the Tibetan, “has in it the seeds of vast good” and will likely be responsible for manifesting the concept of goodwill in human consciousness—is being ruthlessly undermined.<sup>26</sup>

In the *Citizens United* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court has declared that corporations are protected as individuals under the rights of the First Amendment and their already enormous influence on politicians and political elections has thereby increased dramatically. In the words of Howard Dean, former Governor of Vermont, presidential candidate, and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, “The Supreme Court put the government up for sale.”<sup>27</sup> Not only do major corporations influence elections and control politicians, they often write legislation directly. Responding to this control of government by corporate powers, a legislative bill, the Financial Services Conflict of Interest Act, has been introduced recently in the hope of merely slowing down the “revolving door” between corporations and the government. In 1948 the Tibetan declared that “organized evil is not in power”<sup>28</sup> but this assertion is arguably no longer true as the forces of evil have become increasingly dominant. Major corporations and the capitalist system *are* in power and they embody “the love of money [which] is the root of all evil . . . the octopus which is slowly strangling human life, enterprise, and decency; it is the millstone around the neck of mankind.”<sup>29</sup> Major corporations today control politicians, election campaigns, media, labor, education, and society.

Regrettably, the Tibetan’s following assertion that “organised good is still quite ineffective”

remains true despite the many diverse and heroic efforts made by individuals and groups throughout the world. The balance required on the mental plane between those who stand for materialism and totalitarianism and those who stand for the freedom of the human soul and the establishment of right human relations has not yet been reached despite almost seventy years having passed since the Tibetan asserted that the time for achieving this balance through a “struggle for control is with us *now*.”<sup>30</sup> The opened “doors of evil” are widening and it appears that we are losing the struggle. The Tibetan went on to state that if the forces of evil become dominant, human life “will lose its meaning . . . [and] death will settle down upon our planet—death both spiritual and mental.”<sup>31</sup> This article is essentially a call for students of the Tibetan’s writings to fight for and establish this balance *on the mental plane*, to fight “for the freedom of the human soul, for the rights of the individual, for brotherhood and right human relations.”<sup>32</sup>

The Tibetan clearly warned of the dangers of capitalism and of the latent fascism in America almost seventy years ago.<sup>33</sup> Several of his statements seem to be even more true today:

First of all, it must be recognized that the cause of all world unrest, of the world wars which have wrecked humanity and the widespread misery upon our planet can largely be attributed to a selfish group with materialistic purposes who have for centuries exploited the masses and used the labour of mankind for their selfish ends . . . the capitalistic system has emerged and has wrecked the world . . . Today, in spite of the disaster which they have brought upon the world, they are again organized and renewing their methods; their goals remain unchanged; their international relationships remain unbroken . . . they control politics . . . they constitute the greatest menace mankind faces today.<sup>34</sup>

The vested interests, the big cartels, trusts and monopolies that controlled the past few decades, preceding this world war, will mobilise their resources and fight to the death to prevent the extinction of their

sources of income; they will not permit, if they can help it, the passing of the control of this illimitable power into the hands of the masses, to whom it rightly belongs.<sup>35</sup>

Today, in fact, conditions are arguably worse. Former U.S. Senator Russ Feingold observes,

I don’t know how it could be more stark or clear: this entire society is being dominated by corporate power in a way that may exceed what happened in the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century . . . the only real difference is that corporate power is even more extended. It’s the Gilded Age on steroids . . . Washington—has become a corporate playground. Since I’ve been here, this place has gone from a government town to a giant corporate headquarters.<sup>36</sup>

The United States has become a surveillance state in which activities of both citizens and foreign governments are being monitored and recorded in huge, illegal data collections under the shroud of national security. Those “whistleblowers” who would bring these illegal actions to the light of public attention have been selectively persecuted, prosecuted, and jailed under the espionage act, while those in positions of power who disclose classified information are not charged at all or are charged only with a misdemeanor.

The mainstream media is controlled by corporations that have little or no interest in challenging the political/economic system because they are entrenched within it. News is packaged in superficial analyses, sound bites, and “infotainment.” Blatant distortions and disinformation are common, if not the norm, in both the media and in educational systems. The major sins the Tibetan once attributed to Russia, separativeness, isolation from world contact, and keeping the people ignorant of world events—conditions achieved through “deception and the withholding of information”<sup>37</sup>—characterize America today. In stark contrast to the Tibetan’s high ideals for the future of education,<sup>38</sup> education in America has been co-opted by corporate and ideological interests.<sup>39</sup> For many, education has been reduced to “teaching to the test,” or rote memorization, in order to satisfy imposed mandates.

Years ago the Tibetan warned, “The existence of a closed mind on a national scale is dangerous in the extreme,”<sup>40</sup> and yet manipulating the public with fabricated illusions has been easily achieved because most people are yet emotionally focused, a fact the Tibetan notes repeatedly. Corporate powers further their interests and control by appealing to and manipulating the material desires and emotional fears of the public. The Tibetan warns that the unthinking masses are susceptible to regimentation through the misuse of the mental principle yet he asserts, “This danger is, however, lessening decade by decade.”<sup>41</sup>

This conclusion appears to be erroneous or at least premature. Despite the Tibetan’s demand over seventy years ago that “A death blow must be struck at the world illusion,”<sup>42</sup> Benjamin R. Barber claims that illusion is the most serious problem in the United States today. He quotes Daniel Boorstin, a former Librarian of Congress who writes: “We risk being the first people in history to have been able to make their illusions so vivid, so persuasive, so ‘realistic’ that they can live in them. We are the most illusioned people on earth.”<sup>43</sup> Barber goes on to quote journalist Chris Hedges who writes in *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, “A populace deprived of the ability to separate lies from truth, that has become hostage to the fictional semblance of reality put forth by pseudo-events, is no longer capable of sustaining a free society.”<sup>44</sup>

This is precisely the situation we find ourselves in today. Less than sixty percent of the eligible voters in the United States participated in the 2016 presidential election and they selected an individual who made 560 documented falsehoods in only seven weeks while cam-

paigned for office.<sup>45</sup> Many Americans can no longer separate lies from truth—or they no longer care about the distinction. As further evidence that standards of truth have lost their currency the Oxford Dictionaries chose “post-truth” as its 2016 word of the year and Webster-Merriam chose “surreal.” In 1992 Steve Tesich, a Serbian-American playwright, first used the term “post-truth” and warned,

We are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only drool about in their dreams. All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary . . . In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world.<sup>46</sup>

Rather than striking death blows at world illusion to liberate humanity as the Tibetan enjoined us to do, we instead find ourselves, for the most part, further acquiescing to totalitarian forces and control.

Finally, our current planetary crises are made evident most dramatically in the ongoing environmental devastation of the planet earth. In a relatively short period of time we have polluted the air, water, and soil of the planet in the rush of modernization and the satisfaction of material desire. We are fast approaching, if we have not already passed, “the tipping point” beyond which the interdependent ecosystems of the planet will not be able to recover. Politicians, controlled by corporate power, make only occasional rhetorical gestures toward solving this catastrophic threat while saying little or nothing about changing consumer values and behavior, conserving resources, and taking immediate and drastic action to avoid imminent disaster.



“Smog in Beijing”<sup>47</sup>

Pope Francis, among many others, has spoken out forcefully against both capitalism and environmental destruction and has thereby influenced public thinking and debate considerably.<sup>48</sup> But where, we must ask, is the public voice of Bailey students? In light of the Tibetan’s many prescient warnings and forceful injunctions for taking action we also have a great responsibility for exercising leadership in influencing public opinion. He stated:

Through the expression and impression of certain great ideas, men everywhere must be brought to the understanding of the fundamental ideals which will govern the New Age. *This is the major task of the New Group of World Servers . . .* During the next few years, *the new ideas must become the ideals of the thinking level of the race.* If this does not take place, the immediate salvaging of humanity will have to be postponed and a further period of distress and of widespread disciplining must then inevitably result.<sup>49</sup>

The responsibility for right action and for the effort to reach the public rests upon the aspirants and disciples of the world who read my words . . . *The Hierarchy waits.* It has done all that is possible from the angle of Its opportunity . . . I beg you to note what I here have said. Everything now depends upon the right action of the men and women of good will.<sup>50</sup>

I find it shocking and disheartening to realize the number of times the Tibetan literally begs his students for assistance. As of yet, courageous and intelligent voices within the Bailey community are not informing the public on the scale demanded by the Tibetan. The “new ideas” and “fundamental ideals” found in Bailey’s writings and embodied in “the three recognitions” are virtually unknown amongst the public, amongst the intelligentsia (“the thinking level of the race”), and within academia. The balance required on the mental plane to offset the forces of evil has not been achieved and only this balance will open the doors of the Hierarchy. I believe it is imperative that we, students of the Tibetan’s teachings, answer Hierarchy’s call by taking immediate action to convey the light and wisdom of these teachings to the public, the intelligentsia, and to those in academia.

## Posing the Question

### *Introduction*

I have endeavored to show that our current situation is dire, as critical as the latter half of the period of Bailey’s writings (1934–1949), when the Tibetan attempted to inspire his students to self-sacrificing action. Immediate, intelligent efforts must be taken to confront the encroachment of evil and one of the most practical and effective ways to do so is to invoke the aid of the intelligentsia and those working

within academia to help evoke the forces of goodwill within humanity. It would seem natural to examine the efforts of Bailey students and organizations over the past seven decades and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts in order to move forward more effectively. However, such an analysis would be beyond the scope of this article. In addition, the distinction between constructive analysis, based on judicious evaluation and careful reasoning, and unwarranted criticism is not clearly demarcated<sup>51</sup> and many Bailey students may find such a critical analysis to constitute a violation of the basic practice of harmlessness.<sup>52</sup> A primary purpose of this article is to encourage such an examination and self-reflection within and between Bailey organizations, between Bailey organizations and students, and among students themselves regarding the work that has been done over the past seventy years, the effectiveness of these efforts, and possible directions for future work.

This proposal to build a bridge to academia stands in stark contrast to the traditional views of many Bailey organizations and students and to the associated belief that the Externalization of the Hierarchy and the manifestation of the Plan are assured and imminent. Generalizing, this traditional perspective maintains that world events are unfolding according to the carefully laid plans of the Hierarchy with the implication that the externalization process should not be upset by radical, or impetuous action taken by those with limited understanding. For example, a recent bi-annual letter from Lucis Trust quotes the Tibetan's statement, "All is planned and ordered . . . The Masters know exactly that which must be done by right timing."<sup>53</sup> Similarly, The School for Esoteric Studies states as a reassuring fact that "a large number of individuals . . . are developing or have already attained initiate consciousness and have become functioning units within the Spiritual Hierarchy . . ." It is asserted that this knowledge will help esoteric workers to understand their role in holding "the field of invocative tension."<sup>54</sup>

I want to make clear that I have not attained such a state of consciousness and that I have no conscious connection with the Hierarchy or

privileged understanding of the Plan. This proposal is based on years of study, experiment, experience, reflection, efforts to work and dialogue with Bailey students and organizations, and wide readings in both esoteric and academic fields—all combined with a growing awareness of the present world crises. It is only with considerable hesitancy and caution that I assert that the traditional efforts and methods of Bailey organizations and students have not been sufficient to stem the tide of materialistic forces and to suggest that enlisting the support of the thinking public, especially of academics, is crucial. Not having direct knowledge of Hierarchical planning I would remain silent if these traditional efforts appeared to be fulfilling the Tibetan's injunctions effectively.

However, in my opinion, based on observation and direct experience, significant limitations, glamours, and illusions are apparent within all Bailey organizations (which I will not address here for the reasons given above). This is not necessarily a criticism as we all express degrees of glamour and illusion. The Tibetan notes that even the Masters are subject to illusion until the sixth Initiation and that great and basic illusions govern life within the Hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> However, I think it is imperative that we strive to bring our glamours and illusions into the light in order for them to be dispelled, and this raises delicate issues of constructive criticism not only within oneself but also amongst disciples and esoteric groups. Regardless, I believe that new approaches are needed in preparing for the Externalization of the Hierarchy and the manifestation of the Plan in addition to those undertaken by Bailey students and organizations to date. Additionally, engagement with academic thinking may well be one of the most powerful ways to expose, clarify, and dissipate our glamours and illusions as students of the Tibetan's teachings. Coming down from our secluded ivory towers and working in "the hard arena of daily and public life" will decisively separate idealistic glamours and illusions from applicable esoteric truths.

In acknowledging my limitations it therefore seems important as a first step to consider reasons why this approach to academia should not be undertaken before suggesting a radical plan

of action that may be contrary to Hierarchical intention. I therefore examine five such possible objections and offer counterarguments to each of them in turn. Only then, after having cleared the ground so to speak, do I develop an affirmative response to the question as to whether or not Bailey students should attempt to build a bridge to academia. This positive response is based on implicit and explicit injunctions found in the Tibetan's teachings.

### ***The Question – “Should Bailey Students Build a Bridge to Academia?”***

#### **No – Objections and Responses to Objections**

*Objection – The proposal is unnecessary as world events are unfolding according to the Plan.* This appears to be a position held by many Bailey organizations and students, a view succinctly presented in the quotation referenced above: “All is planned and ordered . . . The Masters know exactly that which must be done by right timing.” The current suffering in the world is acknowledged in the same letter as “causing feelings of unease and disorientation” but these are attributed to “a ‘crisis of spatial extension’ . . . a transformation in the way time and space are registered in the subconscious as a result of increased spiritual influences” such as, perhaps, extraplanetary forces, the Shamballa force, crises of initiation, etc. The numerous crises I identified above in “Growth of the Monster” are merely bumps on a rough road that must be endured.

*Response –* It should be noted again that Hierarchical plans are *not* unfolding inexorably, due to human free will. The Tibetan states:

It is wise for human beings to realise that mankind is free. Even the Hierarchy Itself does not know which forces—those of good or those of evil—will ultimately prevail because even if the forces of good triumph where the war is concerned, will they triumph where the peace is concerned? Good must ultimately triumph but the Hierarchy does not know what the immediate future holds for humanity because men determine their own destiny. The Law of Cause and Effect cannot be offset.<sup>56</sup>

It seems obvious that the forces of good are as of yet far from triumphant. Rather than assuming or asserting that the Plan is unfolding exactly as envisioned by the Hierarchy I suggest that in this time of great crises those who *do* know, those who “have attained initiate consciousness and have become functioning units with the Spiritual Hierarchy,” should share with others the immediate and practical aspects of the externalization process. This may sound like an impertinent demand, especially in light of the Tibetan's insistence that one should not attempt “to lure” disciples working subjectively into publicity.<sup>57</sup> However, he also suggests that those who have knowledge of the Masters might “testify to their knowledge, and thus establish past all controversy the reality of Their work.”<sup>58</sup> The Tibetan states that the disciples consciously working with the Plan under Hierarchical inspiration, or those instructed by them, together termed “conscious disciples,” constitute the first of two major divisions of the New Group of World Servers and that their numbers had grown quickly from less than two hundred to nearly one thousand by 1939.<sup>59</sup> He also makes a specific demand of these disciples:

Therefore the call goes out at this time for hierarchical workers to reveal with greater emphasis the fact of the Hierarchy. This—if done on a large scale and through proper organisation—will destroy on a large scale the present world structure in the field of religion, of economics, and of politics . . . An increase of pressure on the part of all who recognise the factual nature of the inner subjective kingdom of God, will produce amazing results.<sup>60</sup>

The Tibetan is not asking these workers to share a hope, belief, or expectation but rather to *reveal and testify to the fact of the Hierarchy*. He states explicitly that in the new cycle beginning in 1945, “*the fact of the Hierarchy and the work of the Masters—through Their disciples—must and will be brought to public attention.*”<sup>61</sup> Seifer reminded us ten years ago that above everything else required at this time is public recognition of the fact of both the Hierarchy and the Plan, recognitions that “must be evidenced by humanity and affect

human thinking and action *if* the total destruction of mankind is to be averted.” She also warned that this work has not been accomplished. Given the impending disaster that draws closer every day, repeated pronouncements by Bailey students and organizations claiming that the Externalization of the Hierarchy is assured and imminent may ring hollow to those students who do *not* have direct knowledge of current Hierarchical intentions, to the skeptical public, and especially to academics.

Personally, as one who does not have such knowledge, I think it is equally likely that the planetary Hierarchy may not carry through with the externalization process in the near future as its members may have abandoned humanity as the Tibetan forewarned. In 1942, during the lowest point of the war when materialistic forces were close to success, the Tibetan stated that “there were four months when the members of the spiritual Hierarchy had made every possible arrangement to withdraw from human contact for an indefinite and unforeseen period of time” as their efforts to collaborate with humanity “seemed doomed to destruction” and they “believed man would go down to defeat, owing to his selfishness and his misuse of the principle of free will.”<sup>62</sup> The previous year he noted that “the majority” of his students had “done little or nothing” in cooperating with his call for help in world service<sup>63</sup> and he elsewhere stated that his students failed to comply with his requests because they “simply suffered from inertia” and were “too lazy.”<sup>64</sup> I think it is imperative that as students of the Tibetan’s teachings we ask ourselves if we have adequately understood his injunctions and if we are willing to “battle for the freedom of the human soul with every weapon . . . [to] hold back the forces of aggression by force itself if need be . . . [and to use] every physical plane method” to fight the forces of evil.<sup>65</sup>

*Objection – While possibly having some value, the proposal is premature.* Another objection to this proposal may be that such an effort is unwarranted or at least premature. The Tibetan delineates the stages in the unfolding of the Purpose and Plan of the planetary Logos as these stages manifest through “the creative

meditative process.”<sup>66</sup> This process will lead eventually to a critical “point of precipitation” whereupon meditation “will give place to scientific *thinking* . . . and to the needed physical plane activity” as the new and *intended* civilization is manifested.<sup>67</sup> He also states the need for the cultivation of a correct sense of timing and explicitly warns against “a too premature precipitation of the hierarchical life upon the Earth.”<sup>68</sup> In discussing the emergence into public consciousness of the new ideals he emphasizes the need for slow, steady efforts undertaken by many small groups through “the new position, the new attitude towards work, and . . . the [new] subjective method,” efforts that should *not* be organized.<sup>69</sup>

*Response –* After the Tibetan encouraged “slow, steady work” (1934) the accelerated growth of Fascism and National Socialism led to his more urgent calls for immediate and courageous action. Finding little response, however, he grew increasingly disappointed with aspirants’ “blindness, illusion, separateness and inertia” and by 1941 he wondered whether anything he could say might “awaken disciples to the needed spiritual effort” and he questioned whether world disciples and aspirants could “focus every possible effort on fighting evil . . . with every possible agency.”<sup>70</sup> He insisted that the New Group of World Servers and the masses be contacted simultaneously with the intent of developing the will-to-good and goodwill. If this does not eventuate, he warned, a still more dangerous situation, worse than the first (1914-45), will result in the “consolidation of the forces of evil or materialism on Earth.”<sup>71</sup> I have argued above that this is the situation confronting humanity today and it has resulted from our failure to have yet effectively contacted the New Group of World Servers and the masses through slow, steady work regarding “the three recognitions.”

*Objection – Bailey’s writings might be attacked.* Once the power of Bailey’s esoteric philosophy penetrates academic thinking there will be forceful responses both negative and positive. This constitutes another reason for opposing my proposal—a fear that Bailey’s writings will be attacked by academics and the

related belief that engaging in conflict is not appropriate for esoteric work. In following many of the Tibetan's injunctions, Bailey organizations and students place a high value on the practice of harmlessness and therefore avoid making criticisms of others or taking partisan positions that could further divisions and antagonisms.<sup>72</sup> In doing so they "take the high road" and emphasize cooperation over competition; they endeavor to maintain a level of consciousness above personality conflicts that arise on emotional and lower mental levels. It seems that Bailey students are therefore precluded from descending into the competitive academic arena of argumentative debate, attack, and defense.

*Response* – It should be understood that Bailey's ideas *will* be attacked as they enter the public sphere and that it will require courage to promote and defend them. It will also take a great deal of intelligence and skill to understand the analyses and attacks of academics and to effectively engage with them. Introducing Bailey's esoteric philosophy to the intelligentsia can be understood as a practice of *apologetics* which entails exegesis, dialogue, openness and humility, defense, and, at times when necessary, critical analyses and the wise use of the force of destruction to expose and refute faulty assumptions, arguments, and accusations made by opponents. However, this work of contacting the intelligentsia as called for by the Tibetan has hardly begun, a fact due in large part, I suggest, to glamour and illusion within the Bailey community regarding the practice of harmlessness and an associated desire to avoid conflict and controversy. It should be remembered that the wise use of destructive force is an essential aspect of the work to be done in the first phase of the externalization process.<sup>73</sup> Conflict is of course an inherent aspect of the Fourth Ray of Harmony through Conflict and the desire to avoid conflict is also contrary to the Tibetan's frequent exhortations that we must be willing to fight when necessary.

The Hierarchy is a great fighting body today, fighting for the souls of men, fighting all that blocks the expansion of the human consciousness, fighting all that limits hu-

man freedom . . . There is nothing weak, vacillating, sentimental or neutral in the attitude of the Hierarchy; this must be grasped by humanity . . .

You can see therefore how critical, spiritually, are these times, and how urgent is the task which confronts the Hierarchy and its workers on earth. The war may be over in the physical sense [1946], but great issues are still involved and undetermined and can lead either to peace or to a renewal of those conditions in which wars are generated and which, once generated, cannot be avoided.<sup>74</sup>

I believe that fear, especially the fear of conflict and an unwillingness to fight for human freedom, has prevented Bailey students from taking leadership responsibility for promoting peace and establishing the necessary balance on the mental plane. We have left the "great issues" unaddressed in the public sphere and as a result the conditions generating wars have grown in strength and now dominate throughout the world in these times of "endless war."

Without dwelling on possible dramatic scenarios, it should be understood also that anyone taking a stand in the public sphere to promote Bailey's writings does so at the risk of attack not only from academics but from authoritarian governments and religious extremists as well.

*Objection* – *Bailey's writings are not compatible with academic thinking.* Another objection to my proposal may be that the worldviews of esotericists and academics may be incompatible. In response to a letter I sent to several Bailey organizations and students regarding my dissertation proposal, Sarah McKechnie, former president of Lucis Trust, wrote to me, saying in part:

The academic worldview is quite different than that of the esoteric group of disciples-in-training for whom the books of Alice Bailey were intended . . . I can only wish you good fortune in your attempt to build a bridge to the academic community, as my sense drawn from the past experience of others who have attempted to cross this bridge is that it's not easy.<sup>75</sup>

An interesting depiction of such a presumed distinction separating esotericists and academics is shown in the diagram accompanying the Tibetan’s description of the “creative meditative process,” re-created below as Diagram 1. “Thinkers and Scientists” are shown as occupying a position at the very “bottom” of hu-

manity, clearly separated from both the New Group of World Servers and the Hierarchy. Another example of this separation is indicated when the Tibetan describes “the thinkers of the world” as a separate group located between the middle classes and the New Group of World Servers.<sup>76</sup>

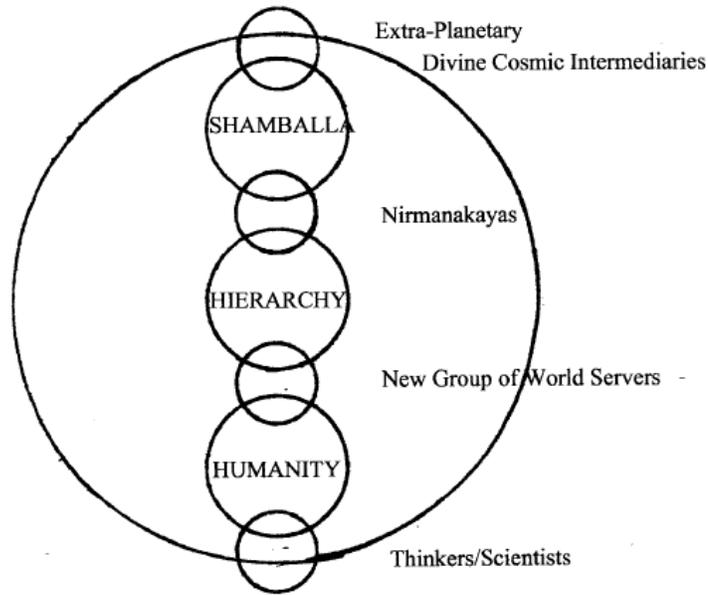


Diagram 1.

Adapted from Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 214

*Response* – I disagree that the worldviews of Bailey students and academics are “quite different” for several reasons. This belief assumes that there is a single “academic worldview” and thereby ignores the fact that academic thinking is in constant flux and expresses innumerable competing ideas, theories, and worldviews. This is especially true today in our “postmodern,” “post-postmodern,” and “postsecular” era. Some academics are struggling to express new ideas that actually reflect the esoteric worldview but they are receiving little, if any, assistance from Bailey students. Attempts to maintain a distinction between esotericists and academics also fail in light of the Tibetan’s criticism of esoteric groups who claim to be the sole repository and outlet for Hierarchical teaching and efforts. He encourages esoteric students to recognize the fact that

“the hierarchical vibration” is embodied by many individuals in “the activities and occupations and truth dissemination of the various churches, sciences, and philosophies,”<sup>77</sup> activities and occupations certainly found within academia. He notes explicitly that members of the Hierarchy “will be scientists and philosophers, college professors and educators.”<sup>78</sup>

Additionally, maintaining the idea that esoteric and academic worldviews are distinct ignores the Tibetan’s insistence that Bailey students need to understand exoteric knowledge as “the stepping stones” upon which to build esoteric understanding<sup>79</sup> and that they need to transmit exoteric knowledge, “the newest mind,” to the Hierarchy so that the latter can better understand and guide developing human consciousness.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it seems that the “esoteric

worldview” should be considered to be *inclusive* of academic thinking, not separate from it.

To assume there is such a separation contributes, I suggest, to “short-circuiting the light” otherwise available in spiritual teachings. The Tibetan asserts:

Humanity has never really lived up to the teaching given to it. Spiritual impression . . . has not yet been expressed as it was hoped. Men do not live up to what they already know; they fail to make practical their information; they short-circuit the light . . . To put it scientifically and from the esoteric angle: Spiritual impression has been interrupted and there has been interference with the divine circulatory flow. It is the task of the disciples of the world to restore this flow and to stop this interference. This is the major problem facing the Ashrams at this time.<sup>81</sup>

By maintaining the view that esoteric and academic worldviews are distinct I believe that many Bailey students interrupt “the divine circulatory flow” and therefore fail to practically apply and disseminate the Tibetan’s teachings as he implored them to do.

I also disagree with the idea that the Tibetan’s teachings were intended only for “disciples-in-training,” an idea that drives another wedge between Bailey students and academics. In discussing his work<sup>82</sup> the Tibetan states that: his books have been made available to “the general public” as well as to esoteric students; the needs of humanity demand a changed approach to the spread of the teachings; what were once “esoteric doctrines” are now public property;<sup>83</sup> his books and influence “have gone to the far corners of the earth and convey aid and help;” and the fact of the Hierarchy “must and will be brought to public attention” during the new cycle commencing in 1945. This latter task will be aided greatly by the public and unrestricted dissemination of the Tibetan’s teachings, especially to the intelligentsia, but it is a duty and responsibility that has hardly begun.

To promote the idea that academics and intellectuals are not separate from the Hierarchy and the New Group of World Servers I suggest

that the diagram of the “creative meditative process” (Diagram 1) be redrawn and reinterpreted (see Diagram 2 below). The original diagram depicts the “seven phases of the creative meditative process” within the periphery of the planetary Logos as a chain of intersecting circles. These phases, also identified as “seven sources,” include (in “descending” order): the planetary Logos; a group of Extra-Planetary Divine Intermediaries; Shamballa; the Nirmanakayas or divine Contemplatives; the Hierarchy of Masters; the New Group of World Servers; and Humanity. A small circle, identified as “Thinkers/Scientists,” although not described as one of the seven sources, is appended somewhat oddly at the bottom of the diagram, shown as intersecting only the lowest section of Humanity and as extending somehow outside the circle of both Humanity and the planetary Logos.

As drawn, the original diagram reinforces a perception among many Bailey students that “thinkers and scientists,” which would include all academics, are mostly irrelevant (not even *tangential*) to the work of esotericists and the New Group of World Servers. This appears to be in conflict with the Tibetan’s statements that scientists are members of the New Group of World Servers and that *all* members of this latter group “must inevitably be reflecting thinkers . . . must be truly intelligent, and must have added *expanding* love to their intelligence.”<sup>84</sup> It appears that the lowest circle in the diagram may have been positioned so as to preserve an overall symmetry and not to indicate an exact location. I suggest it would be more accurate and productive to imagine this circle representing the intelligentsia to be redrawn as a flame-like figure extending upward from the “higher dimensions” of the circle of humanity (since, having developed the lower mind to a significant degree, they can be viewed as “above” the majority of human beings who are yet emotionally focused) to the highest levels of the New Group of World Servers (and therefore penetrating the circle of Hierarchy). I do not want to idealize the intelligentsia but I do believe that many members of the New Group of World Servers are “intelligent, reflecting thinkers and scientists” who are also aspirants, disciples, and initiates.

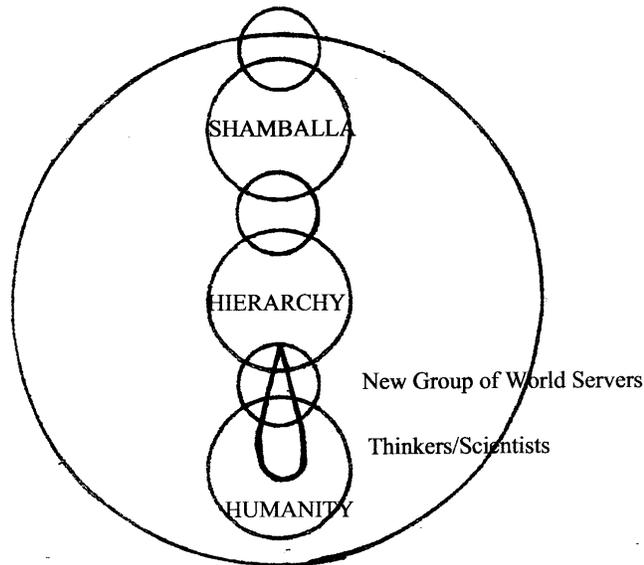


Diagram 2.

I believe this reinterpretation and redrawing of the original diagram is in accordance with the Tibetan's suggestion to apply the "deep spiritual implications" of the intersecting area found in another diagram in the same book. When two Ashrams interpenetrate, at the point of overlap or the Middle Point, "there is relation and contact . . . increased opportunity and inspiration . . . [and] focal points of transmutation, of transition and of transformation . . . [where] increased intercourse and interplay become possible."<sup>85</sup> He adds that "this important little diagram" of interpenetrating Ashrams applies also to the interpenetrating domains of Hierarchy and Humanity, with the New Group of World Servers occupying the middle point, although he does not refer explicitly to his earlier diagram depicting this area of overlap or to the intelligentsia. These two diagrams and the Tibetan's associated comments summarize my arguments regarding the need for Bailey students to engage with academics. That is to say, I believe the "increased intercourse, relations, contacts, opportunities, and inspiration" that will result from the interplay of esoteric/academic convergence will result in "focal points of transmutation, transition, and transformation" that will help

humanity successfully address our current crises.

*Objection – The Tibetan did not make such a proposal.* Finally, one might object to this proposal to build a bridge to academia because the Tibetan did not suggest it explicitly. He insisted that following Bailey's death the work must continue within the departments and Service Activities already established—the Arcane School, the work of Triangles, and the Goodwill work.<sup>86</sup> Bailey organizations and most students have not adopted this proposed approach to academia in the intervening decades so why should we do so now?

*Response –* I argue below that the idea of building a bridge to academia is implicit in many of the Tibetan's teachings and at times it is explicit. I also suggest that this apparent omission may be due to his limitations and lack of familiarity with academia. Drawing attention to the limitations of the Masters is an uncommon practice among Bailey students but I suggest such limitations need to be addressed, especially as the Masters and their teachings become increasingly subject to scrutiny by the general public and academics.<sup>87</sup> The Masters are not omniscient, a fact that the

Tibetan acknowledges several times as for example when he mentions the amusement the Masters often experience in recognizing how their powers are overestimated by aspirants and disciples.<sup>88</sup> The Tibetan confesses his limited understanding of science and he also acknowledges the limitations of Bailey's capacities and the undue effort that would be required to obtain advanced scientific information.<sup>89</sup> He further states that the Masters at times rely on their students for knowledge, opinions, and advice.<sup>90</sup> As a result, a Master's understanding may be conditioned by current public knowledge to some degree and therefore may be possibly distorted or even erroneous. Regarding his limited work with Western students the Tibetan states, "This is an experiment likewise for me. I have worked hitherto with only three occidental chelas, of whom A.A.B. is one."<sup>91</sup>

The limitations and difficulties of the Masters are acknowledged in the Tibetan's revelation that they are "wrestling with . . . [their] own interior problems of response, of recognition and of responsibility" and they "have to learn how to use the new incoming energies . . . and master new techniques and the new methods of work called for by the new conditions" as they alter and adapt their mode of work to meet ever changing needs.<sup>92</sup> It is likely that the results of these struggles on the part of the Hierarchy to determine new modes of work are not always ideal and sometimes may not even be realistic. A good example of this is found in some early thoughts offered by the Tibetan regarding public education. In the relatively halcyon days of 1920 he claimed that the instructors in the future "ideal" preparatory schools of occultism would be "able to teach and to compete with the trained teachers of the world universities."<sup>93</sup> He added that the best written work of the students in these schools "will be published yearly by the college, for the use of the public. In this way . . . [the student] serves his time and generation and educates the race in the higher knowledge."<sup>94</sup>

One of the problems with these statements is that they can be interpreted in ways that create a separation between Bailey students and the thinking public, and they can also lead to a

sense of spiritual superiority—as if the public will each year await the next revelation of "higher knowledge" to be presented to them by occult students secluded in "preparatory schools." This projected ideal appears to demonstrate the Tibetan's unfamiliarity with the role and methods of the academic process in the continuous accumulation and distribution of knowledge as it would develop in the twentieth century. As one example of this development, the number of academic journals exploded from a few hundred at the beginning of the century to tens of thousands today.

The Tibetan does not elaborate on his suggestion of such an annual revelation. He does not explain, for example, how such teachings will be published and by whom, how they will be received and by whom, or what obstacles and criticisms might hinder their reception. His suggestion regarding the significant and unquestionably positive impact an annual revelation would have on helping humanity may be based in part on the immediate and powerful impact H. P. Blavatsky's writings had on the world,<sup>95</sup> a public impact that was not to be repeated several decades later following the publication of Bailey's work in a changed intellectual climate. It should be noted that in his early work describing Future Schools of Meditation (1922) the Tibetan states that he is presenting "a portion of a tentative plan" and "the ideal . . . as it is hoped it will eventually be," and that his presentation provides "much room for interested speculation."<sup>96</sup>

It should also be remembered that the Tibetan states that the work of both the Hierarchy and of disciples and initiates is often undertaken as *experiments*.<sup>97</sup> These experiments can and have failed, as happened with the Tibetan's experiment with founding "seed groups" for the dissemination of Hierarchical ideas and understanding of the Plan in such areas as politics, education, economics, religion, science, psychology, and healing.<sup>98</sup> His intended purpose for creating these working groups is stated in the following quotation and its relevance for this article should be clear.

The objective of the work of these seed groups is to familiarise people with the hierarchical Plan as it is working out today in

this time of crisis. In these last three words you have the theme which is of paramount importance to you at this time. Is it? Your work is partly to dispel illusion, but *primarily to impress the Plan upon the consciousness of the leading people in the world*. It has seemed to us that this crisis is more keenly realised by worldly people than it is by world aspirants, who do have a slight vision of the objectives.<sup>99</sup>

I suggest that the Tibetan's understanding of academia was limited at the time of his work with Bailey and that today, in this time of continuing crises, the most effective way to "familiarise people with the hierarchical Plan" and to impress this Plan "upon the consciousness of the leading people in the world" is to work directly and collaboratively with academics, intellectuals, and the wider public. As the Tibetan often states, his ideas and suggestions are in need of constant adaptation to changing conditions as his students also seek to discover and express the new techniques and methods that will be effective for world service. He emphasizes, "Mistakes matter not . . . What does matter is lack of aspiration, inability to attempt, and incapacity to learn the lesson that failure teaches."<sup>100</sup> I am arguing that as students of the Tibetan's teachings we are always already in the school of practical esotericism. We should not wait until we somehow find ourselves in a future ideal preparatory school of occultism but instead, now, *in this time of crisis*, we should serve our "time and generation and educate . . . the race in the higher knowledge."

To my mind, the possible objections explored above regarding the building of a bridge to academia remain unconvincing. However, to clarify the necessary work to be done and to protect the integrity of Hierarchical intention as necessary, I hope others will contribute alternative responses and other possible objections to my proposal as well. I now offer reasons why this approach to academia should be supported, reasons based on ideas that are both implicit and explicit in Bailey's writings.

***Yes, Bailey students should attempt to build a bridge to academia – implicit and explicit injunctions***

### **Implicit Injunctions**

Two central aspects of this proposed project are implicit in Bailey's writings—the need for esoteric students to have a good grasp of current academic thinking and the need for esoteric students to work cooperatively with academics. It should be noted that some esoteric students *are* academics and that many academics will likely become esotericists, or in many instances, recognize that they *are* esotericists, as defined by their role in exploring the energy relationships and the world of meaning underlying outer phenomena.<sup>101</sup>

*The need for academic knowledge* – Regarding the first aspect, the Tibetan maintains that esoteric students should have a solid understanding of current academic knowledge, a requirement made evident in his proposed preliminary curriculum for preparatory esoteric schools.<sup>102</sup> It is also evident, as previously noted, in his statement that disciples will present truth within the Ashram in terms of the "newest mind,"<sup>103</sup> and in his assertion that students "will utilize that which is exoteric and known [i.e., academic knowledge] as stepping stones on the path to perfect knowledge."<sup>104</sup> He makes the same point regarding academic knowledge by identifying the necessary development of the mental vehicle and the faculty of discrimination as forms of service and by emphasizing that the server must first pass through the Hall of Learning before passing into the Hall of Wisdom.

The worker . . . seeks to build in information, to supply knowledge and facts, to train it [the mental body] intellectually and scientifically so that it may prove as time goes on a stable foundation for the divine wisdom.<sup>105</sup>

Academic knowledge will be needed to fulfill the Tibetan's injunction to "approach spiritual realities in such a way that the results will be factual and proven" or, in other words, acceptable to academics. He further states that the Hierarchy works with three groups of devas associated with science, religion, and philosophy to bring about

the desired union of science and religion . . .  
[which will] shatter the materialism of the

west on the one hand and on the other the sentimental devotion of the many devotees of all faiths.<sup>106</sup>

It seems clear that in order to contribute to this desired union Bailey students will need to possess intelligent understandings of science, religion, and philosophy. Otherwise, I believe the failure to keep abreast of current academic understanding (the “newest mind”) will render their work increasingly anachronistic and isolated. Einstein famously made this point in his assessment that “science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”<sup>107</sup> This “blindness” to which Bailey students are prone if they remain isolated from academic knowledge underlies at least three forms of *illusion*: the lack of discrimination associated with an untrained, unilluminated mind results in a *wrong perception* of an idea; a poorly developed mind, unaware of the breadth and depth of academic understanding, provides a limited view which distorts a contacted idea and leads to *wrong interpretation*; and a limited, non-inclusive mind that is not “well-stocked and well developed from the angle of modern intelligence” leads to the *wrong direction* of a contacted idea.<sup>108</sup>

A cursory examination of current published work by many Bailey organizations and students reveals, in my opinion, that many such writings reflect these illusions. Academics exposed to these writings might therefore dismiss all of the Tibetan’s teachings without giving them adequate consideration. I will not provide examples here as doing so might be regarded by many as unnecessarily critical or as an attack. This regrettable situation has resulted, I believe, from the unwillingness of most Bailey organizations and students to develop the newer, more mental esotericism and from the self-imposed choice to remain isolated and separate from academia. On the other hand, and with few exceptions, the Bailey students who do demonstrate a solid understanding of current academic knowledge are apparently content to publish in esoteric journals or to self-publish their books, making it unlikely that their ideas will reach a wide audience. If we, as students of the Tibetans’ teachings, are to effectively educate the public and the intelligentsia re-

garding the Three Recognitions before 2025, I believe it is imperative that we first educate ourselves in basic academic knowledge and develop the newer, mental esotericism.

*The need to cooperate with academics* – Regarding the second implicit aspect of this project, the Tibetan insists repeatedly that his students should work with academics and he emphasizes the latter’s important role (although his preferred and more inclusive term is *the intelligentsia*). He asserts:

Their function and the part they play is of supreme importance . . . Their responsibility is enormous . . . They constitute the most influential unit today, because it is through them that the large middle class is reached, swayed and organised for political, religious and social ends . . . Given the assistance of . . . [their] trained minds . . . the new order can be firmly established upon earth.<sup>109</sup>

The obvious question here is, “how can we most effectively invoke the assistance of the intelligentsia?” Part of the answer, I suggest, lies in “the art of precipitation” whereby disciples are taught how to convey divine ideas to the concrete and receptive minds of the intelligentsia so that these ideas may then be transformed into practical ideals.<sup>110</sup> According to the Tibetan “the Hierarchical Pattern” will be precipitated into the mass consciousness by two groups—disciples working consciously within the Ashram and by the intelligentsia who are working *unconsciously*. The final phase of the Process of Precipitation results in the recognition of the Pattern by world thinkers.<sup>111</sup> A most important point to emphasize for the purpose of this article is that disciples are also trained to “translate . . . [these emerging ideas] into the concepts which will condition human thinking in the cycle just ahead.”<sup>112</sup> This task of translation requires a solid understanding of academic knowledge if basic and newly emerging divine ideas are not to remain abstract metaphysical speculations.

In this time of urgent crises aspirants and disciples may need to take a more direct and objective approach to convey divine ideas. This will entail communicating with the intelligent-

sia via writing and speech to impress upon them “the three recognitions” and the basic ideas expressed in the Tibetan’s teachings. This suggestion is not intended to discount or diminish the Hierarchical work of subjectively impressing divine ideas into the minds of the intelligentsia. It might be seen as a preparatory work of “seeding” the lower mental plane with basic esoteric ideas so that new, divine ideas presented by conscious workers within the Hierarchy will find greater receptivity among the intelligentsia, academics, and the public. Given our dire situation I believe this approach is justified as opposed to remaining silent and assuming that the intelligentsia is being effectively impressed on subjective levels by esoteric workers and are carrying out their “most important work” unconsciously and successfully.

This proposal to introduce the Tibetan’s teachings within academia also finds implicit support in his frequent encouragement for students to be creative and adaptable, and in his statement that less advanced disciples who are closer to human thinking will supervise the precipitation of the Plan.

In every ashram are to be found those disciples whose task it is to make the needed readjustments of the pattern and the demanded changes in the programme as the process of precipitation goes forward . . . The staging of the Plan and its working out is, in the last analysis, an entirely human affair, once it has reached the stage of precipitation. It is dependent upon the responsiveness of human brains, and their recognition of need and its sources. This is a point which should be remembered.<sup>113</sup>

In this light two major questions must be addressed by Bailey students: “are we in the stage of Precipitation?” and, “what ‘changes’

and ‘readjustments’ need to be made in the work of precipitating the Plan?”

### Explicit Injunctions

I have endeavored to show that a program of action enjoining students of Bailey’s writings to educate themselves in academic understanding and to work directly with academics is implicit in many of the Tibetan’s statements related to educating the public and the intelligentsia. More explicit injunctions for undertaking such a program are now explored.

The Tibetan suggests that the evil confronting humanity could be averted by “the widespread dissemination of the academic truths of the esoteric teaching and its correct interpretation by the trained minds in the Occident.”<sup>114</sup> This necessitates not only a thorough understanding of the

“technicalities of wisdom” (a task avoided by those possessing the “mystical mind”) but also requires an understanding of the technicalities of academic thinking if the dissemination is to be fruitful. The “correct interpretation” of esoteric truths by the trained minds of the West, that is, academics, will only be possible if esoteric students are educated in both worlds, esoteric and exoteric, and are thereby able to translate between the corresponding idioms, concepts, and worldviews. If this collaboration is successful, the Tibetan asserts that the members of the New Group of World Servers who are responsible for directing the Forces of Enlightenment, forces which “lead to intelligent activity and correct mental planning,”<sup>115</sup> will be able to reach the intelligentsia and affect world-wide institutions and agencies, including “the big educational systems,” thereby helping to establish spiritual principles and right human relations.

The Tibetan states that educating the “thinking people,” which certainly includes academics, is

one of the main functions of the New Group of World Servers, and that the intellectuals will in turn educate the masses.<sup>116</sup> In fact, he adds, the major task of the New Group of World Servers is to express and impress certain great ideas (such as the unity of humanity, the fact of the Plan, and the fact of immortality) that will lead to the understanding of “the fundamental ideals which will govern the New Age.”<sup>117</sup> As noted above, he asserts that the awakening of the intelligentsia is a crucial aspect of this work and that “the new ideas must become the ideals of the thinking level of the race . . . during the next few years” or dire consequences will result.<sup>118</sup>

Not only does the Tibetan assert that esoteric truths should be disseminated to academia, “the trained minds of the Occident,” but he further asserts that the colleges and universities of the future will correspond to the world of the Hierarchy.

[They] should be the custodian of those methods, techniques and systems of thought and of life which will relate a human being to the world of souls, to the Kingdom of God, and not only to other human beings upon the physical plane; not only to the world of phenomena but also to the inner world of values and quality.<sup>119</sup>

This is not the work of religious activity, he adds, but should be the task of higher education. This is not an idealistic hope but rather “will be the recognised objective of the educators” by the time the Aquarian Age is in full flower. This optimism, however, must be tempered by the fact that academia today is heading in the opposite direction with respect to fulfilling this task. As noted earlier, the goal of higher education is no longer character formation (*Bildung*) as the Tibetan envisions, but rather the inculcation of the “technocratic perspective” due to the imperatives of the capitalistic system and the forces of materialism. To reverse this trend and to fulfill the Tibetan’s vision for education in the new age I believe it is imperative that his students begin working directly with academics.

The Tibetan states explicitly that “the new, compelling, inner impulses must stand re-

vealed to the human intellect,” and that “the true intelligentsia” (which obviously includes academics) must be contacted and educated to develop the potent force of goodwill within humanity.<sup>120</sup> He offers some broad suggestions on how this might be done which include the use of printed pamphlets, personal contact, correspondence, and lectures. These suggestions may appear to be relatively ineffective in today’s world and the Tibetan did not explore in detail either the techniques of “revealing” the new impulses so that they would be convincing to academics, or how to handle the expected critical response. Most likely he did not need to provide such details as he expected his students to take responsibility for the work and to adjust and adapt it as necessary. For example, in referring to his suggested procedure for contacting and educating the public and the intelligentsia he adds, “The details of its application will vary from time to time in the different countries.”<sup>121</sup>

I suggest that today the details of application should include direct outreach to academics through conversations, academic lectures, academic conference presentations, published articles and books in academic journals and academic publishing houses, and all other relevant means of revealing “the new, compelling, inner impulses” to the thinkers of the world. The Tibetan asserts that this work of contacting the intelligentsia and molding public opinion will result in the formation of a powerful group consciousness based on goodwill and international understanding that can change the complexion of world affairs. He concludes, “The power of such a group, working in such a fashion, will be tremendous. They can accomplish phenomenal results.”<sup>122</sup>

International understanding and cooperative goodwill are precisely the forces needed today but liberating this potential is of course contingent upon efforts to educate the public and the intelligentsia in the practical work of establishing right human relations. Too often, in my opinion, Bailey organizations and students instead promote subjective work and offer feeble platitudes such as “Hold the vision,” or “Hold on to the vision” that fail to educate the public with respect to the actual vision of the Plan.

Such phrasing truncates and distorts the Tibetan's interpretation of the original statement (Proverbs 29:18) when he refers to it as one of the demands made by humanity upon the New Group of World Servers. He states this demand as: "To hold the vision of the Plan before the eyes of men, for 'where there is no vision, the people perish.'"<sup>123</sup> People, species, coral reefs and many other forms of life on earth are perishing because a unifying vision has not been presented to humanity. To hold the vision of the Plan *before the eyes of the public and the intelligentsia* will require enormous intelligence, courage, and persevering work "in the hard arena of daily and public life."

I do not believe this demand can be fulfilled through merely subjective work undertaken in isolated comfort and safety, especially in light of the three duties enunciated by the Tibetan for all who read his words. These duties include:

The building of that structure of thought which will embody this newer teaching. You can—if you so desire—help construct the thought form of the New Age teaching. You do this, above all, by your thought; by your practical application of any truth, which you may have understood, to your personal life at any cost; by your sacrifice and your service to your fellow men *and by the constant dissemination of any knowledge which you may possess.*

Distribution of the teaching over a long period of time. *Have you done anything along this line, thus shouldering your responsibility?*<sup>124</sup>

An important aspect of the work of disseminating and distributing the Tibetan's teachings will be through developing practical research activities in the esoteric sciences. The Tibetan offers a specific example of relating the electrical nature of the human being to the discovery of the soul—a discovery, which he asserts "is the next step ahead for science." He encourages his students to assist in this endeavor through discovering connections between the research of scientists and esoteric teachings and by "using the analytical mind as a bridging factor between the world of human science and

the occult sciences."<sup>125</sup> This "bridging" work of course requires fluency in the languages of both sciences, human and occult, and it reinforces my point that Bailey students need to immerse themselves in academic understanding. (I offer some suggestions for esoteric research in Part II.)

Another explicit example of the Tibetan's insistence that we engage with academia is found in his call for the embodiment of "the newer esotericism which the more modern and mental types will sponsor" and for the development of "esoteric research" programs related to world events and movements.<sup>126</sup> He offers politics as an example of an area of focus for reasoning and thinking that will lead to the discovery of new truths and techniques that will contribute to the new era of right human relations. Given the interdependence of all fields of knowledge and today's emphasis on holism, integration, and synthesis, I suggest that not only politics but nearly all areas of academic knowledge can and should be the focus of esoteric research for the more modern and mentally focused esotericists.

In providing the example of politics the Tibetan is critical of esotericists among "older Piscean groups" who hold themselves aloof from current events, ideas, and movements. He states that these areas of practical focus are "scorned by present day esotericists who regard themselves as spiritually superior to such affairs and—in their ivory tower—concentrate on their own development, plus a little philosophy."<sup>127</sup> It is imperative that Bailey students and organizations reflect on their own possible vestiges of Piscean attitudes that may contribute to a sense of spiritual superiority, not only with regard to world affairs but to concrete knowledge and academia as well—attitudes that may lead to seclusion within the comfort and safety of our own "ivory towers" where we can continue to focus on the old, traditional forms of "esoteric work," blind to the "newer esotericism" demanded today by world events and by the more modern mental approach.

Terence Chivers, a longtime student of the Tibetan's work and now retired from a career in academia, embodies the new Aquarian attitude

by closing his synopsis of Bailey's *Education in the New Age* with this call:

The new education is available in the here and now. It is up to us to find an appropriate form in which we can interpret the material. That's a challenge! The arena is dangerous. Advocates must proceed with much caution and work out plans with great care. But we must proceed.<sup>128</sup>

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to encourage Bailey students to manifest "the newer esotericism" by engaging directly with the intelligentsia and academics of the world. It will require intelligence, expanding love, humility, and a spirit of cooperation. It will also require courage, invincible will, and the readiness to sacrifice everything. As the Tibetan stated:

This new world will not come as an answer to prayer or by the passive wishful thinking and expectation of the peace-loving idealist and mystical visionary . . . It will come when the mystic and the man of vision *awakens* to the need of the hour and comes down from the world of dreams, of theories, and of words into the hard arena of daily and public life. He must be willing to fight for that which he desires and knows to be good and true and right, and must stand firm against those who seek to distort the vision and to arrest its appearance, arming for battle so that final disarmament may be possible.<sup>129</sup>

As students of the Tibetan's teachings, will we awaken to the need of our time? Are we willing to enter the hard arena of daily public life and to fight if necessary for what we believe? Or will we remain in relative seclusion and safety as we "hold the field of invocative tension" and "hold the vision," continuing subjective, "esoteric" work as it has been done for over seventy years while the "Monster" grows steadily in power? These are questions I believe every Bailey student must consider deeply in the light of her or his highest understanding and wisdom, in the light of the Soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Seifer, "Disciples and the Year 2025," *The Esoteric Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Fall 2006), 9-13. Djwhal Khul, generally referred to as "the Tibetan" or "D. K.," is the claimed source of eighteen books of esoteric philosophy telepathically transmitted to Alice Bailey between 1919–1949. See Alice A. Bailey, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (New York: Lucis, 1951). As Bailey's *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925) is her most important and comprehensive work and the three-fold concept of Cosmic Fire provides the overarching philosophical framework encompassing all of her other books, I utilize the term "Cosmic Fire Studies" in the title of this article and elsewhere as an abbreviation for "the esoteric philosophy of Alice A. Bailey" and to distinguish her writings from other esoteric and spiritual traditions (see Part II). I refer to those persons who study the Tibetan's teachings as presented in the writings of Alice Bailey as "Bailey students" and "the Bailey community."

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York: Lucis, 1955), 164. The Tibetan is considered to be a Master of the Wisdom, one who has transcended the human condition and, technically speaking, one who has taken the fifth initiation and therefore become a member of the planetary Hierarchy working under the leadership of the current World Teacher, the Christ. See especially: Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (New York: Lucis, 1922), 20-62; *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 406-11. The Plan is basically the divine Will and Purpose of our planetary Logos and is discussed throughout Bailey's writings.

<sup>3</sup> In this article my use of the term "esoteric teachings" and related expressions relate primarily to Bailey's esoteric philosophy as distinct from the academic field of "esoteric studies." This distinction is clarified in Part II.

<sup>4</sup> "This is a gigantic subject—a monster has been created in this past century, strengthened by technology and the culture of the instantaneous. This monster is of course part of Humanity's Dweller/Shadow." Phillip Lindsay, Scorpio Newsletter 2015. Online: <http://esotericastrologer.org/newsletters/scorpio-2015-media-maya-putin-russia-ukraine-syria/>. (accessed November 7, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Seifer responded to my inquiry by stating that

- her article “stirred very little if any response” (personal communication, July 9, 2015).
- 6 Phillip Lindsay, “Fifth Shamballa Impact of 2000: Ongoing Activation” (no date). Online: <http://esotericastrologer.org/articles/the-ongoing-activation-of-the-fifth-shamballa-impact-of-2000/>. (accessed September 29, 2016).
- 7 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis, 1960), 12-18.
- 8 The interrelated processes of “the Reappearance of the Christ and the Externalization of the Hierarchy” are central aspects of the Tibetan’s teaching and are discussed throughout Bailey’s writings. See especially, Alice A. Bailey: *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis, 1948); and *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis, 1957). The Great Invocation is a world prayer that invokes divine Light, Love, and Power and is a vital aspect of the Tibetan’s teachings. See especially, Bailey: *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 148-51, 157-76, 187-89; and *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 142-70, 251-82, and 488-91.
- 9 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 300. Quoted in “The Coming Avatar” by Dorje Jinpa. Online: [http://whenthe-soul-wakens.org/files/documents/The\\_Comming\\_Avatar.pdf](http://whenthe-soul-wakens.org/files/documents/The_Comming_Avatar.pdf). (accessed November 8, 2015). Jinpa also notes (ibid., 5n8) two other references in Bailey’s writings to the possibility of cataclysmic divine intervention: *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 259; and *Rays and the Initiations*, 555.
- 10 Dorje Jinpa, “The Apocalypse of St. John,” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 2015), 45-53. Jinpa takes the title of his article from a series of talks given by Rudolf Steiner (later published in book form and available online at [http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA104/English/APC1958/ApoJon\\_index.html](http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA104/English/APC1958/ApoJon_index.html). (accessed November 8, 2015). He refers to the *Terra Lucida* teachings as “a series of texts . . . based on transmissions from the inner world” (ibid., 52n2). For an alternative esoteric interpretation of the book of Revelation see, Zachary F. Lansdowne, *The Revelation of St. John: The Path to Soul Initiation* (San Francisco: Weiser, 2006).
- 11 Alice A. Bailey, *Problems of Humanity* (New York: Lucis, 1947), 171 (italics in the original).
- 12 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II* (New York: Lucis, 1942), 714-15 (italics in the original).
- 13 Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, 168-69.
- 14 Ibid., 177 (italics in the original).
- 15 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 11 (italics added).
- 16 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 678; 689. If we are to initiate dialogues with academics and the general public I suggest that we adapt our language to reflect not only gender sensibilities but racial ones as well. For example, the expression “Great White Brotherhood” may be completely understandable in its original context as referring to the planetary forces of Love but it carries both racist and sexist connotations that, for those unfamiliar with Bailey’s work, might seem to refer to a white supremacist organization. More importantly, associating evil with “black” is simply not acceptable today. Therefore I endeavor to avoid using or quoting black/white and dark/light descriptors for the planetary Lodges, Forces, and associated forms of magic. While I still refer to the original title of Bailey’s classic book, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis, 1934), I more generally refer to “soul magic” instead of “white magic,” and “Forces of Materialism” instead of “the Black Lodge” or “Dark Forces of Evil.” Additionally, at times I may add “and women” to the phrase “men of goodwill,” as Bailey often does as well, without acknowledging the change. For a discussion of the need to include the feminine perspective and redress imbalances in cultural worldviews and in the presentation of the Ageless Wisdom teachings in particular see, Kathy Newburn, “Masculine and Feminine Polarities,” in *A Planetary Awakening: Reflections on the Teachings of the Tibetan in the Works of Alice A. Bailey* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin, 2007), 14-17.
- 17 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 84-85.
- 18 Image, from WikiArt is under Fair Use Act, which permits any copying of copyrighted material done for a limited and “transformative” purposes.
- 19 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 614.
- 20 Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, 87. My depiction of the current global crises suffers numerous limitations. It is obviously not intended to be a careful historical analysis but rather

- serves as a summary sketch of forces and events that I believe must be taken into consideration when reflecting on world conditions and possible courses of action. In particular, this account is limited by a narrow focus on the United States.
- 21 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 611.
- 22 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).
- 23 In 1939 the MS *St. Louis*, carrying 908 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, was turned away from American shores. Following the terror attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, at least twenty-six U.S. governors and all of the Republican presidential candidates reacted by pledging to refuse entry to refugees from Syria.
- 24 Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations* (New York: Lucis, 1949), 88-92. The concept of seven “ray qualities” is explored throughout many of Bailey’s writings. See especially: *Esoteric Psychology I* (New York: Lucis, 1936); and *Esoteric Psychology II*.
- 25 Canadian political scientist C. B. Macpherson (1911–1987) developed (and opposed) the theory of “possessive individualism,” a construct that assumes that the essence of a human being is pure self-interest and unlimited consumption. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (reprint 2011; New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
- 26 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 647.
- 27 Howard Dean, quoted by Ari Berman, “How the Wealth Primary is Undermining Voting Rights,” *The Nation*, June 8, 2015.
- 28 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 651.
- 29 Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, 79-80.
- 30 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 651 (italics in the original).
- 31 *Ibid.*, 651-52.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 651.
- 33 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis, 1953), 662. Martin Vieweg, a longtime Bailey student and worker in the esoteric community, notes that the Tibetan’s words have been echoed by many recently and Naomi Wolf in particular. Years ago she warned of the “fascist tactics” and the “fascist shift” taking place in America, warnings that have been re-ignited during the 2016 U. S. presidential campaign. See, *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007); referenced in Vieweg, “The Release of Light Into A Darkened World,” 2015. Online: [http://whentheshoulawakens.org/the-release-of-light\\_495.html](http://whentheshoulawakens.org/the-release-of-light_495.html). (accessed November 21, 2015).
- 34 Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, 70-71.
- 35 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 499.
- 36 Russ Feingold, interview by John Nichols, “Russ Feingold Speaks Out,” *The Nation*, January 31, 2011, 24-26.
- 37 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 595.
- 38 Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York: Lucis, 1954).
- 39 According to Tony Smith, “The university . . . [is] now funded to a large degree by contracts and grants from corporations and state agencies . . . This breakdown . . . was closely connected to a shift in educational ideals away from those advocated in the classical German university. No longer was the goal of a university education the formation of character. Rather than being oriented towards the ideal of *Bildung* [Gm.—“formation,” “education,” “self-cultivation,” “the process of both personal and cultural maturation”] the university now had the goal of producing persons capable of discovering and applying technically employable knowledge. No longer was the ideal the well-rounded humanist of the *Universitas litterarum*. Instead the ideal became the specialist . . . The *technocratic perspective* . . . insists that the increased specialization required to master a particular scientific area and the direct bond between the university and the need of industry and government have made the classical humanist ideals totally outdated.” Tony Smith, *The Role of Ethics in Social Theory: Essays from a Habermasian Perspective* (New York: SUNY, 1991), 196-98 (italics in the original).
- 40 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 595.
- 41 Bailey, *Destiny of the Nations*, 37.
- 42 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I* (New York: Lucis, 1944), 26.
- 43 Benjamin Barber, “America’s Knowledge Deficit,” *The Nation*, November 29, 2010, 21-22.
- 44 Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (New York: Nation Books, 2009). The triumph of illusion over the past forty years has been documented in a film “HyperNormalization” available on a website dedicated to provoking critical thinking and effective action. See,

- https://thoughtmaybe.com/hypernormalisation  
 45 <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/uselection/2016/04/donald-trump-the-unauthorized-database-of-false-things.html>. (accessed December 6, 2016).
- 46 Steve Tesich, *The Nation*, 1992. Quoted by Richard Kreitner, “Post-Truth and Its Consequences,” *The Nation*, December 19/26, 2016, 7.
- 47 “Smog in Beijing.” Image is protected under the Fair Use Act.
- 48 Pope Francis, *Praise Be to You - Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015).
- 49 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology* II, 717-18 (italics added). The New Group of World Servers is constituted of all women and men worldwide who evidence goodwill and who are working toward mutual understanding and the establishment of right human relations. See especially, Bailey, *White Magic*, 398-433.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 750-51 (italics in the original).
- 51 The Tibetan insists, however, that students must learn the distinction. See Bailey: *Discipleship in the New Age* I, 725, 729; and *Esoteric Healing*, 354-55.
- 52 It should be noted that the Tibetan indicates there are several levels of “harmlessness” (Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 670-71) and also that he was at times extremely critical of governments, religious movements, and financial leaders. See most notably, Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*.
- 53 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 237-38. Quoted in “Understanding These Testing Times,” Bi-annual Letter from Lucis Trust, Autumn 2016. Online: [https://www.lucistrust.org/about\\_us/lucis\\_trust/bi-annual\\_letter/autumn\\_2016](https://www.lucistrust.org/about_us/lucis_trust/bi-annual_letter/autumn_2016). (accessed October 20, 2016).
- 54 Group Letter from The School for Esoteric Studies (May 2015).
- 55 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 600.
- 56 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 74.
- 57 Bailey, *White Magic*, 425.
- 58 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 52.
- 59 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology* II, 715-16.
- 60 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 300; See also the Appendix “My Work” (Bailey, *Autobiography*, 255-58) where the Tibetan states, “Years ago, I definitely told A.A.B. [Bailey] (as did her own Master) that her major duty as a disciple was to familiarise the public with the true nature of the Masters of the Wisdom . . . *The fact of the Hierarchy and the work of the Masters—through Their disciples—must and will be brought increasingly to public attention.*”
- 61 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* I, 789 (italics in the original).
- 62 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 493-94.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 313.
- 64 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 92.
- 65 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 311.
- 66 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 207-31. See also “Stages in the Externalisation” in Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 501-701.
- 67 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 218-19 (italics in the original.)
- 68 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 112. See also Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 186.
- 69 Bailey, *White Magic*, 424-26.
- 70 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 309-310.
- 71 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 109-10.
- 72 See for example, Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology* II, 679-83.
- 73 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 568-75.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 550-52.
- 75 Personal communication, July 23, 2007.
- 76 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology* II, 634-39. It should be noted that in numerous instances the Tibetan makes clear that there are “no real lines of demarcation” in cycles, stages, and states of consciousness; “All in nature overlaps” (Alice A. Bailey: *Glamour: A World Problem* [New York, Lucis, 1950], 192; *Cosmic Fire*, 774).
- 77 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 52.
- 78 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 570-71.
- 79 Bailey, *Cosmic Fire*, 707.
- 80 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 358.
- 81 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* II, 48. Earlier in the same book the Tibetan decries as both a great tragedy and a serious problem for the Hierarchy the fact that esoteric students pile up knowledge but fail to apply it with understanding and wisdom. This tendency, together with misdirected aspiration “obliterates the need of their fellow men” (*ibid.*, 25).
- 82 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age* I, 777-90.
- 83 Bailey, *Autobiography*, 275.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 202-203 (italics in the original).
- 85 *Ibid.*, 609-610.

- 86 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 84-87. See also Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 250-55.
- 87 The School for Esoteric Studies is a notable exception. A section of their website, "Current Topics for Reflection," acknowledges the importance of the historical context in which Bailey wrote, the social changes that have occurred since that time, possible "limitations in the Tibetan's synthetic understanding," and the necessity for students to question, challenge, and shape the received teachings according to one's lived experience. The collected papers explore topics including social justice, homosexuality, and the use of gender-neutral language. Online: <http://www.esotericstudies.net/current-topics.html>. (accessed January 1, 2017).
- 88 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 218-19.
- 89 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 58.
- 90 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 279; *White Magic*, 609-610.
- 91 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, 16.
- 92 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 235-36.
- 93 Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis, 1922), 315. In Bailey's writings, the terms "occult" and "occultism" are virtually synonymous with "esoteric" and "esotericism." For her explication of the term "esotericism" see especially, *Education in the New Age*, 59-68.
- 94 Bailey, *Occult Meditation*, 326.
- 95 See for example, Sylvia Cranston, *H.P.B. The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993).
- 96 Bailey, *Occult Meditation*, 299, 317, 331 (italics added).
- 97 Bailey: *Discipleship in the New Age I*, 71-73; *Rays and the Initiations*, 111-12; 231.
- 98 Regarding the planned work of these groups see especially, Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, 34-74; *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 26-66. The Tibetan indicates the lines of failure for his first experiment in training groups for effective work in the new age and he offers four reasons for *exoterically* disbanding "the New Seed Group" which was reorganized from the original ten seed groups (Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 3-9; 74-76).
- 99 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 65 (italics added).
- 100 Bailey, *Occult Meditation*, 311.
- 101 Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, 59-68.
- 102 Bailey, *Occult Meditation*, 328-30.
- 103 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 358.
- 104 Bailey, *Cosmic Fire*, 707.
- 105 Bailey, *Occult Meditation*, 346.
- 106 Bailey, *Cosmic Fire*, 677-78.
- 107 Albert Einstein, "Science, Philosophy and Religion, A Symposium," published by The Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, Inc., New York, 1941. Online: [http://www.update.uu.se/~fbendz/library/ae\\_s\\_cire.htm](http://www.update.uu.se/~fbendz/library/ae_s_cire.htm). (accessed May 11, 2016).
- 108 Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem*, 56-65.
- 109 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 636-37. See also *ibid.*, 679-80, and 717-18. Additionally, the Tibetan states that the resurrection of humanity will occur through the intelligentsia and the women and men of goodwill (Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 468; see also *ibid.*, 484).
- 110 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 185-87.
- 111 *Ibid.*, 361-62.
- 112 *Ibid.*, 186. In a later section of the same book, "Teachings on Initiation" the Tibetan also describes "Precipitation" as the final stage in the process of revelation (following "Penetration" and "Polarisation," *ibid.*, 321-23; 426-39) and asserts that it constitutes "an imperative opportunity . . . unprecedented in human history" (*ibid.*, 428).
- 113 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 362.
- 114 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 511.
- 115 Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 484.
- 116 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 677-78. See also Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 185-87.
- 117 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 717. See also *ibid.*, 672-73.
- 118 *Ibid.*, 717-18 (italics added).
- 119 Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, 49.
- 120 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 678-80.
- 121 *Ibid.*, 679.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 683.
- 123 Bailey, *Rays and the Initiations*, 233.
- 124 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 712 (italics added).
- 125 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 368-69.
- 126 Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, 62-64.
- 127 *Ibid.*, 63-64. In addition to Lindsay's ongoing work (<http://www.esotericastrologer.org>), a good example of Bailey students who do focus on the practical work associated with current movements and events in the field of poli-

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tics is found in Corrine McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson, *Spiritual Politics: Changing the World from the Inside Out* (New York, Ballantine, 1994).

<sup>128</sup> Terence Chivers, "New Education Now," Brisbane Goodwill Unit of Service. Online:

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<http://www.brisbanegoodwill.com/esoteric-philosophy/new-education-now/>. (accessed May 16, 2016).

<sup>129</sup> Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 243 (italics added).



# The Third-Ray Cause of Inharmony and Disease

Zachary F. Lansdowne

## Abstract

The *seven rays* denote seven primary differentiations of energy, and doctrines on the seven rays have been expounded by various theosophical writers. Alice Bailey, in her book *Esoteric Healing*, presents seven symbolic stanzas that portray “The Seven Ray Causes of Inharmony and Disease,” but with very little explanation. She acknowledges that these stanzas are “abstruse and difficult,” but says that their comprehension leads to “the isolation of the seven psychological causes of disease, inherent in the substance of all forms in this world cycle.” This article elucidates the practical significance of the stanza that portrays the third-ray cause of inharmony and disease.

## The Seven Rays

The *seven rays* are mentioned in both the ancient Hindu *Rig Veda* and modern Theosophy,<sup>1</sup> and the following definition is often used: “A ray is but a name for a particular force or type of energy, with the emphasis upon the quality which that force exhibits and not upon the form aspect which it creates.”<sup>2</sup> Alice Bailey (1880 – 1949), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue her own activities, says, “Every unit of the human race is on some one of the seven rays,”<sup>3</sup> so the seven rays provide a way of characterizing human beings according to the qualities that they exhibit. Bailey also says, “We must bear in mind that the ... synthetic characteristic of each of the rays is denoted by the ray name,”<sup>4</sup> and gives the following ray names:

Ray I—Will or Power

Ray II—Love-Wisdom

Ray III—Active Intelligence or Adaptability

Ray IV—Harmony, Beauty, Art

Ray V—Concrete Knowledge or Science

Ray VI—Devotion or Idealism

Ray VII—Ceremonial Order or Magic.<sup>5</sup>

Bailey provides this definition, “When we speak of ray energy we are in reality considering the quality and the will-purpose aspect of a certain great Life to Whom we give the name ‘Lord of a Ray.’”<sup>6</sup> She considers the Lords of the Seven Rays to be “The seven Spirits which are before his throne,”<sup>7</sup> as rendered in Revelation 1:4 (King James Version), and gives this analysis:

The seven Spirits, we are told in the Scriptures of the world, are “before the Throne of God”; this signifies that They are not yet in a position to mount the Throne, symbolically speaking, owing to the fact that They have not yet achieved complete divine expression.<sup>8</sup>

Bailey concludes that the seven rays, which are the emanations from the Lords of the Seven Rays, must be imperfect:

It will be apparent to you that these streams of force, emanating from the Lords of the Seven Rays, are coloured, therefore, and “tainted”—if I may use such a word—by

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the limitations of these same great Beings; They are Gods, from our point of view, but in reality, Gods in the making, even though much nearer solar divinity than the most advanced human being is near to planetary divinity. They are the “imperfect Gods” spoken of in *The Secret Doctrine* and are the planetary Logoi of the sacred and non-sacred planets.<sup>9</sup>

Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, expresses a similar notion:

The millions upon millions of imperfect works found in Nature testify loudly that they are the products of finite, conditioned beings—though the latter were and are Dhyani-Chohans, Archangels, or whatever else they may be named. In short, these imperfect works are the unfinished production of evolution, under the guidance of the imperfect Gods.<sup>10</sup>

Blavatsky also writes, “There are seven chief groups of such Dhyani Chohans, which groups will be found and recognised in every religion, for they are the primeval SEVEN Rays,”<sup>11</sup> so her preceding quotation has this implication: the millions of imperfect works found in nature testify loudly to the imperfection of the seven rays. Therefore, every human being also shares in that imperfection by being on some one of the seven rays.

### The Seven Stanzas

Bailey’s book *Esoteric Healing*, which appears as the fourth volume in a five-volume series entitled *A Treatise on the Seven Rays*, addresses the various ways that the topic of healing is related to the seven rays. In particular, this book gives seven symbolic stanzas, one for each ray, that portray “The Seven Ray Causes of Inharmony and Disease.”<sup>12</sup> Bailey introduces these stanzas with the following comment:

If the great informing Lives of the planets within our solar system are imperfect, the effect of this imperfection must inevitably affect Their planetary creations, Their bodies of manifestation, and thus introduce a karmic condition over which the

individual human being has absolutely no control, but within which he moves and which he shares. It is obviously impossible for me to elucidate this theme. All I can do or am permitted to do is to give you seven stanzas from one of the most ancient volumes in the world; it deals with the seven ray causes of imperfections in our planetary manifestations.<sup>13</sup>

She also describes the comprehension that students might obtain from studying these stanzas:

The comprehension of the seven stanzas which I now propose to give you will lead eventually to the isolation of the seven psychological causes of disease, inherent in the substance of all forms in this world cycle, because all forms are infused with the life energy of the “imperfect Gods.”<sup>14</sup>

Even though *Esoteric Healing* was first published in 1953, and even though its seven stanzas are said to embody revelatory information, no publicized effort seems to have been made to explain any of these stanzas. The reason for this absence is that each stanza consists of very enigmatic sentences. Bailey herself acknowledges, “These are abstruse and difficult concepts, but they should be pondered upon, and deep reflection will lead to understanding.”<sup>15</sup>

### The Third-Ray Stanza

This article attempts to explain only the third-ray stanza:

The Great One gathered here and there. He chose and He rejected. This power He refused and this power He accepted. He had no purpose linked to the six purposes of His six Brothers. He acquired a form and liked it not; threw it away and chose another. He had no settled point or plan but lived in glamour and liked it well. He smothered both the good and the bad, though using both. Excess in one direction could be seen and starvation in another. Both these extremes governed His choice of living substance, He threw together those that suited not each other, then saw the end was sorrow and deceit. Patterns He made,

but purpose suited not. He gave up in despair.<sup>16</sup>

Bailey's entire commentary on the third-ray stanza, in which "astral" is used as a synonym for emotional,<sup>17</sup> is as follows:

The main effect of this imperfect "maneuvering" and manipulation, as it has been called, is largely astral in nature, producing consequent physical ill health and the undesirable effects which we have already studied in this treatise. It is because this third ray energy is the energy of substance itself that its imperfections demonstrate profusely in the human tendency to disease. Glamour results from the excessive use of this third ray energy for selfish and personal ends and manifests primarily upon the sixth or astral plane. As a result of this manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines, you have such diseases as the gastric and intestinal disorders and the various stomach troubles which devastate civilised humanity—far more than the savage races. Certain brain disorders also are effects, and low vitality.<sup>18</sup>

The third-ray stanza consists of eleven symbolic sentences, and the purpose of this article is to elucidate their practical significance. Each sentence is considered separately and is repeated in bold print.

### **1. The Great One gathered here and there.**

Bailey comments, "the stanzas ... indicate the quality of the descending energies and the taints which these energies carry and convey to all forms which are vitalised by the life of our planetary Logos."<sup>19</sup> Although this comment suggests that the stanzas are applicable to "all forms" on the planet, our commentary is concerned only with the application to human beings. Accordingly, our commentary construes the "The Great One," in the first sentence of the third-ray stanza, to be *people on the third ray*.

Who are the people on the third ray? Bailey writes, "The mass of intelligent humanity are found on this [third] ray,"<sup>20</sup> and also, "Humanity is predominantly governed by the

third Ray of Active Intelligence."<sup>21</sup> As an example of a specific person, Epictetus (55 – 135), a Greek sage and Stoic philosopher, appears to be on the third ray, because his philosophical teachings are similar to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Third Ray.<sup>22</sup> As another example, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895 – 1986), an Indian speaker and writer on philosophical and spiritual subjects, also appears to be on the third ray, because his philosophical teachings are similar to Bailey's Third-Ray Method of Building the Antahkarana.<sup>23</sup>

If "gathered" in the first sentence meant *collected* or *appropriated*, it could be referring to the third-ray method of appropriation, of which Bailey gives this description:

Just as the grasping and attracting are terms applicable to the methods of the two first rays, so a process of "selective manipulation" is characteristic of this third ray ... Just as souls in the first case seem to *grasp* indiscriminately what they need, and force the substance thus grasped into the form or appearance required, enduing it with the quality needed in a dynamic and forceful way, and just as souls on the second ray set up a motion which gathers material out of the immediately surrounding environment, and imposes on it, through *magnetic attraction*, the desired quality, so in the case of souls on the third ray the required material is chosen here and there, but that chosen already has the needed quality (note this difference) and nothing whatever is imposed.<sup>24</sup>

The above quotation says, "in the case of souls on the third ray the required material is chosen here and there," but this phrase incorporates the same wording, "here and there," found in the first sentence. Let us accept the common wording as a clue having this implication: the first sentence is a symbol or sign for the third-ray method of appropriation. Accordingly, the first sentence has the following meaning: *Third-ray people use a process of selective manipulation to gather materials that already have the needed quality.*

### **2. He chose and He rejected.**

Bailey says that “the names of the Lord of the third ray indicate His use of force and His real nature,” and that one of these names is, “The Discriminating Essential Life.”<sup>25</sup> Here, *discrimination* is defined as “the recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another,” rather than “the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things.”<sup>26</sup>

The verb *chose*, which is part of the second sentence, characterizes discriminating capacity, because Bailey mentions, “Discriminating capacity, or the power to choose and thereby gain experience.”<sup>27</sup> The verb *rejected*, which is also part of the second sentence, also characterizes discriminating capacity, because Bailey also says, “Learn to reject and thus discriminate the best.”<sup>28</sup> Thus the second sentence has this meaning:

*They have discriminating capacity that enables them to choose and reject from what they have gathered.*

### **3. This power He refused and this power He accepted.**

Bailey writes, “Under the occult method, we must begin with the universal and the whole; in time the individual and the particular will stand revealed, but in relation to the whole.”<sup>29</sup>

The third-ray stanza is composed according to the occult method, because the first and second sentences depict two general characteristics of third-ray people, whereas the third sentence portrays how these general characteristics are applied in a specific case.

What is the meaning of “power” in the third sentence? Bailey speaks of “the power of some mental thoughtform, of some ideal, and some concept—sensed, grasped and interpreted in mental form—to dominate the mental processes of the individual.”<sup>30</sup> *A Course in Miracles* (*ACIM*), a modern system of spiritual psychol-

ogy, explains how every belief, which is an accepted concept, has power:

No belief is neutral. Every one has the power to dictate each decision you make. For a decision is a conclusion based on everything that you believe. It is the outcome of belief, and follows it as surely as does suffering follow guilt and freedom sinlessness.<sup>31</sup>

Thus “power” could be inferred as signifying a concept, because both Bailey and *ACIM* use the word *power* to characterize the ability of a concept to dominate or dictate mental processes. Bailey corroborates this inference through her frequent use of the verbs *refuse* and *accept*, which are also part of the third sentence, in relation to

a concept or statement, such as in these two passages:

Aspirants lose much by refusing to let go of that which the lower mind cherishes. When they do succeed in being entirely open minded and are ready to accept the new theories and hypotheses, they discover that the old and dearly held truth is not really lost, but only relegated to its rightful place in a larger scheme.<sup>32</sup>

Must all that a Master says be accepted as true and infallibly correct? Is the disciple wrong when he refuses (if he does) to recognise the Master’s point of view and the statements He may make?<sup>33</sup>

What is the meaning of the verbs *refuse* and *accept* in the third sentence? As illustrated by the above passages, each person has the responsibility to choose the concepts that he or she believes: refusing some concepts and accepting others. *ACIM* has a similar perspective by saying, “you are responsible for what you believe.”<sup>34</sup>

It might be thought, however, that many beliefs are imposed upon children by their parents, but *ACIM (Urtext Manuscripts)* indicates that even children choose the concepts that they accept as beliefs:

No one has adopted ALL of his parents' attitudes as his own. In every case, there has been a long process of choice, in which the individual has escaped from those he himself vetoed, while retaining those he voted FOR.<sup>35</sup>

The third sentence uses the phrase, "this power," twice. The adjective "this" refers to something that is nearby or present, and "power" signifies a concept, as discussed previously, so "this power" denotes the concept being evaluated. Consequently, the repeated use of the phrase depicts people who approach their concepts in a serial way: they make a judgment about one concept, which is either refusal or acceptance, and then they make a judgment about another concept. Their serial approach does not allow them to postpone making a judgment about a concept that they have begun to evaluate, or to conclude that they do not know its validity. Moreover, the sentence does not depict a process of extended evaluation but simply shows the movement from the judgment of one concept to that of another.

Let us make the following inference from the foregoing depiction: Third-ray people tend to make their judgments cursorily, which means with careless speed, and thereby misjudge what is true or false. Bailey corroborates this inference by saying, "Third ray people are ... susceptible to ... the rapidity with which they can deceive themselves,"<sup>36</sup> and, "Third ray people ... hardly know where truth begins and delusion ends."<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in the third sentence, third-ray people apply their general characteristics, which were portrayed in the first and second sentences, to the following specific case: *They gather concepts that have the potential of meeting their need, and then use their discriminating capacity on them, refusing some and accepting others as their beliefs. They tend to make their judgments cursorily and thereby misjudge what is true or false.*

#### **4. He had no purpose linked to the six purposes of His six Brothers.**

Bailey describes the evolution of will from individual purpose to group purpose:

The little will of the little lives must be merged in the larger will of the whole. Individual purpose must be identified with group purpose, which is as much of the purpose of the Whole or the One Life as the little life can grasp at any given point in time and space.<sup>38</sup>

She also describes how individual purpose entails a sense of separation:

As long as your state of awareness lays emphasis upon the fact of your individuality, the group *idea* cannot take form as a group *ideal*. The sense of separateness is still present. It is a sense which has been laboriously developed—under evolutionary law—from the moment when your soul decided to experiment, to experience, and to express divinity. Separative effort, separative emotional reactions and separative materialistic endeavour have been (if I may so unfortunately express it) the spiritual essentials which must perforce precede group effort and conscious group relations.<sup>39</sup>

Many third-ray people, such as Epictetus and Krishnamurti, have certainly identified with the purpose of a larger group, but what about the third-ray people being portrayed in the third-ray stanza? Bailey writes, "The seven brothers are all the children of the same Father,"<sup>40</sup> so *seven* brothers signify an entire group of members. The fourth sentence assumes that a portrayed person is participating in a group, so "His six Brothers" signify all other members of that group. Accordingly, the entire sentence, "He had no purpose linked to the six purposes of His six Brothers," means that a portrayed person does not share an interest in common with any other group member. Thus the following inference can be made: Each portrayed person has individual purpose even when participating in a group.

The foregoing inference can be corroborated in the following way. The *personality* is defined as the threefold lower self that consists of the physical body, emotional body, and mental body.<sup>41</sup> Bailey mentions, “the third ray faculties and capacities of your personality—critical, analytical, separative, prideful and full of self-interest,”<sup>42</sup> which shows that these third-ray faculties and capacities have characteristics that foster individual purpose.

Consequently, the fourth sentence has this meaning: *They are motivated by individual purpose even when participating in their various groups.*

**5. He acquired a form and liked it not; threw it away and chose another.**

A *form* could signify “the shape of a thing or person,”<sup>43</sup> and *shape* could denote the “outward appearance,”<sup>44</sup> so the first phrase, “He acquired a form,” could indicate the acquisition of a thing or person for the outward appearance. Such a goal would be selfish and personal, and it would be consistent with the individual purpose that was depicted in the fourth sentence. In her earlier commentary on the third-ray stanza, Bailey mentions the “use of this third ray energy for selfish and personal ends,” so let us render the meaning of the first phrase in a corresponding way: The portrayed people acquire some thing or person for their selfish and personal ends.

The second phrase, “and liked it not,” indicates that the portrayed people are dissatisfied with their acquisition. Epictetus, however, teaches that such dissatisfaction is an effect of their earlier selection of beliefs, or opinions, which occurred in the stage represented by the third sentence:

Men are disturbed not by the things which happen, but by the opinions about the things: for example, death is nothing terrible, for if it were, it would have seemed so to Socrates; for the opinion about death, that it is terrible, is the terrible thing. When then we are impeded or disturbed or grieved, let us never blame others, but ourselves, that is, our opinions.<sup>45</sup>

When you see a person weeping in sorrow either when a child goes abroad or when he is dead, or when the man has lost his property, take care that the appearance do not hurry you away with it, as if he were suffering in external things. But straightway make a distinction in your own mind, and be in readiness to say, it is not that which has happened that afflicts this man, for it does not afflict another, but it is the opinion about this thing which afflicts the man.<sup>46</sup>

To *throw away* could mean to “waste or use in a foolish way.”<sup>47</sup> For example, one might say: He threw away his inheritance. Accordingly, the third phrase, “threw it away,” is interpreted as follows: The portrayed people use their acquisition in a foolish way, because they blame it, rather than their own beliefs, for being the cause of their dissatisfaction.

Epictetus teaches his students to resist such foolishness:

The foolish person thinks that those things that initially strike the mind as dreadful and horrifying really are what they first appear, and, as if they were properly to be feared, he approves them by his assent “and confirms them by his judgment” (the word that the Stoics use when they discuss this topic). But the wise person, although affected superficially and briefly in colour and expression “does not assent,” but keeps the consistency and firmness of judgment which he has always had about things that look like this to the mind, namely that they are not proper objects of fear at all, but that they frighten with a false face and empty terror.<sup>48</sup>

The above quotation is consistent with the initial part of the third sentence’s meaning: namely, one can refuse or accept a given concept. In particular, with respect to the concept that things appearing “as dreadful and horrifying” are “proper objects of fear,” the “foolish person” accepts it when “he approves them by his assent,” whereas the “wise person” refuses it when he “does not assent.”

Since the portrayed people accept the concept that their acquisition is the cause of their

dissatisfaction, they must also believe that another thing or person can be the cause of their satisfaction. To *choose* could mean to “think of—choose in one’s mind.”<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, the fourth phrase, “and chose another,” is interpreted in this way: The portrayed people think of a replacement that would satisfy them.

Let us suppose that Epictetus’ teaching is correct: when the portrayed people accept the concept that their acquisition is the cause of their dissatisfaction, they accept an *illusion*, which is an erroneous concept. After accepting this concept as their belief, they have difficulty in recognizing it as an illusion. Krishnamurti describes this difficulty:

Ignorance of the ways of the self leads to illusion; and once caught in the net of illusion, it is extremely hard to break through it. It is difficult to recognize an illusion, for, having created it, the mind cannot be aware of it.<sup>50</sup>

To recognize that their concept is an illusion, the portrayed people need to, in Bailey’s words, “stand aside and observe with dispassion”;<sup>51</sup> but they do not do so, because the fourth phrase depicts them as mentally turning toward a future replacement and thereby avoiding dispassionate observation of their present circumstance. Krishnamurti describes how such avoidance blocks understanding:

If one can understand what to do with “what is”, then one will not escape to “what should be”. Because one does not know what to do with “what is”, one hopes that by inventing an ideal that one can somehow through the ideal change “what is”. Or, because one is incapable and does not know what to do, one’s brain becomes conditioned to living always in the future—the “what one hopes to be”. One is essentially living in the past but one hopes by living for an ideal in the future to alter the present. If one were to see what to do with “what is” then the future does not matter. It is not a question of accepting “what is”, but remaining with “what is”. One can only understand something if one looks at “what is” and does not run away from it—not try to change it into something else. Can one

remain with, observe, see, “what is”—nothing else?<sup>52</sup>

Thus the fifth sentence is consistent with the final part of the third sentence’s meaning: namely, third-ray people tend to reach their conclusions cursorily and thereby misjudge what is true or false.

In summary, the fifth sentence has this meaning: *They acquire some thing or person for their selfish and personal ends, and are dissatisfied with it; they foolishly blame it, rather than their own beliefs, for being the cause of their dissatisfaction, and think of a replacement that would satisfy them. In this manner they accept an illusion, or erroneous concept, but avoid the means for recognizing it as an illusion.*

#### **6. He had no settled point or plan but lived in glamour and liked it well.**

The first phrase is: “He had no settled point or plan.” Here, “settled point” refers to a clear-cut, positive goal set in advance, and “settled ... plan” refers to the means to make that goal happen. As *ACIM* explains, a settled goal motivates the implementation of the corresponding plan:

The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to *make* it happen. You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.<sup>53</sup>

Let us consider some examples. Bailey says to “add virtue to virtue in the building of the form of the ideal self until all the virtues have been attempted,”<sup>54</sup> so a settled goal might be to build the form of the ideal self, and the corresponding plan would be to add virtue to virtue. Bailey also mentions people who “identify themselves discriminately with group purpose, and submerge their separative identities in organised group activity and synthesis,”<sup>55</sup> so another goal might be to identify with group purpose, and the corresponding plan would be to submerge one’s separative identity in organized group activity. A third goal might be to express what Marshall Rosenberg, an Ameri-

can psychologist and peacemaker, calls “Non-violent Communication,” and the corresponding plan would be to practice the language and communication skills that he espouses.<sup>56</sup>

The word *ego* has various meanings. *ACIM*, which often uses this word, gives it the following meaning: “Everyone makes an ego or a self for himself, which is subject to enormous variation because of its instability”;<sup>57</sup> “The ego’s ... purpose is to be separate, sufficient unto itself and independent of any power except its own.”<sup>58</sup> When people do not have a settled goal or settled plan, *ACIM* describes how their ego determines their emotional response in any situation:

Without a clear-cut, positive goal, set at the outset, the situation just seems to happen, and makes no sense until it has already happened. Then you look back at it, and try to piece together what it must have meant. And you will be wrong. Not only is your judgment in the past, but you have no idea what should happen. No goal was set with which to bring the means in line. And now the only judgment left to make is whether or not the ego likes it; is it acceptable, or does it call for vengeance? The absence of a criterion for outcome, set in advance, makes understanding doubtful and evaluation impossible.<sup>59</sup>

According to the fourth sentence, the portrayed people are motivated by what Bailey calls “individual purpose,” which is equivalent to what *ACIM* calls “the ego’s purpose.” According to the first phrase of the sixth sentence, these people do not have a settled goal or settled plan, so the foregoing quotation implies that their individual purpose determines their emotional response in any situation.

The second phrase is: “but lived in glamour.” Bailey gives this definition, “*Glamour*, in its turn, veils and hides the truth behind the fogs and mists of feeling and emotional reaction,”<sup>60</sup> and explains how glamour is created from illusion: “*The Problem of Glamour* is found when the mental illusion is intensified by desire.”<sup>61</sup> In the stage represented by the fifth sentence, the portrayed people accept the illusion that things or people have the power to satisfy or

dissatisfy them. In the stage represented by the second phrase of the sixth sentence, they find glamour by intensifying their illusion with desire, but how do they do that?

Bailey says, “the use of the creative imagination is the outstanding characteristic” of “third ray results,”<sup>62</sup> and “the use of the imagination ... brings in the realm of desire.”<sup>63</sup> Krishna-murti describes how the imagination gives rise to desire:

We are asking: what is the source of desire? We must be very truthful in this, very honest, for desire is very, very deceptive, very subtle, unless we understand the root of it ... When you see something, the seeing brings about a response. You see a green shirt, or a green dress, the seeing awakens the response. Then contact takes place. Then from contact thought creates the image of you in that shirt or dress, then the desire arises. Or you see a car in the road, it has nice lines, it is highly polished and there is plenty of power behind it. Then you go around it, examine the engine. Then thought creates the image of you getting into the car and starting the engine, putting your foot down and driving it. So does desire begin and the source of desire is thought creating the image, up to that point there is no desire. There are the sensory responses, which are normal, but then thought creates the image and from that moment desire begins.<sup>64</sup>

Consequently, the portrayed people create images of themselves as being involved with their illusions and thereby attach desires to their illusions. In her earlier commentary on the stanza, Bailey describes the outcome: “Glamour results from the excessive use of this third ray energy for selfish and personal ends and manifests primarily upon the sixth or astral plane.”

The third phrase, “and liked it well,” depicts the stage in which the portrayed people are lost in glamour about their own glamour. Bailey also describes this stage: “Many good people today ... deify their glammers and regard their illusions as their prized and hard won possessions.”<sup>65</sup> These people have a *second-order*

*desire*, which is a desire about a desire. A *first-order desire* is a desire for something other than a desire.<sup>66</sup>

For example, an unwilling addict has a first-order desire for heroin, but wishes that this desire were otherwise, which is a second-order desire. In the context of the third phrase, if the portrayed people took pride in having a refined, cultivated, or sophisticated taste in such things as food, art, wine, music, literature, antiques, or clothes, then their pride would reflect a second-order desire, and their taste would be a first-order desire.

In summary, the sixth sentence has this overall meaning: *They do not have a settled goal or settled plan, which implies that their individual purpose determines their emotional response in any situation; but live in glamour, which means that their creative imagination attaches desires to the things or people that they believe can satisfy them; and like their glamour, which means that they attach second-order desires to their first-order desires.*

### **7. He smothered both the good and the bad, though using both.**

The first phrase is: “He smothered both the good and the bad.” To *smother* could mean, “to lavish a surfeit of a given emotion on (someone).”<sup>67</sup> For example, one might say: The parents smothered the child with affection. Bailey uses smother in this sense when she characterizes some people by writing, “They were smothered by desire.”<sup>68</sup> In her earlier commentary on the third-ray stanza, Bailey mentions “this manipulation of desire,” so “He smothered,” in the first phrase, is construed to mean: They lavish a surfeit of desire. Bailey mentions “all human tendencies, good and bad,”<sup>69</sup> so “the good and the bad” could denote good and bad tendencies. *Good tendencies* are inclinations, or predispositions, to proceed toward the betterment of humanity, and *bad tendencies* are inclinations to proceed toward personal gain. Thus the first phrase could have this meaning: They lavish a surfeit of desire on both their good and bad tendencies. But what is the meaning of this meaning?

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, provides this definition:

For our purposes, we will define a habit as the intersection of *knowledge*, *skill*, and *desire*. Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the *what to do* and the *why*. Skill is the *how to do*. And desire is the motivation, the *want to do*. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three.<sup>70</sup>

Desire is needed for developing habits, because it motivates one to find the appropriate knowledge and to figure out the appropriate skill. Consequently, a surfeit of desire implies that there is enough desire to develop a tendency into a habit, so the first phrase is given this meaning: They lavish desire on both their good and bad tendencies so as to develop them into habits.

For example, Bailey describes the development of a good tendency into a habit:

You can note too, if you will, a growing tendency towards soul control. I say tendency, my brother, for it is when tendency is transformed into habit and dynamic daily rhythm that the gates of initiation open before the disciple.<sup>71</sup>

Although the word *soul* has various meanings, it is used in here to denote the inner divine voice in a human being.<sup>72</sup> Bailey also describes the development of a bad tendency into a habit:

There are also those tendencies which constitute a form of dangerous appetite, which lead to undesirable habits, a letting down of the morale, and are dangerous to the will of the person, rendering him futile to fight these predispositions. He succumbs to them and pays the price of such habits, which is disease and death.<sup>73</sup>

The second phrase, “though using both,” indicates that the portrayed people use both good and bad habits. As an example, Bailey provides the following instruction to a student:

You have functioned in a glamorous world of your own idea of service and of what

should be done, but there has been no true cooperation with what is *being done*—only an interest in what your own over-active third ray tendency has sought to produce has engaged your deepest attention. Superficially you cooperate, basically you do not.<sup>74</sup>

This particular student is described as having an “over-active third ray tendency” that yields opposing good and bad habits: “Superficially you cooperate, basically you do not.”

Lucille Cedercrans (1921 – 1984), who presented a teaching called the “New Thought-form Presentation of the Wisdom,” describes the development of habit patterns:

People who place their feet upon the path of mental development move either to the right, toward white magic, or to the left, toward black magic. They are confronted with the forked path of decision as they make those many small choices having to do with the routine of daily living. They are learning the creative process and establishing those patterns in mental substance which direct the weight of their creativity, toward the forces of light for the betterment of humanity or toward the forces of darkness for what they think is personal gain.<sup>75</sup>

In Cedercrans’ account, people direct the “weight of their creativity” toward either good habit patterns or bad ones, which suggests that they are emphasizing one kind though using both kinds. Correspondingly, the seventh sentence seems to be saying: *They lavish desire on both their good and bad tendencies so as to develop them into habits, emphasizing one kind though using both kinds.*

#### **8. Excess in one direction could be seen and starvation in another.**

Let us introduce some additional terminology before considering the eighth sentence. The physical body of a human being has both dense and subtle portions. The *dense physical body* contains the muscles, bones, and glands. The *subtle physical body* is called the etheric or vital body in theosophy;<sup>76</sup> “golden bowl” in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 12:6);<sup>77</sup> and *prana mayakosha*, a Sanskrit name, in Hinduism.<sup>78</sup>

The Sanskrit word *chakra* literally means wheel. The Hindu tradition describes seven wheels of energy, called chakras, which belong to the etheric body and have the following locations and Sanskrit names:

1. Head centre—sahasrara chakra
2. Centre between eyebrows—ajna chakra
3. Throat centre—vishuddha chakra
4. Heart or cardiac centre—anahata chakra
5. Solar plexus centre—manipura chakra
6. Sacral or sexual centre—svadhisthana chakra
7. Centre at base of spine—muladhara chakra.<sup>79</sup>

Bailey describes the kind of diseases that can be traced to the condition of the chakras, or centers:

All diseases—except those due to accidents, wounds resulting in infections, and epidemics—can in the last analysis be traced to some condition of the centres, and therefore to energy running wild, to energy overactive and misdirected or insufficient and lacking altogether, or retained instead of used and transmuted into a higher corresponding centre of energy.<sup>80</sup>

Bailey also describes the fundamental cause of disease:

I have attempted to make clear to you that the fundamental cause is related to energy, to its presence in excess as it pours through the centres, or to its deficiency. Here lie the two main factors in the production of disease. It is essential that those of you who are interested in the study of disease and its healing should admit this and permit it to form the basis of your approach.<sup>81</sup>

The above quotation mentions both “excess” of energy and its “deficiency,” just as the eighth sentence mentions both “excess” and “starvation,” so the above quotation suggests the following explanation of the eighth sentence: An excess of energy is in one chakra, and a deficiency of energy in another.

Bailey, however, provides clues as to the particular chakras that are involved. First, she describes a general principle that relates the chakras to physical organs:

It is essential that spiritual healers should get clearly in their minds the picture of the areas in the body which are governed by the head centres and the other centres, because within those areas are the various organs which react to disease. The health of these organs is largely dependent upon the centres, as they condition the glands and as the energy is distributed throughout the body.<sup>82</sup>

In her earlier commentary on the third-ray stanza, Bailey writes, “As a result of this manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines, you have such diseases as the gastric and intestinal disorders and the various stomach troubles which devastate civilized humanity.” She characterizes the solar plexus chakra as “the organ of self-conscious personal desire,”<sup>83</sup> and specifically associates its over-activity with gastric, intestinal, and stomach disorders:

The solar plexus centre is, at this time, highly active among men and women everywhere. In every country millions of people are over-sensitised, emotional frequently to the point of hysteria, full of dreams, visions and fears, and highly nervous. This produces widespread gastric difficulties, indigestion, stomachic and liver ills and diseases, and intestinal disorders.<sup>84</sup>

Consequently, the portrayed third-ray people can be inferred as having an excess of energy in their solar plexus chakra.

Bailey says that an integrated personality is controlled by a mental plan rather than instinct or desire:

The developed man, with an integrated personality, gradually brings the etheric body under the control of mental energy and his physical plane activity is not then so much implemented by instinct or desire as by thought energy, dedicated to and expressing the nature of the man’s plan.<sup>85</sup>

The sixth sentence’s first phrase, “He had no settled point or plan,” shows that the people portrayed in the third-ray stanza have not yet begun the effort to integrate their personality. Bailey characterizes the ajna

chakra as “the centre of personality force and integration,”<sup>86</sup> so it is activated through the effort of integrating the personality. Accordingly, the portrayed people can be inferred as having a deficiency of energy in their ajna chakra.

Bailey corroborates the foregoing inference in two ways. First, she tells a third-ray student,

The ajna centre is, in your case, very little awakened. It is quiescent and revolving slowly ... You see, therefore, that for the present the ajna centre is the one which should receive immediate attention.<sup>87</sup>

Second, Bailey writes in her earlier commentary on the third-ray stanza, “Certain brain disorders also are effects, and low vitality.” Low vitality is a symptom of the lack of personality integration. Moreover, Bailey says, “The ajna centre between the eyebrows [becomes the controlling factor during the stage of mental development], corresponding to the period of integration and of personality control, wherein certain areas of the brain

become sensitised and used.”<sup>88</sup> Consequently, activity in the ajna chakra is associated with both use of the brain and personality integration, which indicates that a deficiency of energy in the ajna chakra could be associated with brain disorders and low vitality.

To “see” sometimes means to see mentally or to discern,<sup>89</sup> so the eighth sentence is given this significance: *An excess of energy could be discerned in their solar plexus chakra, which is the center of self-conscious personal desire, and a deficiency of energy in their ajna chakra, which is the center of personality integration.*

**9. Both these extremes governed His choice of living substance, He threw together those that suited not each other, then saw the end was sorrow and deceit.**

In the ninth sentence, “both these extremes” refers to the extreme imbalance of the solar plexus and ajna chakras that was depicted in the eighth sentence. Also, “living substance” denotes the hormones from the endocrine system, because Bailey mentions “The blood stream, the recipient of streams of living energy from the endocrine system, via what are called the hormones,”<sup>90</sup> and says, “And energy is substance and nothing else.”<sup>91</sup>

Consequently, the ninth sentence is concerned with the relationship between the chakras and endocrine system, which Bailey describes as follows:

Much is said today in modern medical investigation anent the “imbalance” of the endocrine glands, and many physical difficulties are ascribed to this frequent imbalance. But behind this condition of the glandular system lies the basic imbalance of the centres themselves. Only when there is a right understanding of force and its reception and consequent use, will right balance be achieved and the human endocrine system control the physical man in the manner that is intended.<sup>92</sup>

Bailey lists the seven chakras and allied glands:

1. The head centre—The pineal gland

2. The ajna centre—The pituitary gland
3. The throat centre—The thyroid gland
4. The heart centre—The thymus gland
5. The solar plexus centre—The pancreas
6. The sacral centre—The gonads
7. The centre at base of spine—The adrenal glands.<sup>93</sup>

Thus the first phrase, “Both these extremes governed His choice of living substance,” has this meaning: the imbalance of the solar plexus chakra and ajna chakra causes an imbalance in the hormones secreted by the pancreas and pituitary gland.

The second phrase, “He threw together those that suited not each other,” implies that the portrayed people are responsible for transmitting hormones into their blood system that do not suit each other. Bailey expresses this responsibility in the form of the following law:

Disease is an effect of the basic centralisation of a man’s life energy. From the Plane whereon those energies are focussed proceed those determining conditions which produce ill health. These, therefore, work out as disease or as freedom from disease.<sup>94</sup>

According to Bailey, the imbalance in the endocrine system produces a self-engendered disease:

We might consequently lay down the premise (one which the medical profession will later accept in its entirety) that diseases which are self-engendered (if I may use so curious and inadequate a phrase), and which are not the result of contagion or infection or of accidents, are caused by the failure, the limitation, the deficiency or the excess, and by the overdevelopment or the underdevelopment, of the endocrine system. This ductless glandular system, via the hormones, affects every part of the physical organism—via the blood stream—and it may therefore be truly posited that when the ductless glands are perfectly balanced and functioning correctly, there will be no diseased areas in the body.<sup>95</sup>

The third phrase is: “then saw the end was sorrow and deceit.” The word “sorrow” is interpreted as sorrow for the self-engendered disease. The word “deceit” indicates betrayal of trust. Bailey says, “the third Ray of Intelligence ... is apt to bring with it the sense of pride of intellect,”<sup>96</sup> and “A deep distrust of one’s reactions to life and circumstance, when such reactions awaken and call forth *criticism, separateness* or *pride*, is of value.”<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, the word “deceit” could indicate that the self-engendered disease causes one to distrust one’s reactions to life and circumstance, because those reactions betrayed one’s trust by bringing on the disease.

In summary, the ninth sentence is given this meaning: *The imbalance of the solar plexus and ajna chakras causes an imbalance in the hormones secreted by the pancreas and pituitary gland; consequently, the portrayed people are responsible for transmitting hormones into their blood system that do not suit each other, then have sorrow for their self-engendered disease and distrust of their reactions to life and circumstance.*

#### **10. Patterns He made, but purpose suited not.**

Bailey describes the three major patterns associated with a ray:

Every ray produces three major patterns which are imposed upon the form nature, whether it be that of a man, a nation or a planet. These three patterns are: *the emotional pattern*, embodying the aspiration of a man, a nation or a race; it is the sum total of the desire tendency at any one time; *the mental pattern*, emerging later in time and governing the thought processes of a man, a nation or a race. The emotional and mental patterns are the negative and positive aspects of the personality of a man, a nation or a race. *The soul pattern* is the pre-disposing and spiritual goal, the ring-pass-not or destiny which the spiritual principle succeeds eventually in imposing upon the personality of a man, a nation or a race. This soul pattern eventually supersedes and obliterates the two earlier pattern-producing processes.<sup>98</sup>

According to the above quotation, the emotional pattern is the first major pattern that is made. In the series of sentences that comprise the third-ray stanza, the emotional pattern is made in the sixth sentence. The subsequent sentences depict the imposition of the emotional pattern upon the form nature: the habit pattern is made in the seventh sentence, the etheric pattern in the eighth sentence, and the dense physical pattern in the ninth sentence.

Bailey says: “First, the mind controls the brain and the emotional nature. Then the soul controls the mind.”<sup>99</sup> When the mind controls the emotional nature, the mental pattern will have been made. When the soul controls the mind, the soul pattern will have been made. The sixth sentence’s first phrase, “He had no settled point or plan,” shows that the portrayed people have not yet made their mental pattern or soul pattern. Bailey says, “your soul-intended life pattern ... will be an expression of a life purpose.”<sup>100</sup> Thus the tenth sentence could have this meaning: the patterns made by the portrayed people are not suited for expressing their life purpose, because they have not yet made their soul pattern. This sentence, however, has a more esoteric, or hidden, meaning, as discussed next.

Bailey indicates that the third-ray quest for illumination is a philosophical one:

The method of approaching the great Quest, for this [third] ray type, is by deep thinking on philosophic or metaphysical lines till he is led to the realisation of the great Beyond and of the paramount importance of treading the Path that leads thither.<sup>101</sup>

Epictetus describes the beginning of philosophy, as it should be taken up:

The beginning of philosophy with those who take it up as they should, and enter in, as it were, by the gate, is a consciousness of a man’s own weakness and impotence with reference to the things of real consequence in life.<sup>102</sup>

The portrayed people see what the above quotation calls their “own weakness and impotence,” because the ninth sentence says that

they “saw the end was sorrow and deceit,” so the above quotation implies that they take up philosophy as it should be taken up. How should philosophy be taken up? Epictetus begins one of his discourses with the imperative, “Examine who you are,”<sup>103</sup> and explains that only through self-examination can people determine the actions that are appropriate for them.

Consequently, in the stage represented by the tenth sentence, the portrayed people achieve a temporary *alignment* with their soul and then examine their personality in a dispassionate way. Bailey describes each one’s discoveries: “He then, having discovered the personality, discovers the quality of his own soul life, and the purpose for which he has ‘appeared.’”<sup>104</sup> Thus the tenth sentence does not simply characterize the patterns that the portrayed people have made, but it also depicts the self-knowledge that they discover via their alignment: *They see that the patterns that they have made in their personality are not suited for expressing their sensed life purpose.*

### 11. He gave up in despair.

Krishnamurti writes, “Self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, and therefore the beginning of transformation or regeneration.”<sup>105</sup> After obtaining self-knowledge, how do third-ray people begin their process of transformation or regeneration? As part of her commentary on the Technique of Integration for the Third Ray, Bailey describes how a third-ray person is affected by the self-knowledge obtained via the preceding alignment:

This alignment naturally produces *a crisis* which is characterised by two qualities:

- a. The quality of deep distress. This is a period of difficulty and of real concern because it dawns upon his consciousness how useless, relatively, are his weaving and his manipulations, and how much of a problem he presents to the other Weavers.
- b. The quality which might be expressed as the determination to stand in spiritual being and to comprehend the significance of the ancient aphorism, given frequently to third ray aspirants: “Cease from thy doing. Walk

not on the Path until thou hast learnt the art of standing still. Study the spider, brother, entangled not in its own web, as thou art today entangled in thine own.”<sup>106</sup>

*Weaving* is a method of fabric production in which two distinct sets of threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric. In the above quotation, “Weavers” is a metaphor for third-ray people, because weaving entails active intelligence, and active intelligence is the synthetic characteristic of the third ray.

“Despair,” in the eleventh sentence, corresponds to *part a* in the above quotation: “The quality of deep distress.” This distress occurs when third-ray people see the relative uselessness of their manipulations.

To *give up* can mean, “to cease to do or perform.”<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, “He gave up,” in the eleventh sentence, corresponds to *part b* in the above quotation: “The quality which might be expressed as the determination to stand in spiritual being and to comprehend the significance of the ancient aphorism, given frequently to third ray aspirants.” The aphorism’s first sentence, “Cease from thy doing,” tells the aspirants to bring stillness to their outer activities, as Bailey explains:

The aspirant upon the third ray is apt to waste much energy in perpetuating the glamorous forms with which he persistently surrounds himself. How can he achieve his goal when he is ceaselessly running hither and thither—weaving, manipulating, planning and arranging? He manages to get nowhere. Ever he is occupied with the distant objective, with that which may materialise in some dim and distant future, and he fails ever to achieve the immediate objective. He is often the expression and example of waste energy.<sup>108</sup>

The aphorism’s second sentence, “Walk not on the Path until thou hast learnt the art of standing still,” tells the aspirants to bring stillness to their mind, as Bailey also explains:

Let him stand still at the centre, fixing his eyes on the soul and ceasing activity for a brief period of time until the light breaks in.<sup>109</sup>

The aphorism's third sentence, "Study the spider, brother, entangled not in its own web, as thou art today entangled in thine own," tells the aspirants to bring stillness to their emotions, as Bailey indicates:

The spiritual man is enmeshed in the web of the emotions; desire, fear, ambition, passion.<sup>110</sup>

Thus the following meaning is given to the eleventh sentence: *They are deeply distressed by seeing the relative uselessness of their manipulations, so they are determined to stand in spiritual being and bring stillness to their outer activities, mind, and emotions.*

## Conclusions

Bailey's third-ray stanza, which we call the "Third-Ray Cause of Inharmony and Disease," consists of eleven symbolic sentences that can be interpreted in the following manner:

1. Third-ray people use a process of selective manipulation to gather materials that already have the needed quality.
2. They have discriminating capacity that enables them to choose and reject from what they have gathered.
3. They gather concepts that have the potential of meeting their need, and then use their discriminating capacity on them, refusing some and accepting others as their beliefs. They tend to make their judgments cursorily and thereby misjudge what is true or false.
4. They are motivated by individual purpose even when participating in their various groups.
5. They acquire some thing or person for their selfish and personal ends, and are dissatisfied with it; they foolishly blame it, rather than their own beliefs, for being the cause of their dissatisfaction, and think of a replacement that would satisfy them. In this manner they accept an illusion, or erroneous concept, but avoid the means for recognizing it as an illusion.
6. They do not have a settled goal or settled plan, which implies that their individual purpose determines their emotional response in

any situation; but live in glamour, which means that their creative imagination attaches desires to the things or people that they believe can satisfy them; and like their glamour, which means that they attach second-order desires to their first-order desires.

7. They lavish desire on both their good and bad tendencies so as to develop them into habits, emphasizing one kind though using both kinds.

8. An excess of energy could be discerned in their solar plexus chakra, which is the center of self-conscious personal desire, and a deficiency of energy in their ajna chakra, which is the center of personality integration.

9. The imbalance of the solar plexus and ajna chakras causes an imbalance in the hormones secreted by the pancreas and pituitary gland; consequently, the portrayed people are responsible for transmitting hormones into their blood system that do not suit each other, then have sorrow for their self-engendered disease and distrust of their reactions to life and circumstance.

10. They see that the patterns that they have made in their personality are not suited for expressing their sensed life purpose.

11. They are deeply distressed by seeing the relative uselessness of their manipulations, so they are determined to stand in spiritual being and bring stillness to their outer activities, mind, and emotions.

These sentences embody a common theme. The first and second sentences portray the gathering of general materials and the selection among what has been gathered; and then the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth sentences portray the appropriation of these specific materials: concepts, individual purpose, illusions, emotional pattern, habit pattern, etheric pattern, dense physical pattern, and self-knowledge, respectively.

When third-ray people reach the stage represented by the eleventh sentence, they are "determined ... to bring stillness to their outer activities, mind, and emotions." On the other hand, Bailey says that the "first result" of using

the Technique of Integration for the Third Ray can be summed up in a single word: “Stillness.”<sup>111</sup> Thus Bailey’s two symbolic formulas for third-ray people—the Third-Ray Cause of Inharmony and Disease and the Technique of Integration for the Third Ray—fit together as progressive unified instruction.

The major premise of this article is the following: the third-ray stanza indicates the quality of the descending third-ray energy and the taints that this energy carries and conveys to third-ray people.<sup>112</sup> As indicated by the third sentence, we have the ability to refuse or accept this premise as our belief. What are some consequences of accepting this premise?

If we encountered people involved with what Bailey’s earlier commentary calls “this manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines,” we might be critical of them for their lack of self-control, but the third-ray stanza would tell us that their uncontrolled behavior actually reflects the imperfection of the third ray. If we encountered people who have what Bailey’s earlier commentary calls “the gastric and intestinal disorders and the various stomach troubles which devastate civilised humanity,” we might feel sorry for their misfortune, but the third-ray stanza would tell us that their disease is a sign of their having reached an advanced stage in the stanza. Thus our acceptance of the major premise would enable us to have more understanding of third-ray people and their diseases.

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<sup>1</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, “Vedic Teachings on the Seven Rays,” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2010.  
<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 316.  
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-83.  
<sup>6</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 568.  
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

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<sup>8</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 298.  
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 292-293.  
<sup>10</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), vol. XIV, 217.  
<sup>11</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), vol. I, 573.  
<sup>12</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 298-304.  
<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.  
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.  
<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.  
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.  
<sup>17</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 31.  
<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 300-301.  
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.  
<sup>20</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), xiii.  
<sup>21</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1975), 135.  
<sup>22</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, “Epictetus’ Discourses compared to Bailey’s Technique of Integration for the Third Ray,” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Winter 2013.  
<sup>23</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, “Krishnamurti’s Teachings compared to Bailey’s Third-Ray Method of Building the Antahkarana,” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2015.  
<sup>24</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 81-82.  
<sup>25</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 68.  
<sup>26</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Difficult Words* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 131.  
<sup>27</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 252.  
<sup>28</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), 516.  
<sup>29</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 591.

- 30 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 128-129.
- 31 *A Course in Miracles* (third edition; Mill Valley, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 2007), Text, 499.
- 32 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 2.
- 33 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 686.
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# The Origins and Evolution of the Tarot

John F. Nash

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## Summary

This article explores the origins and complex history of the Tarot, setting aside issues of symbolism, which are already covered extensively in the literature. Reproductions of selected cards illustrate the Tarot's development over the last six centuries. The Tarot can be traced back to card games from the East as well as to the mysteries and magic of the West.

The oldest extant Tarot decks, in which the Major and Minor Arcana are combined, come from fifteenth-century Italy. The Minor Arcana resemble medieval playing cards, bearing in mind that games of chance had broader meaning than they do today. The “pip” cards originated in China, and court cards were added as games migrated westward. The origins of the Major Arcana are less clear. The claim that they were invented to enhance card-game complexity is unconvincing. Rather they seem to have evolved from the talismans of Hermetic, Neoplatonic and medieval magic. Plausible theories link the Major Arcana with the mystery schools of ancient Egypt. The Tarot may bear traces of *Sensa*, the language of high initiates, and seems to have emerged with the blessing of the Planetary Hierarchy.

The aesthetic quality of Tarot cards has depended on card creation and reproduction technologies as well as on users' needs and resources. Inexpensive woodcut images sufficed for gaming and fortune telling, but the nobility of the Italian Renaissance insisted on decks hand-painted by leading artists. Symbolism and aesthetics may be of comparable importance in our own choice of Tarot decks for study, meditation, divination or magic.

## Introduction

The Tarot, as we know it today, consists of seventy-eight images, customarily printed on cards resembling conventional playing cards. We speak of a “deck” of cards, or in

British English, a “pack.” The Tarot is used for esoteric study, meditation, divination, and occasionally ceremonial magic. The images suggest an underlying system of symbolism, though opinions differ as to how the symbols should be expressed and interpreted. Some esotericists hold the Tarot in the highest regard; others, along with much of the general public, view it as unwholesome. For a long time the Tarot bore the epithet: “The Devil's Picture Book.”

Notwithstanding the diversity of attitudes, broad consensus exists that the Tarot is an important element in the western esoteric tradition. Arthur Edward Waite, who designed the most familiar Tarot deck currently in use, declared: “The true Tarot is symbolism . . . . On the highest planes it offers a key to the Mysteries.”<sup>1</sup> To Harriette and Homer Curtis: “The Tarot is the most ancient of books, a collection of cards embodying the Secret Doctrine of the ages.”<sup>2</sup> To Paul Foster Case, writing in 1947: “The Tarot is a pictorial text-book of Ageless Wisdom. From its pages has been drawn inspiration for some of the most important works on occult science published during the last seventy-five years.”<sup>3</sup> Eden Gray commented that “[t]he very word Tarot seems to strike a hidden chord—the love of mystery—in the hearts of many when they first look upon the strange and beautiful cards of the Tarot pack.”<sup>4</sup> Carl Jung viewed the images as archetypes “which

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## About the Author

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mingle with the ordinary constituents of the flow of the unconscious, and therefore it [the Tarot] is applicable for an intuitive method that has the purpose of understanding the flow of life, possibly even predicting future events.”<sup>5</sup>

Many people view the Tarot as a guidebook to the spiritual path. To quote one source, the Tarot is “a finely tuned communication system, employing symbolism, mythology, and universal motifs, unrestricted by time, culture, and semantics.”<sup>6</sup> Another writer commented: “As anybody who has embarked upon a journey with the Tarot knows, the journey never actually ends, and the Tarot cards hold within their symbolism the mysteries of Creation in their telling of the tale of the soul’s return to its original home.”<sup>7</sup> A third declared: “When you discover the true nature of the Tarot, you will be taking your first step on the path of the initiate; this path takes you step by step toward the highest levels of spiritual awakening.”<sup>8</sup> We shall suggest that the Tarot came into existence, at the time of the Renaissance, in response to a broad initiative by the Planetary Hierarchy to raise human consciousness.

The Tarot is divided into two sections, known as the Minor and Major Arcana. *Arcana* is a plural Latin noun (singular: *arcanum*), which ordinarily means “mysteries” but can also be interpreted to mean “keys (or even portal) to the mysteries.” An anonymous author, believed to be the Russian-born Valentin Tomberg, explained that the arcana

conceal and reveal their sense at one and the same time according to the depth of meditation. That which they reveal are not *secrets*, i.e., things hidden by human will, but are *arcana*, which is something quite different. An *arcanum* is that which it is necessary to “know” in order to be fruitful in a given domain of spiritual life. It is that which must be actively present in our consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

The fifty-six Minor Arcana closely resemble conventional playing cards. Four suits: Wands, Cups, Swords and Pentacles, correspond, with some historical justification, to clubs, hearts, spades and diamonds, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Alternative names of the suits are listed in Table 1. French names are included because of strong

French influence on the Tarot in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Each suit contains ten “pip cards,” numbered ace (or one) through ten, and four court cards, usually denoted Page, Knight, Queen and King.<sup>11</sup> Note that the Tarot has an extra court card, versus the three in playing cards.

The images on the twenty-two Major Arcana are archetypal in quality. Their names, and even the order of the cards, vary from one deck to another, but a representative list is shown in Table 2.<sup>12</sup> French names are included as before. Twenty-one of the cards are assigned the Roman numerals I through XXI, while the Fool is either left unnumbered or is assigned the Hindu-Arabic zero (0).

The symbolism of Tarot cards is already addressed by an extensive literature, and the interested reader is referred thereto.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of this article is to trace the history of the Tarot and examine theories of its origins. The literature touches on these latter topics; but the published information is fragmented, much of it is speculative, and some is patently erroneous. The most useful treatment is Paul Huson’s book *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*,<sup>14</sup> though his focus is more on the history of Tarot symbols. Catherine Hargrave’s *A History of Playing Cards* is a useful companion source.<sup>15</sup> Readers may also be interested in historian Mary Greer’s blog,<sup>16</sup> though it is not used as a source in the present work.

The oldest known Tarot decks date from early fifteenth-century Italy. But the Tarot’s real origins are clouded in mystery, and competing theories attempt to explain how it came into existence and what its antecedents might have been. The academic consensus is that the Tarot evolved from card games that spread from China via the Middle East to Europe. A contrasting belief, expressed by many esotericists, is that the Tarot encodes the mystery teachings of ancient Egypt; one version asserts that it was preserved by Romani fortune tellers after destruction of the Library of Alexandria. The various theories will be examined and evaluated herein.

A major thesis of the present article is that the Major Arcana have roots in the talismans of

medieval and earlier magic, and approached their present form in the Hermetic and Neoplatonic revivals of the Italian Renaissance. Magic, in its broadest sense, is the transfer of energy from one level of reality to another, through the agency of a magician, or *magus*. Lying at the heart of occultism, magic is an activity in which all disciples will participate—by means of the Tarot or otherwise—at some point on the initiatory path. Participation requires a high level of responsibility and inner purity because the powers involved are potent, and the magus determines whether they are to be used for good or evil. “Good,” or “white,” magic overlaps in intent and/or form with religious liturgy and traditionally has been undertaken in the context of sacred ritual. Today it is often used in healing therapies.

“Talisman” is derived, via the Arabic *talsam* and the Byzantine Greek *telesma* (“performance of a religious rite”), from the Greek root *teleo* (“to complete or consecrate”). A talisman, to quote twentieth-century occultist Israel Regardie, is “any object, sacred or profane, with or without appropriate inscriptions or symbols, uncharged or consecrated by means of appropriate ritual magic or meditation.”<sup>17</sup> Another authority insists that, whereas an amulet may have intrinsic magical properties, a talisman must be consecrated for its intended use.<sup>18</sup> In either case, a talisman is designed to resonate with an elemental force, nonphysical entity, or other source of power. Exploiting the Law of Correspondences, it helps span, or break down, the barriers between the different levels of reality and serves as a visual aid in the invocation or evocation of the targeted power.

Another major thesis of this article is that, in order to serve as talismans, or indeed to be used effectively for meditation or divination, attention should be paid to the aesthetic value of Tarot images, as well as to their symbolism. Aesthetics has a positive effect on our own consciousness. It also serves to attract the higher devas who facilitate white magic and may guide divination. Recent efforts to recover the artistic quality of the Renaissance Tarot are to be commended.

## Tarot Decks: a Brief History

### *Early Playing Cards*

Card games were played in China as early as the ninth century CE. Decks of twenty-two monochromatic (black and white) cards were in common use by the eleventh century. In some cases playing cards served as currency, or at least “play money,” presumably to facilitate gambling. The fifteenth-century Chinese scholar Lu Rong described an earlier deck consisting of thirty-eight cards, divided into four suits: nine each in “coins,” “strings of coins,” and “myriads” of coins (10,000); and eleven in the suit “tens of myriads.”

Cards were produced by woodcut printing techniques, which, along with methods for producing paper or cardstock to print them on, also came from China.<sup>19</sup> As these technologies spread to India, Persia, Egypt, and finally Europe, so did card games. Playing cards seem to have reached southern Europe in the 1370s, with almost simultaneous appearances in several locations. At first, card decks may have been imported from Malmuk sources in Egypt.<sup>20</sup> But by 1380 one Rodrigo Borges was operating as a “painter and playing card maker” in Perpignan, then ruled by the count of Barcelona.<sup>21</sup>

Most card players accepted the relatively crude images produced by woodcuts, and in their simplest application woodcut images are monochromatic. From time to time, however, wealthy individuals commissioned hand-painted playing cards. In 1392 Jacquemin Gringonneur painted three decks of cards for Charles VI of France, widely known as “Charles the Mad.” Claims that these were the first known Tarot cards are dismissed by historians; they were probably playing cards, though the Fool may have been included, serving the role of today’s Joker.

The fifteenth-century Topkapı deck, discovered in Istanbul in 1939, consisted of four suits of thirteen cards each: polo sticks, coins, swords, and cups. Each suit contained ten pip cards and three court cards: *malik* (king), *nā'ib*

*malik* (viceroy), and *thānī nā'ib* (deputy viceroy).<sup>22</sup> The Seven of Swords from the Topkapi deck is shown in Figure 1.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 1. Seven of Swords from the Topkapi Playing Card Deck (15th century)**



Since the Chinese deck described by Lu Rong included no court cards, we may conclude that these were added after card games began their westward migration. The court cards of the Topkapi deck bore purely symbolic images because Islam prohibited human representation.<sup>24</sup> When card decks reached Europe, where no such proscriptions applied, the court cards acquired faces.<sup>25</sup> The queen may have been added to the uniformly masculine king, viceroy, and deputy viceroy—the two latter renamed knight and page—in response to instincts of courtly love.

### ***Evolution of Tarot Decks***

For a card deck to be considered a Tarot deck, it must include some number of Major Arcana in addition to the four suits of the Minor Arcana. The oldest known decks to meet this requirement date from the fifteenth century, the height of the Italian Renaissance.

Why the Major Arcana came to be called “triumphs,” or “trumps,” is unclear. The term may have been a reference to the six triumphs in Francesco Petrarca’s (1304–1374) epic poem *Triumphus Cupidinis* (“the Triumph of Love”): Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time and Eternity. Significantly, Petrarca is often lauded as “father of the Renaissance.” In any event, the

term links the Major Arcana to the superior values assigned to designated cards in card games—leaving aside the issue of which came first.

Early in the fifteenth century, the Milanese painter and illuminator Michelino Molinari da Besozzo (c.1370–c.1455) is credited with painting a Tarot deck, commissioned by an unknown patron. It consisted of four suits depicting different kinds of birds, and sixteen Major Arcana bearing images of Greek gods. None of Besozzo’s cards survives, but we have twenty-four images Besozzo created to illustrate a devotional text. The illustrations are similar in shape, size and decoration to the Tarot cards of a few years later and may indicate the style of the lost cards. Figure 2 shows “St Anthony” from the prayer book.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 2. St Anthony from the Besozzo Prayer Book (15th century)**



The oldest surviving Tarot cards, and even near-complete decks, date from the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1442 the D’Este family of Ferrara commissioned four decks, each containing the conventional four suits, plus a fifth suit that served as the Major Arcana. Eight cards survive, including one resembling the Lovers.<sup>27</sup>

From the same time period we have the master prints of a set of fifty engravings. Now thought to have been created by two unknown artists, they were long attributed to the Paduan painter and printmaker Andreas Mantegna, and “Mantegna deck” continues to serve as a convenient label. All of the Mantegna images resemble

Major Arcana, and some have captions like “The Emperor,” “Pope,” and “Justice,” which appear in the modern Tarot. But the deck also includes “Servant” and “Gentleman,” along with cards representing the liberal arts, muses and planets.<sup>28</sup> Figure 3 shows the virtue *Speranza* (“Hope”) from the Mantegna Tarot.

**Figure 3. Speranza (Hope) from the Mantegna Tarot(15th Century)**



The Mantegna deck does not fit easily into either the playing cards or the “mainstream” Tarot of the period. But it illustrates the type and degree of experimentation that took place in the development of the Major Arcana. Moreover, we shall see that it remains relevant to modern interpretations of the Tarot.

The mainstream evolution of the Tarot in the mid-fifteenth century is exemplified by three decks commissioned by Duke Filippo Visconti and his son-in-law, and successor, Francesco Sforza. The best known was painted between 1451 and 1453. Usually referred to as the Visconti–Sforza deck, it was commissioned by Sforza and his wife Bianca Maria Visconti, Filippo’s daughter, probably to celebrate Francesco’s and Bianca’s victorious entry into Milan in 1450. The principal artist is believed to have been Bonifacio Bembo, who was active as a painter and manuscript illuminator from 1444 to 1477.<sup>29</sup>

The Visconti–Sforza Tarot consisted of seventy-eight cards, of which all but four survive. Reproductions are readily available today, with plausible reconstructions of the missing cards.

Figures 4(a) and 5(a) show, respectively, the Seven of Swords and The High Priestess from the Visconti–Sforza deck.<sup>30</sup>

A second deck, created sometime between 1442 and 1447, now consists of forty-eight cards. The third, dated to around 1466, may originally have consisted of eighty-six cards, of which sixty-seven survive. Interestingly, it includes two extra court cards in each suit: “Damsel” and “Lady on Horse”—that is, female knight—in addition to the King, Queen, Knight and Page.

An important contribution from the late fifteenth century was the Sola Busca deck, named for the Milanese family who donated the deck to the British Museum in 1907. Conventionally dated to about 1491, and attributed to either Marco Zoppo or Nicola di maestro Antonio, the complete deck of seventy-eight cards survives.<sup>31</sup> The twenty-two Major Arcana include eighteen depicting characters of ancient Rome and four from the Bible. Most significant is pictorial illustration of the pip cards of the Minor Arcana, contrasting with the usual practice of showing only the requisite number of symbols of each suit. Pictorial illustration of the pip cards was not revived until the twentieth century.

The Renaissance Tarot’s golden age lasted less than a century. Little or no activity was reported in Italy after 1500, when war and foreign occupation took its toll. But the Tarot reappeared in France a century-and-a-half later. Rouen and Lyons became centers of French card production in the sixteenth century,<sup>32</sup> followed in due course by Marseille, on the Mediterranean coast.

In about 1650, French master card maker Jean Noblet produced a Tarot deck. Noblet lived in Paris, but his deck is regarded as the first of the several “Marseille” decks, so named because of that city’s increasing preeminence in card printing. François Chosson produced another deck in 1672, Jean Dodal produced a third in 1701, and Nicolas Conver a fourth in about 1760.<sup>33</sup> They all have a similar flavor, with images less artistically sophisticated, but perhaps more lively, than those in the Visconti–Sforza deck. Figures 4(b) and 5(b) show the

Seven of Swords and High Priestess, respectively, from the Dodal Marseille deck.<sup>34</sup> The cards of the Marseille Tarot originally bore French names; names in multiple languages {for example Figure 5(b)} were added by a modern publisher.

While the Marseille Tarot owed its structure to the Renaissance—especially to the Visconti–Sforza deck—its imagery drew upon Middle Eastern precedents. Swords in the Italian Tarot decks are straight, following European tradition dating back to the Age of Chivalry {Figure 4(a)}. By contrast, most of the swords in the Marseille decks look like scimitars, resembling those in the Topkapı playing-card deck; the respective Seven of Swords cards are shown in Figures 1 and 4(b). Aside from these differences, the Visconti–Sforza and Marseille decks jointly served as the prototypes for most modern Tarot decks.

In the late nineteenth century, the Marseille Tarot became the focus of attention of two individuals who became famous in their respective circles. British occultist Macgregor Mathers wrote a pamphlet on divination in 1888, subsequently published in book form: *The Tarot: Its Occult Significance*.<sup>35</sup> The following year Gérard Encausse (1865–1916), who adopted the pseudonym Papus, published his influential *Le Tarot des Bohémiens* (“The Tarot of the Bohemians”) in France.<sup>36</sup> Mathers illustrated his book with the Dodal Marseille deck, while Papus showed the Dodal and Convey decks side-by-side for comparison.

Mathers co-founded the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, in 1888, and two of its most prominent members created new Tarot decks: Arthur Waite and Aleister Crowley. Waite was assisted by artist Pamela Coleman Smith, who reportedly spent two years on the project. The Waite–Smith deck, published in 1909, is also known as the “Rider” deck after its original publisher, the Rider Company.<sup>37</sup> Reportedly, Waite communicated his ideas in the form of verbal or written instructions, giving Smith broad latitude in the choice and treatment of images. She may have studied and been influenced by the Sola Busca deck, which had just been made available for public examination. Significantly, the Waite–Smith deck was the

first since the fifteenth century to involve pictorial illustration of the pip cards. In any event the symbolism and lively artwork made the Waite–Smith deck the most widely used Tarot deck in the English-speaking world. Figures 4(c) and 5(c) show the Seven of Swords and High Priestess, respectively.<sup>38</sup>

The “Universal Waite Tarot Deck” was published in the early 1990s, based on Smith’s original line drawings, but with enhanced colors. While some users have criticized the changes, others, including the present author, feel that they improve the look and feel of the deck.

Aleister Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris created the “Thoth” deck, whose early version is described in Crowley’s *The Book of Thoth* (1944).<sup>39</sup> Crowley and Harris continued to work on the cards after the book appeared, and the final version was not published until 1969—after their deaths. Figures 4(d) and 5(d) show the Seven of Swords and High Priestess from the Thoth Tarot.<sup>40</sup>

Another new deck was created, with the help of artist Jessie Burns Parke, by Paul Foster Case founder of Builders of the Adytum, a derivative of the Golden Dawn. Hundreds of other Tarot decks have been created over the past one hundred years, and new ones continually appear, offering the insights, esoteric persuasions, and artistic talents of a wide variety of people.

Attempts have been made to imitate the artwork of the Renaissance Tarot—digitally, rather than by painting. One is the “Golden Deck,” created by Kat Black and published in 2004, which consists of collages of details from the Visconti–Sforza Tarot but with symbolism reflecting more recent precedents. Figures 4(e) and 5(e) show the Seven of Swords and High Priestess in the Black deck.<sup>41</sup> Another is the “Botticelli” deck, created by Atanas Atanassov and published in 2007; it was assembled from details from the paintings of Italian artist Allessandro Botticelli (1445–1510).<sup>42</sup> Figures 4(f) and 5(f) show the Seven of Swords and High Priestess in the Atanassov deck.<sup>43</sup> Gone from both Black’s and Atanassov’s High Priestess is the iconic, blue-

robed Isis/Mary figure of the Waite–Smith card {Figure 5(c)}.

Perhaps the lack of a continuous historical precedent for illustrating the pip cards has given designers latitude in the way they treated their subjects. For example, we can see a resemblance between the Seven of Swords in the Waite–Smith and Black decks {Figures 4(c) and (e)}, but Atanassov’s treatment is entirely different {Figure 4(f)}. Crowley returned to the custom of purely symbolic pip cards {for example Figure 4(d)}.

### **Methods of Production**

When we speak of “producing” a playing-card or Tarot deck, we have to recognize that, prior to the twentieth century, creation and reproduction of images meant either hand painting or some form of printing, using woodcuts, etching or engraving.

Production also implies the availability of paper, parchment, card stock, or other medium on which the image could be displayed. Paper was invented in China in the first or second century CE. Paper manufacturing came to Moorish Spain in the eleventh century. By the thirteenth century it had spread other parts of Europe, soon to replace fabric, parchment and velum for all but the most valued documents.

The standard method of printing cards was woodblock printing, or what is now called *xylography*. It was invented in China and spread westward, along with paper production. Card games followed at every step, and the printing of cards was one of the first applications of woodcut techniques in the West. In the fifteenth century Milan became a center of woodcut printing and card production.

In its simplest application a single woodcut was required for each image. The image was

carved into a flat block of wood. Areas to remain uncolored were carved away, leaving the image in relief. Pressing an inked block against the paper or card produced the desired copy. The technique produced monochromatic (typi-

cally black and white) images. Once a woodcut was prepared, it could be used multiple times, offering a rudimentary form of mass production.

Color printing, which came to the West from Japan in the sixteenth century, required multiple woodcuts for a single image. It could produce vivid effects but was impracticable for more than three or four colors. Alternatively, color could be added by hand painting or, more often, by stenciling the monochrome woodcut images. Alt-

hough some of the economy of mass production was lost, stenciling was effective and could be performed by relatively low-paid workers. The fourteenth-century Rodrigo Borges, described as a “painter and playing card maker,” may have painted other works. But most likely he used woodblocking to print his playing cards and then had colors applied by stenciling.

Fine detail is hard to achieve in a woodcut, and colors—where they are applied at all—are “flat,” without subtle variations in hue, tint, tone or shade. The Marseille decks {see for example Figures 4(b), 5(b)} illustrate stenciled woodcut images of relatively high-quality; poorer examples may have preceded (or followed) them.

Card images could, of course, be created entirely by hand painting. Hand painting permitted the incorporation of a whole spectrum of colors, subtle shading, and fine detail. Silver or gold leaf could be used to enhance visual effect. As we have seen, the wealthiest families

*Arthur Edward Waite, who designed the most familiar Tarot deck currently in use, declared: “The Tarot is true symbolism. . . . On the highest planes it offers a key to the Mysteries.” To Harriette and Homer Curtis: “The Tarot is the most ancient of books, a collection of cards embodying the Secret Doctrine of the ages.” To Paul Foster Case, writing in 1947: “The Tarot is a pictorial textbook of the Ageless Wisdom.*

of Renaissance Italy hired leading artists to create Tarot decks—artists whom, at other times, might be painting altarpieces, frescoes, or portraits of the nobility. The artists might include heraldic devices in the designs and/or portrayals of the patron or the patron’s family, as was also the custom when painting sacred or mythological scenes. Appreciative patrons meant further commissions and referrals.

Besozza’s illustrations and the cards of the Visconti–Sforza deck are of the highest artistic quality. Hand painting was extremely labor-intensive, however; to paint a complete deck could take months or years. Few decks could be produced, and the cost was high, restricting availability to a very few individuals or families; Visconti reportedly was the richest man in Italy. The uniqueness of a Tarot deck hand painted by a recognized artist afforded prestige. But we cannot imagine such decks being handled on a regular basis; the delicate artwork could easily be damaged. More likely they would be created for special occasions, and then would reside in display cabinets, to be brought out on other special occasions. Decks intended for frequent handling would be produced by less expensive methods.

While we have examples of Tarot decks painted by prominent artists, we do not know how many decks were painted by lesser-known artists—or, for that matter, artisans with minimal artistic skills. Crude copies of existing decks could be made for sale at markets or fairs. The fact that no cheap decks of that nature survive is unsurprising.

Etching or engraving provided an alternative to woodblocking, where monochromatic images were acceptable. The initial step was to etch or cut fine slits, defining the image, in a thin metal plate. The second step, which could be repeated multiple times, was to place the plate onto the paper, card, or other material, and to pour ink onto the plate. The image was reproduced by ink seeping through the slits.

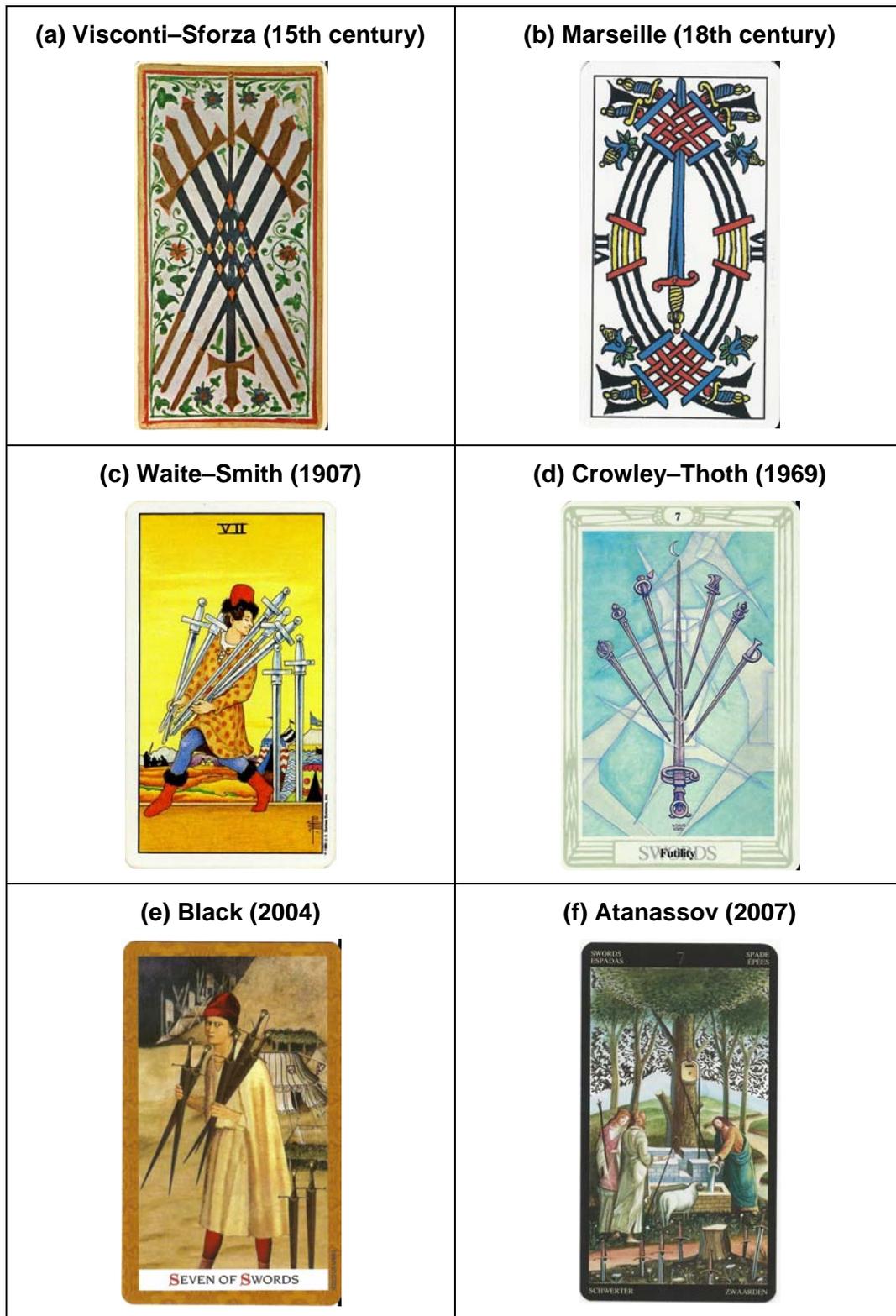
Etching and engraving were more expensive than woodblocking but could produce finer detail. They were used primarily for reproducing maps and portraits, which demanded high resolution. But we have two examples of the use of engraving to produce Tarot cards. One was the Mantegna Tarot. The other, allegedly inspired by it, was a selection of Tarot images created by German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).<sup>44</sup>

Preparing woodcuts, and even engraved or etched plates, was relatively easy for highly stylized images—like the traditional pip cards in which the suit symbol was repeated a given number of times, and minimal decoration added. It was considerably more time-consuming for pictorial images, like the Major Arcana and court cards, and the costs were correspondingly higher. Fortunately, the initial costs could be amortized over substantial numbers of copies. Nevertheless, printers pressed for more efficient, and more versatile, reproduction technologies for all kinds of images.

The Waite–Smith deck included pictorial pip cards, inflating the initial costs still more. The deck became popular because of the easy-to-remember symbolism of its seventy-eight pictorial images, as well as growing interest in esoterica that the Golden Dawn helped create. But the deck would never have become a best-seller if newly emerging printing methods had not driven prices down to affordable levels. The Waite–Smith deck was reproduced by a chromolithographic technique, or, from 1940 onward, by photographic techniques.<sup>45</sup>

Most recently, digital image processing has made possible the reproduction of colored images in all their detail and subtlety. Taking advantage of this new capability, hand-painting of Tarot cards is again becoming popular. Time, effort and artistry can be invested in a deck in the hope of selling hundreds or thousands of copies. The “Golden Dawn Temple Tarot deck,” published in 2016, took Harry and Nicola Wendrich seven years to complete.<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 4. The Seven of Swords in Tarot Decks through the Ages**



**Figure 5. The High Priestess in Tarot Decks through the Ages**



## The Tarot as a Card Game

An enduring theory, with strong support from academic historians, is that the Tarot originated as a card game. Significantly, the earliest records of the Tarot date from a few decades after the arrival of card games in Italy. And we know that Tarot decks were used for gaming in fifteenth-century Italy.

Pre-European playing card decks, like the Lu Rong and Topkapı decks, were surprisingly similar to modern playing cards. They contained nothing resembling Major Arcana. Yet games appeared in northern and central Italy with additional cards that could triumph over, or “trump,” cards of the four suits. The rules of one such game were published in a manuscript by Martiano da Tortona, dated to 1425.<sup>47</sup>

These additional cards, or what we now know as the Major Arcana, supposedly were invented and added to existing card decks to facilitate more complicated games. Soon, between sixteen (the Besozzo deck) and fifty (the Mantegna deck) new cards were in use. By 1500, typical decks included the now-familiar twenty-two Major Arcana, and the identities of most of the cards were established.<sup>48</sup>

Card games involving separate trump cards were referred to as *trionfi*. The first known use of the term was in 1440, when a Florentine notary recorded the transfer of two *trionfi* decks to a Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. *Trionfi* is the Italian equivalent of the Latin plural noun *triumphi* (singular *triumphus*: “triumph,” “victory,” or possibly “trump”). In about 1450 Jacopo Antonio Marcello of Venice, who had come into possession of the Besozzo Tarot deck, seems to have re-gifted it to Isabelle of Lorraine, wife of King René of Anjou.<sup>49</sup> Marcello’s accompanying letter, written in Latin, indicated that the deck was intended to be used in a game, which he described as *ludus triumphorum*. *Triumphorum* is the genitive plural of *triumphus*.

By 1500 the term *trionfi* had disappeared, and *tarocci*, *tarocchi* or *tarock*—from which the French word *Tarot* evolved—had taken its place. These latter terms may have come from regional dialects in Italy and the German-speaking area of Switzerland, or they may

have referred to games with different rules. Further comments on the origin and significance of the word “Tarot” will be made later.

The theory that the Major Arcana were added to enhance card-game complexity has merit, but it leaves unanswered questions:

- The worldwide community of modern card players, like its medieval counterpart in Asia and the Middle East, views a deck of four suits, and possibly a Joker, as an adequate basis for a wide variety of games. Certain cards can be designated as trumps, according to the rules of a particular game. Why then were fifteenth-century Italian card players not content with traditional decks? Why did they suddenly find it necessary to add extra cards to serve as trumps?
- Perhaps the Renaissance mind demanded particularly challenging games. But why were so many new cards added within a short period of time? The potential complexity of a game played with seventy-eight (or more) cards is many times greater than a game played with fifty-two or fifty-six.<sup>50</sup> One might have expected a more gradual evolution in which one or two extra cards were added every few years, as players adapted to and accepted the new challenges, or as new games were created.
- If the objective was simply to expand game complexity, and trumps had to be separate from the four suits, why were the trumps not designated in some simple manner, say by letters of the alphabet, with minimal decoration? Instead, images of rich, symbolic or archetypal value were chosen, involving high initial costs, even when woodblocking was used.
- Finally, why did families like the Viscontis and Sforzas invest so heavily in the artwork of their Tarot decks, when that very artwork was vulnerable to damage from the frequent shuffling card games imposed?<sup>51</sup>

The more plausible scenario is that proto-Major Arcana were already in existence in 1400. They had been created for some other purpose, which shall argue was ceremonial magic, and new cards were created, in the same lineage, as that purpose expanded. Card game players co-opted and exploited the available Major Arcana and may have been responsible for conflating them with the playing card decks that formed the Minor Arcana. But they were not the driving force behind the development of the Major Arcana.

## **Tarot, Egypt, and the Romani**

### *The “French School”*

French occultist Jean-Baptiste Alliette (1738–1791), who wrote under the pseudonym “Etteilla,” was the first-known professional Tarot reader. His book *Etteilla, or How to Entertain Yourself With the Deck of Cards Called Tarot* (1770) helped popularize use of the Tarot for divination.<sup>52</sup> It described a number of spreads and provided hints on interpretation. But he did not take credit for that knowledge; he attributed it to an unnamed Italian whom he had met sometime earlier.<sup>53</sup>

A close contemporary of Etteilla’s was the French Freemason and former Huguenot clergyman Antoine Court (1725–1784), who called himself Antoine Court de Gébelin. De Gébelin claimed that the Tarot was an arcane repository of timeless esoteric wisdom. In 1781 he wrote:

Were we to hear that there exists in our day a Work of Ancient Egyptians, one of their books which had escaped the flames that devoured their superb libraries, and one which contains their purest doctrine on most interesting subjects, everyone would doubtless be anxious to acquire the knowledge of so valuable and extraordinary a work. Were we to add that this book is widely spread through a large part of Europe, and for several centuries it has been accessible to any one, would it be still more surprising?<sup>54</sup>

The flames Gébelin referred to were those that destroyed the Library of Alexandria, and perhaps other academic facilities in Egypt, in the

fourth century CE. Gébelin’s thesis was that the Tarot, by his own time readily available throughout Europe, encoded the essence of the Egyptian mysteries. Priests had distilled the ancient Book of Thoth into these images. Thoth was originally an Egyptian moon god, later to invent writing, reveal hieroglyphics to humankind, and serve as scribe to the sun god Ra.<sup>55</sup> He was depicted in Egyptian art as a man with the head of an ibis, his long beak suggestive of a quill. Thoth became identified with the pre-existing Olympian god Hermes, upon the Hellenization of Egypt in the fourth century BCE, and eventually with the Roman messenger-god Mercury. As for “Book of Thoth,” we do not know whether there was actually a book or whether it referred to a body of teachings.

According to Gébelin proto-Tarot cards encoding the Egyptian teachings were brought to Rome, preserved secretly by the popes, and eventually brought to Avignon during the papal exile in the fourteenth century. From Avignon the cards—or at least the associated images—spread throughout France and beyond.

In the same work Gébelin credited his contemporary, Louis-Raphaël-Lucrèce de Fayolle, Comte de Mellet, with suggesting correspondences between the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana and the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Soon, esotericists began to see correspondences between the Tarot and the Kabbalah. And within a few years of the Gébelin’s publication, Tarot cards were being used for esoteric study and meditation, as well as for divination.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Tarot became a focus of intense study by French occultists led by Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1875). Constant, who referred to himself as a magus and adopted the pseudonym Éliphas Lévi Zahed,<sup>56</sup> claimed optimistically that “a prisoner devoid of books, 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>57</sup>

Lévi’s Spanish-born student, Papus, agreed with Gébelin on the Tarot’s Egyptian origins,

but he rejected the notion that the papacy had been its custodian; instead it was the nomadic ethnic group known as the Romani.<sup>58</sup> Papus referred to the Romani by the then-popular term *Bohémiens* (Literally “Bohemians,” but rendered in English translations of his books as “Gypsies”).<sup>59</sup> The Romani are believed to have migrated to Europe from India about 1,500 years ago.

Reports from eleventh-century Constantinople and fourteenth-century Germany refer to nomadic ethnic groups engaged in fortune telling.<sup>60</sup> Whether they were Romani is unclear, and whether they used Tarot cards was not recorded. Yet Papus boldly linked the Romani with the Tarot and saw in their divination and gaming interests the fortuitous preservation of a most important “book”:

The Gypsies possess a Bible which has proved their means of gaining a livelihood, for it enabled them to tell fortunes; at the same time it has been a perpetual source of amusement, for it enables them to gamble. Yes, the game of cards called the Tarot, which the Gypsies possess, is the Bible of Bibles. It is the book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus, the book of Adam, the book of the primitive Revelation of ancient civilization.”<sup>61</sup>

Papus further asserted that the Marseille Tarot was “really the exact representation of the primitive Egyptian Tarot, slightly altered to the epoch denoted by the costumes.”<sup>62</sup> He added: “Only the Gypsies possess the primitive pack intact.”<sup>63</sup>

Papus’ assertions are vulnerable to challenge on several fronts. The famous library of Alexandria, founded by the Ptolemies in the third century BCE, is credited with having accumulated a wealth of ancient teachings. But the library was torched by Julius Caesar in 50 BCE, severely damaged in about 270 CE, and almost totally destroyed by Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria in 391 CE. It ceased to exist in any form after the Muslim invasion in the seventh century.

Valuable materials were lost every time the library suffered damage. Little material of any significance, and none of the oldest, are

thought to have survived the end of the fourth century CE. Sometime prior to that date, if we are to believe Papus, priests of the ancient mysteries encoded their teachings onto Tarot cards and gave them to the Romani. Allegedly the priests trusted that mundane use would ensure the images’ survival until such time as enlightened people recognized the images for what they were and could reconstruct the ancient teachings.

We do not know whether any Romani had reached Egypt by the fourth century, or if Romani anywhere were involved in fortune telling or gambling at that time. Even if they were, the only available means of reproducing the cards would have been hand painting. Woodblock printing was invented in China in the second century CE, but it did not reach the Middle East until well into the Middle Ages. Use of the Tarot would necessarily have been on a small scale, in competition with gaming or divination alternatives that were more immediately accessible and made fewer technological demands.

Papus mentioned the Tarot decks of the Renaissance, but he did not explain whether their creators built upon the decks used by the Romani or had independent channels extending back to ancient Egypt. Neither did he credit Renaissance Italy, or for that matter his own countrymen, Etteilla and Gébelin, for making any meaningful contribution to the Tarot: “Only the Gypsies possess the primitive pack intact.”

### ***Hermes, the “Egyptian Tarot,” and the Kabbalah***

De Gébelin and Papus both made reference to Thoth, and associated with him the name Hermes Trismegistus. The title *Trismegistus* (“Thrice Great”) first appeared in an inscription on the second-century BCE Ibis shrine at Sakkara, Egypt.<sup>64</sup> And Plutarch mentioned Hermes Trismegistus in the first century CE. But Hermes Trismegistus came to be revered as a high initiate, a priest-king, who lived at a much earlier time. Some people believed that he was Moses’ teacher, or even Abraham’s, while others suggested that he lived at the time of Noah or Zoroaster. His original name must

have been something other than the Latinized Greek Hermes Trismegistus, but we do not know what it was.

Authors who described themselves as “Three Initiates” wrote in 1912 that the Egyptians deified Hermes Trismegistus and called him Thoth; in due course Thoth became the Greek god Hermes.<sup>65</sup> Whether or not that scenario is true, the alleged sequence of events can be reconciled with key dates. If Hermes Trismegistus—or whatever he was called then—was Abraham’s teacher, that would place him at around 2000 BCE. The earliest known depiction of the Egyptian god Thoth dates from about 1,400 BCE—or the time of the Exodus. Hermes, son of Zeus, was mentioned in the Homeric poems, which are believed to have been written in the eighth or seventh century BCE, and widespread awareness of him probably reached Egypt no later than the fourth century BCE, when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt.

Reverence for Hermes Trismegistus produced the Greco-Roman esoteric system known as Hermetism. It drew its inspiration from texts that came to light early in the Common Era.<sup>66</sup> The texts included fifteen tractates, collectively known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and a few companion texts like the *Asclepius*. Although the texts were written in Greek, they claimed to present the mystery teachings of ancient Egypt.

The Hermetic texts described a system of magic, which will be discussed in its turn. They also spoke of God, man, and the quest for enlightenment; and they contained prophecies that seemed to foretell the coming of Christ and the Redemption. The writings of this ancient Egyptian sage apparently corroborated and expanded on the writings of the Old Testament prophets. As a result, the *Corpus* came to the attention of the church fathers and other Christian scholars.

After the Greco-Roman civilization went into decline, Hermetism gradually evolved into the broader system of *Hermeticism*, which incorporated concepts and practices from other esoteric traditions and added the *Emerald Tablet* to its core literature. The *Emerald Tablet* was

discovered much later than the classical Hermetic texts, but it too was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>67</sup> The work contains the famous quote (paraphrased): “As above, so below.”

Hermeticism was a blend of magic, astrology, divination and alchemy. Hermes Trismegistus is often described as the “father of alchemy.” But the *Corpus Hermeticum* never mentions alchemy, and the *Emerald Tablet* only refers to it indirectly. Alchemy may have been studied in ancient Egypt, but it was virtually unknown in Europe until westerners came into contact with Arab scholars in the tenth century.

Hermeticism played a relatively small role in medieval European esotericism. It blossomed in the Italian Renaissance and continued to grow in influence thereafter. Yet Hermeticism would soon receive a potentially devastating blow.

Swiss classical scholar and philologist Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) demonstrated, by means of textual analysis, that the *Corpus Hermeticum* and associated texts were not nearly as old as previously thought: the vocabulary was relatively modern; and, rather than prophesying the coming of Christ, the texts referred to events that had already taken place. The texts apparently were written early in the Common Era. Academic critics seized upon Casaubon’s revelation to assert—without justification—that the ancient Egyptian “Hermes Trismegistus” was fictitious. Neither could Casaubon’s work rule out the possibility that the texts were based on earlier teachings, perhaps an oral tradition extending back to a real Hermes Trismegistus.

By then Hermeticism had acquired a life of its own and was sufficiently robust that it did not collapse, either from Casaubon’s revelation or from Enlightenment rationalism, which swept Europe a few decades later. Indeed, Hermeticism experienced a revival, beginning in the nineteenth century, to which Lévi; Papus; Anna Kingsford, former Theosophist and co-founder of the Hermetic Society; and prominent members of the Golden Dawn all contributed.

Papus and others continued to believe that Hermes Trismegistus was a real personage. The “Three Initiates,” referred to earlier, reit-

erated that Hermes Trismegistus was a contemporary of Abraham, adding: “All the fundamental and basic teachings embedded in the esoteric teachings of every race may be traced back to Hermes. Even the most ancient teachings of India undoubtedly have their roots in the original Hermetic Teachings.”<sup>68</sup> A bold statement indeed!

Aleister Crowley was indifferent to the historical record, to Papus’ account of Romani involvement, and to the wisdom allegedly communicated to Mathers by the “Secret Chiefs.” Crowley was even indifferent to the veracity of his own earlier work, which claimed that his (Crowley’s) teachings were communicated by the “Lord of Silence.”<sup>69</sup> “It is not here useful,” he explained, “to discuss the evidence which goes to establish the truth of this claim. . . . It would make no difference if the statement of any of the persons concerned turned out to be false.”<sup>70</sup>

Crowley nevertheless based his whole concept of the Tarot on an Egyptian connection. He declared that the Tarot was self-authenticating, at least as studied with “the assistance of superiors whose mental processes were, or are, pertaining to a higher dimension.”<sup>71</sup> The Tarot came from Egypt and it is “beyond doubt a deliberate attempt to represent, in pictorial form, the doctrine of the [Kabbalah].”<sup>72</sup>

As early as the sixteenth century Judaic scholars had studied paths, or pathways, connecting adjacent sephiroth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Twenty-two paths had been identified, each corresponding to a Hebrew letter.

In the Golden Dawn tradition these paths were recognized as opportunities to contemplate the juxtaposition of energies represented by the connected sephiroth. The paths became associated, not only with Hebrew letters, but also with Major Arcana in the Tarot. Dion Fortune, who claimed to have received the information in visionary experiences, commented that the paths “correspond perfectly with the Tarot trumps” and provide “the keys to esoteric astrology and Tarot divination.”<sup>73</sup> For example, she associated the path from Malkuth to Yesod with the letter *tav* and the Tarot card XXI: “the World”; she associated the path from Yesod to Hod with *resh* and card XIX: “the Sun.”

Fortune associated the Minor Arcana with the sephiroth themselves, the four suits symbolizing the four “worlds” of the Kabbalah. Thus the Ace of Wands corresponds to Kether in the highest world of Atziluth, the “World of Emanations”; the Ace of Cups to Kether in Briah, the “World of Thrones”; the Ace of Swords to Kether in Yetzirah, the “World of Formation and of Angels”; and the Ace of Pentacles to Kether in Assiah, the “World of Action, or Matter.”<sup>74</sup>

Gareth Knight, who never met Fortune but considered her his mentor, agreed that “the twenty-two Trumps of the Tarot relate to the Paths.” But he took a somewhat different perspective with regard to the Minor Arcana: “As correspondences to the Tree of Life, the sixteen Court Cards to the four worlds, and the forty small cards to the Sephiroth according to number.”<sup>75</sup>

## The Tarot as Talismans

### *Hermetic and Neoplatonic Magic*

The Tarot seems to be connected, not only with Hermeticism, but also with the earlier Hermetism, which involved a strong belief in magic and the practice of magical ritual. Hermetic magic exploited the resonance believed to exist between the natural world and beneficent celestial bodies, or the lives that animated them. Its methods, to quote historian Frances Yates, “presuppose that continued effluvia of influences pouring down on earth from the stars . . . could be canalized and used by an operator with the requisite knowledge.”<sup>76</sup> This knowledge included the creation of effective talismans.

Hermetism shared its appeal to the upper classes of the Mediterranean region with other esoteric traditions, including Gnostic and proto-orthodox Christianity, esoteric Judaism, and Neoplatonism. The several traditions competed with one another for attention and followers but also overlapped in their ideals and methods. Many people dabbled in more than one.

Most important for our present discussion was Neoplatonism. Over the course of 200 to 300 years, Platonism had moved from the strict intellectualism of classical Greece to the more

intuitive “Middle Platonism.” Neoplatonism moved still farther, embracing mysticism and magic, while preserving a thread of philosophical concepts extending back to Plato. Neoplatonism had its sacred text: the *Chaldean Oracles*. Now dated to the second century CE, the *Oracles* consist of Hellenistic commentary on a mystery poem believed to have originated in ancient Chaldea, or Babylonia. Because Neoplatonism had philosophical underpinnings, however, it depended less on its core text than Hermeticism did on the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

Prominent Neoplatonists Plotinus (204-270), Iamblichus (245-325), and Proclus (412-485) all wrote of the branch of ritual magic known as *theurgy* (literally “divine work”). Its goal was to attract divine beings—sometimes accompanied by entourage of *daemons*—to descend into sacred objects, like statues, or into participants themselves.<sup>77</sup> In the latter case, the participants hoped to attain a state of prophetic ecstasy—or even mystical union, though the latter state was rare.<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding the *Oracles*’ ostensible connection with Chaldea, theurgy claimed Egyptian roots, as is revealed by the title of Iamblichus’ major work *Theurgia, or The Egyptian Mysteries*.

Whereas institutional Christianity valued the Hermetic teachings insofar as they seemed to prophesy the coming of Christ, it was more hostile to Neoplatonism, which it regarded as a theological competitor.<sup>79</sup> Yet the church embraced the work of the Pseudo-Dionysius, largely because this unknown Neoplatonic scholar of the sixth century or thereabouts was confused with Dionysius the Areopagite mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*. His most important contribution concerned the angelic hierarchy of nine “choirs.”<sup>80</sup> But the Pseudo-Dionysius also discussed the symbolism of stones and their use in the construction of talismans.<sup>81</sup>

When the Dark Ages descended on Europe, those esoteric traditions could easily have been lost.<sup>82</sup> They survived, at least in fragmented form, in orthodox Christianity, in neo-Gnostic movements like Manichaeism, and in the Judaic Kabbalah.<sup>83</sup> Large portions of the teachings also found their way into the Arab world; key texts were translated into Arabic—to await

retranslation into Greek and Latin at the time of the Renaissance.

Some occult teachings may have degenerated into folk magic, or were absorbed into the folk magic that had existed from time immemorial. Medieval folk magic was a collection of spells, enchantments, divinations, evocations and incantations designed for almost every conceivable purpose. On ethical lines it broke down into “good” or “white” magic, in which the power was directed to benefit users or clients; and “bad” or “black” magic, whose purpose was to harm enemies or rivals.

In the Middle Ages institutional Christianity walked a fine line in its attitude to folk magic. The church tried to suppress black magic but tolerated what it considered white magic. It could hardly do otherwise. Christian emblems and medals overlapped in form and intent with talismans, and sacred relics overlapped in intent. The cult of saints’ relics was at its peak, and relics were fought over, traded and venerated in the belief that they could work miracles. Relics were used for the healing of sickness, in both people and their animals; to secure political or economic advantage; and even to sway the outcome of battles. Differences between “pagan” practices and what the church endorsed and benefited from were slight and hard to explain.

The church took much the same stance in its attitudes to magic of a higher level of sophistication. Prominent Christian personages were aware of the Hermetic and Neoplatonic traditions and contributed to the study of both magic and alchemy. Albertus Magnus (c.1200-1280)—Dominican friar, mentor of Thomas Aquinas, and alchemist—criticized “demonic magic” but approved of celestial, or astrological, magic.<sup>84</sup>

Albertus and others of his time learned of the esoteric arts as Hermeticism seeped into Christian Europe through Moorish Spain, southern Italy, and countries bordering the Ottoman Empire. Hermeticism encouraged new perspectives on the role of magic. Traditional medieval forms of magic and general rules of practice were not rejected. But less attention was paid to spells, enchantments, and the like;

and more emphasis was placed on the use of magic for spiritual development.

Closely paralleling these developments, westerners rediscovered the theurgic rituals of Neoplatonism. A ritual might invoke a variety of celestial beings, even God. Parallels were recognized between ceremonial magic and religious liturgy. In the twelfth century Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople was criticized for introducing theurgic ritual into the Christian liturgy.<sup>85</sup> The achievement of altered states of consciousness, the permanent elevation of consciousness, and personal transformation were added to traditional motives for performing theurgic rituals.

### ***The Creation of Talismans***

Both Hermetism and the Neoplatonic theurgy made extensive use of talismans in their respective rituals. Our thesis is that these and other talismans were the precursors of the Tarot's Major Arcana.

The medieval "bible" on talismans was the *Picatrix*, often termed in English the "Goal of The Wise." A handbook, or *grimoire*, of talismanic magic, it was written in Arabic in the eleventh century, translated into Spanish and then into Latin. The *Picatrix* specifically referred to Hermetic magic, but many of its recommendations could be applied to theurgy and other forms of magic.

A typical medieval talisman was an image, symbol, or other device inscribed on some appropriate material such as on paper, parchment, wood, metal or stone. It could be set up in a sacred space, as the backdrop for a magical ritual; or it could be placed where the desired results were to play out. According to the prevailing wisdom, the person desiring to evoke or invoke power should, wherever possible, create the talisman him- or herself, though expert advice might be sought on its design. Consecration required the services of a magus, priest or hierophant.

A talisman should be created at an astrologically auspicious time. Determining such time required detailed knowledge of planetary positions relative to one another and in relation to the background of fixed stars, particularly

those that comprise the zodiac. Most important was the *decan* through which the planet was passing. Each sign of the zodiac was divided into three decans of ten degrees, making a total of thirty-six decans. Some decans were beneficent, while others were malevolent.

In order to achieve maximum resonance, the inscribed image and text must be chosen with insight into the source of power. Symbolism and color were considered particularly important, taking advantage of the Law of Correspondences. Efficacy could be enhanced by embedding in it gemstones of the appropriate vibration. Frances Yates explained:

The operator who wished to capture, let us say, the power of the planet Venus, must know what plants belonged to Venus, what stones and metals, what animals, and use only these when addressing Venus. He must know the images of Venus and know how to inscribe these on talismans made of the right Venus material and at the right astrological moment. Such images were held to capture the spirit or power of the star and to hold it or store it for use.<sup>86</sup>

Apparently speaking as an authority, Albertus Magnus described talismans intended for specific purposes:

Andromeda is the image of a girl turned sideways, seated upon [a rock], with straining hands. And this image, engraved upon gems that are by nature conciliating in love . . . brings about lasting love between man and wife; indeed it is said to reconcile even those who have been adulterous. Cassiopeia is a maiden sitting in an armchair, with her arms uplifted and bent; and this sort of engraving upon [gems] that bring sleep and restore the members is said to give rest after toil and to strengthen weakened bodies.<sup>87</sup>

A talisman that was properly created and consecrated possessed the desired power and could be used in a number of ways. Albertus offered some examples:

[W]hen the image has been made according to these and other conditions, it should be buried in the middle of the place from which you wish to expel the particular

thing, placing earth from the four corners of the place in the belly of the image. If, on the other hand, you wish to make an image for joy and success, make it at a time contrary to what we have said, additionally the image should be made at a time that has been elected, and it will have its effects according to the powers of the Heavens by the command of God.<sup>88</sup>

### **Renaissance Magic**

Although the revival of Hermetic and Neoplatonic occultism began in Europe as early as the eleventh or twelfth century, interest remained at a relatively low level. At the end of the fourteenth century, however, everything changed; within a few decades those time-honored esoteric systems were propelled to the forefront of attention among the elite of Italian society. Even popes became interested.

In 1434 wealthy banker Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464) became de-facto ruler of the Republic of Florence and founder of the Medici political dynasty. A patron of the arts and scholarship, Cosimo established a library, which grew to be the largest in the world since the Library of Alexandria. Italian nobleman Giovanni Lascaris returned from one buying spree in the East with more than 200 ancient manuscripts.<sup>89</sup> The library became a treasure trove of religious, philosophical and esoteric texts, and the broad range of languages in which they were written stimulated linguistic studies.

Scholars from all over Europe flocked to Florence to study in the Medici library and, not incidentally, to exchange ideas. Already in the city was Georgius Gemistos Pletho (c.1355–c.1452), who had studied at the Islamic School of Theology at Brusa, Turkey. He was a student of Neoplatonism and an authority on Plato and Zoroaster.<sup>90</sup> Pletho's presence in Florence, along with so many other scholars, inspired Cosimo de' Medici to found the Accademia Platonica, or Florentine Platonic Academy. By the time it closed in 1492 the academy had translated all of Plato's works into Latin, along with the Enneads of Plotinus, and several other Neoplatonic works previously available only in Greek or Arabic.

Cosimo de' Medici's choice to head the academy was Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), priest, physician, and linguistic scholar. Among his accomplishments Ficino translated the fifteen treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* from Greek into Latin. Like most of his contemporaries, Ficino believed that the *Corpus* had been written by a real, very ancient, Hermes Trismegistus. His translation and accompanying commentary were published in 1463 and reprinted more than twenty times over the next 150 years.

Through Pletho's Neoplatonic influence and his own work on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Ficino became fascinated with magic. But he was dissatisfied with what he considered the crudity of traditional occult practices. As Yates observed, his magic became more refined, more elegant, and in many ways more "spiritual" than that of earlier forms.<sup>91</sup>

Ficino and his student Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) orchestrated a transformation in the way magical rituals were performed. Great care went into the design and performance of the rituals. The setting, paraphernalia, symbols, and words and gestures of power were considered critically important, and magi often prepared themselves by fasting and prayer before performing important rituals. Ficino envisioned the possible integration of ceremonial magic into Christian worship—an aspiration shared by Patriarch Cerularius three centuries earlier, and by Éliphas Lévi four centuries later.

Ficino emphasized the role of aesthetics in magical rituals. His talismans—visual tools for use in the rituals—were not the crude images typical of medieval magic but works of art based on classical themes. And his chanted or sung incantations—auditory tools—were accompanied by the best musical instruments of the period.<sup>92</sup> Historian Gary Tomlinson spoke of Ficino's "musical metaphysics";<sup>93</sup> but it seems clear that his metaphysics had a strong visual dimension as well as a musical one. In any event, it is not difficult to see how these aesthetic enhancements of ceremonial ritual could help raise participants' consciousness.

Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza formed a political alliance that brought relative peace and cooperation between the city states of Florence and Milan—along with mutual resistance to the ambitions of Venice and Rome. At the very time when Ficino was raising the aesthetic quality of magic in Florence, Bonifacio Bembo was painting the Visconti-Sforza Tarot deck in Milan. Some authorities believe that Ficino actually designed the Visconti-Sforza deck, though he may not have painted it. On the other hand, Bembo himself was not devoid of esoteric training. He was influenced by Gemistos Pletho's Neoplatonic teachings and may even have been Pletho's student.<sup>94</sup>

The investment of time, energy and money in hand-painting Tarot cards does not need to be attributed simply to aristocratic extravagance. It can also be explained by the urge to create the most effective talismans possible for use in ceremonial magic, which was rising to new levels of sophistication and spirituality.

Pico della Mirandola shared Ficino's interest in magic, though he treated it more from a theoretical angle and denounced the use of astrology for purposes of divination.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, a major focus of Pico's work was the integration of the Kabbalah into Hermeticism. He benefited from the writings of Christian scholars who, from the thirteenth century onward, had come into contact with Jewish Kabbalists in Spain, Provence, and eventually Italy.<sup>96</sup> Pico's legacy, reinforced a generation later by German esotericist Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), was the “Hermetic,” or “Christian,” Kabbalah—into which the Tarot itself would eventually be integrated.

Pletho is said to have headed a secret occult group, one of whose members was Baslios Bessarion (1403–1472), Latin patriarch of Nicaea. One source claimed that Bessarion, with the help of Pope Pius II and German theologian Nicholas of Cusa, created the Mantegna deck. Their motivation allegedly was the same as the Alexandrian priests' creation of the Tarot of the Bohemians: to protect the teachings against future destruction of esoteric texts.<sup>97</sup> If so, Bessarion's initiative was prophetic.

Hermeticism and the Hermetic Kabbalah attracted the attention of many Christian scholars, and even high churchmen, in the fifteenth century. But ecclesiastical authorities—shaken by the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453—were becoming increasingly defensive and suspicious. Pico was interrogated by Roman authorities on charges of heresy. Pope Alexander VI intervened on Pico's behalf, when he was elected to office in 1492.<sup>98</sup> Hermeticists nevertheless saw the writing on the wall. For safety's sake, the magical elements of Hermeticism were played down, leaving it primarily as a philosophical system and a source of prophecy. Pico had already played down the astrological elements.

The Tarot essentially vanished from Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. Its demise may have been caused primarily by war, but the shift of emphasis within Hermeticism may have contributed. The structure of the Major Arcana remained intact, but the aesthetic element nurtured during the Italian Renaissance was lost. The images on the Marseille Tarot exemplified folk art rather than great art.

### ***Talismans in the Golden Dawn and Beyond***

Talismans were employed in the magic rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Israel Regardie, one-time secretary to Aleister Crowley, reiterated the need for care in creating talismans: “[C]are should be taken to make it, as far as is possible, so to represent the universal Forces that it should be in exact harmony with those you wish to attract, and the more exact the symbolism, the more easy it is to attract the Force.”<sup>99</sup> Esoteric historian Mary Greer showed that many rituals performed by members of the Golden Dawn drew their inspiration, at least in part, from Tarot cards.<sup>100</sup> In one case Annie Horniman meditated on a card during a ritual: “I take the High Priestess, the Moon, in my hand and look and look at the figure and imagine it as a stately woman in golden mitre in red gold-bordered robes on a throne with a book in her hand.”<sup>101</sup> Regardie suggested copying the content of Tarot cards onto larger talismans:

Some of the symbols on the Tarot cards could be reproduced to great advantage on the talismans, if the student wishes. For instance, if he were making a talisman to produce pleasure and joy, the Ace of Cups in any of the conventional packs is a beautiful symbol to be copied in ink or painted on to the silver crescent of Apas. For spiritual help in the hour of trouble, the sword and crown of the Ace of Swords – which literally means evoked strength – would be an ideal symbol to transpose on the blue circle of Vayu. The need for change in an otherwise dull poverty-stricken existence could well be represented by the Two of Pentacles.<sup>102</sup>

“If the student wishes” seems to imply that the use of Tarot cards in Golden Dawn rituals was not a common practice. That would be surprising, given prominent members’ emphasis on the Tarot. On the other hand, Macgregor Mathers’ main interest may have been divination. And Arthur Waite is known to have eschewed ritual in favor of mysticism. Crowley, who was heavily involved in magical ritual did not publish his Tarot deck and accompanying text until long after the Golden Dawn closed its doors.

Other members of the Golden Dawn saw the Tarot—at least the Marseille-style decks then in use—as a poor imitation of talismans of a more fundamental nature. Maud Gonne commented that four talismans, used by William Butler Yeats and herself in a ritual in Ireland, “are universal symbols appearing in debased form in the Tarot.”<sup>103</sup> The symbols, known as the jewels of the Tuatha de Danaan, corresponded to the four suits of the Minor Arcana.

Be that as it may, Regardie emphasized the need to consecrate talismans. He likened the preparation of the talisman to the candidate’s preparation for initiation. At that stage the talisman “is nothing but dead and inert material.” It awaits “initiation,” to open the talisman to higher forces.<sup>104</sup> This initiation process could, he said, be achieved through either meditation or magical ritual. A vault resembling the burial site of Christian Rosencreutz, was constructed at the Golden Dawn’s London temple, and one

of its uses was the performance of rituals for the consecration of talismans.<sup>105</sup>

Elsewhere, Regardie provided a detailed description of a ritual for consecrating the “four elemental weapons”: the Wand, representing fire; the Cup, water; the Sword (or Dagger), air; and the Pentacle, earth. He related them, as various people had previously done, to the four letters of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, respectively: Yod, He, Vah, He.<sup>106</sup>

Aside from the Golden Dawn literature we have few insights into the use of Tarot cards as talismans in ritual magic. This is understandable, given the secrecy with which occult lodges guard their ritual secrets. One interesting insight, however, is provided by a book by Jean-Louis de Biasi. De Biasi recommended study of, and meditation on, the symbols and aesthetics of each card: “the colors, the minute details, any magical words that might be associated with this card.”<sup>107</sup> Creative imagination is utilized to move to a state of invocation, which “explicitly employs contact with a dimension that is not normally a part of your consciousness and reality.”<sup>108</sup>

Biasi proceeded to outline the rituals that should be used for each card of the Major Arcana: including its astrological correlate, color, fragrance, gemstone, and plant. He recommended suitable words and gestures. And he suggested situations in which a particular card might be appropriate. The ritual for each card was described in detail.

Unfortunately, Biasi’s rituals were designed, not for the conventional Tarot deck, but for a specialized Tarot used by his occult order. With some resemblance to the Mantegna Tarot, the twenty-four Major Arcana are divided into “Arcana of the Planets,” “Arcana of the Zodiac,” and “Arcana of the Elements.”<sup>109</sup> Biasi’s book could provide the stimulus for the development of more generally applicable rituals or the disclosure of rituals already performed by occult orders.

## **Reflections and Synthesis**

### ***Roots and Evolution of the Tarot***

There is little doubt that the Minor Arcana evolved from card games dating back to ninth-

century China. But to insist that they were purely mundane in origin is to project modern understanding of gaming on a culture remote from our own. Mathematical randomness, or its approximation by shuffling a card deck, is a modern concept. In times past, the turn of a card was thought to be driven by unseen forces.<sup>110</sup> Today's casino gambler who exclaims: "Fortune is smiling on me"—or: "This is not my lucky day"—is echoing the firmly held beliefs of a pre-scientific age.

A card game might elicit a conversation with a multitude of unseen forces. A lucky outcome could bring monetary gain, but it might also augur success in a hunt, battle, or love pursuit. Card games were tools for divination,<sup>111</sup> and they remained so, even after modern concepts of randomness began to take hold. Playing cards were used for divination in the sixteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Manuals appeared in the eighteenth century providing divinatory meanings of the Tarot cards and describing what we now call "spreads."<sup>113</sup> Divination with playing cards is still performed today, and divination is one of the principal uses of Tarot cards.

A different kind of conversation with the unseen powers could be facilitated by the judicious *choice* of cards. Intense focus on the selected cards, combined with suitable invocations, could mold the future to a player's advantage. Playing cards were used as talismans.

Conflation of the Minor and Major Arcana in the fifteenth century may have filled a desire for more challenging card games. But it would be naïve to think that so many cards, bearing evocative images—created and reproduced at considerable cost—were invented solely for that purpose. Instead, the weight of evidence suggests that the Major Arcana were created for a more important purpose and then were co-opted by game players.

A major thesis of this article is that the immediate predecessors of the Major Arcana were talismans used in ritual magic. The talismans described by Albertus Magnus and others provide hints as to what those proto-Major Arcana may have looked like. Evidence that Tarot cards have been used as talismans in more recent times supports the thesis, as well as point-

ing toward greater appreciation of the Tarot's esoteric potential.

Nobody would claim that talismans closely resembling the Fool, the Magician, and so on, were in use in 1400. As the Besozzo, Mantegna, Visconti-Sforza, and Sola Busca decks testify, considerable experimentation took place in the number of Major Arcana and the images they bore. But the evolution of the Major Arcana to forms we would recognize today was rapid and was driven by factors we shall examine. Experimentation also took place within the Minor Arcana, as exemplified by the Damsel and Lady on the Horse in the eighty-four card deck commissioned by the Visconti family.

The Italian Renaissance saw the convergence of multiple esoteric movements, religious traditions, and philosophies, and the emergence of new styles of art and music. Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, which had remained at a low level during the Middle Ages, blossomed in the new environment and soon merged into a single esoteric system.

New insights into the spiritual dynamics and significance of the Renaissance are found in the trans-Himalayan teachings. According to esoteric teacher Alice Bailey, the Third Ray came into manifestation in 1425, permitting the incarnation of Third-Ray souls.<sup>114</sup> Among them may have been Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Georgius Gemistos Pletho. They and other key figures may well have been involved in the ancient mysteries in previous lives.

The Renaissance may have represented a minor initiation for humanity as a whole. At the same time the Planetary Hierarchy raised the standard for individual initiation, as recognized by the Hierarchy. Bailey explained: "[T]he conditional demands of the Initiator (until the period of the year 1400 A.D.) were for conscious soul contact; today, it is for a measure of established relation to the Spiritual Triad, via the antahkarana. . . . A great change in the human consciousness made it possible—in the year 1425 A.D.—to inaugurate changes in the requirements for initiation and definitely to lift the standard."<sup>115</sup>

The Major Arcana took recognizable form in the Renaissance environment of increasingly sophisticated magic, driven by, or at least taking advantage of, the Hermetic and Neoplatonic revivals. Esoteric teachings now indicate that these interrelated developments may have been orchestrated by the Hierarchy. Since ritual was the dominant element of the western esoteric tradition—contrasting with meditation in the East—the “great change in the human consciousness” and “changes in the requirements for initiation” no doubt extended to ceremonial magic. Emergence of the Tarot may have been one outcome of the Hierarchy’s initiative.

Whether we can trace the Major Arcana, or their prototypes, back to antiquity—in exoteric terms—is more speculative. However, the Greek gods depicted on the Besozzo Tarot fit in well with ancient Neoplatonic practices, and more than ten of the images on the Mantegna Tarot have an astronomical/astrological association typical of ancient Hermeticism. Theories that the Tarot had roots in the ancient mysteries cannot be dismissed. It is tempting, though probably unfounded, to equate the Minor and Major Arcana with the Lesser and Greater Mysteries of antiquity.

Esotericists, from Etteilla and Antoine Court de Gébelin, to Papus and Aleister Crowley, pointed to Egypt as the source of the Tarot—with the strong implication that they were referring to a period in Egyptian history prior to the Hellenic era when Neoplatonism and Hermeticism flourished. One can see Tarot cards’ resemblance to depictions of Egyptian pharaohs and deities, and some resemblance to hieroglyphics. Philologists claim that hieroglyphics emerged in the third or fourth millennium BCE, and survived—despite strong movements toward other kinds of script—until the fourth century of the Common Era. Some 1,000 distinct hieroglyphs have been catalogued.

Hieroglyphics were used for mundane purposes like recording grain inventories and commercial transactions. But they played a more important role in Egyptian religion and no doubt the Egyptian mysteries. Funerary texts were written to help deceased persons navigate

the hazards of the afterlife. They may also have been used in initiation rites involving ritual death. Significantly, the title of the most famous funerary text, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, is translated by some authorities, *Book of Coming Forth into the Light*.<sup>116</sup>

The Egyptians called their hieroglyphic script *mdju netjer* (“words of the gods”) and believed that it was given to them by the god Thoth.<sup>117</sup> By extension, western esotericists from the eighteenth century onward concluded that the Tarot was divinely inspired by Thoth—or by his alleged predecessor, Hermes Trismegistus. Many writers, including Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, spoke of an “Egyptian Tarot.”<sup>118</sup> But whether anything ever existed that could justifiably bear that description is a matter of speculation.

Archeologists have discovered rectangular gold and silver plates inscribed with references to the sixth century BCE Persian king Darius the Great.<sup>119</sup> And Etruscan plates from the same general period were discovered in Italy. But extant images from ancient Egypt, which could be compared with the Tarot, were either painted on walls or tombs, or were drawn on papyrus scrolls. We have no evidence of “decks” of moveable icons that could be shuffled, or from which “cards” could be drawn at random or by choice.

The rich Egyptian civilization, which lasted through many phases for at least three millennia, was in its death throes in the fourth century CE and had entirely collapsed by the seventh. De Gébelin and the others insisted that Egyptian mystery teachings were transcribed onto cards to ensure preservation. Theories of the involvement of the popes or the Romani are appealing. But more likely the mysteries passed into the hands of multiple ethnic groups, Christians, Jews, and magi of no particular ethnic or religious identity.

Also, many of the ancient texts of Alexandria, Athens, Rome, and other centers of learning in the Mediterranean region found their way into Arab hands and were studied extensively during the golden age of Islam. Arabic versions of

Greek classics and esoteric literature began to reach Italy in the thirteenth century.

Some brief remarks are in order regarding the etymology of the word *Tarot*, the Francized form of the Italian *tarocci*, and its variants *tarocchi* and *tarock*. The term came into use when the Tarot and its associated card games migrated from Italy to France. Speculation on its etymology, beginning with de Gébelin and continuing today, has focused either on the common root *taro* or on the French name itself.<sup>120</sup> Some authorities claim that the root was derived from the Egyptian *taru* (“consult”) or the Hebrew *taro* (“law”).

Two difficulties confront these speculations, however. One is to explain how the root *taro* spanned the thousand years between antiquity and the Renaissance. The card-game precursors of the Minor Arcana were never known by that name, so any continuity of terminology must lie in the Major Arcana. If, as we have concluded in this article, the latter’s precursors were the talismans of medieval and earlier magic, the real discussion of etymology should focus on whether ancient talismans were ever known by a name resembling *taro* or *Tarot*. That discussion has yet to begin.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that the first card game to use the conflated Major and Minor Arcana was called *trionfi* (“triumphs”). *Tarocci* and its variants do not appear in the record until several decades later. *Tarocci* seems to have received its name sometime after the Tarot, as we know it, came into existence. The real origin of the name, like the Tarot itself, remains a mystery.

### ***Aesthetics***

The new interest in Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, at the time of the Renaissance, gave rise to a major transformation in the styles of ritual magic: a return to styles used in antiquity or perhaps the development of new styles entirely. More sophisticated styles of magic demanded talismans that were more aesthetically pleasing, and more “spiritual,” than their medieval forebears.

One outcome was the creation of Tarot decks by some of the leading artists of the time. Only

the aristocracy could afford them, but it was a social elite that dabbled in the sophisticated forms of ceremonial magic. Members of the nobility would have been dissatisfied with woodcut talismans, even for card games. Dissatisfaction would have been all the greater when the nobility participated in magical rituals, where so much more was at stake. Artists were only too pleased to cater to expensive tastes, and enlightened magi saw a way to enhance the aesthetic and spiritual status of their craft. Whether the Visconti–Sforza deck achieved that goal is debatable; perhaps the artist sacrificed symbolism in favor of aesthetics. The Besozzo and other lost Tarot decks of the period may have offered a better balance, but we shall never know.

Ordinary people who played *trionfi* or *tarocci* did not have the aristocracy’s resources; nor would they have regarded any significant cost as worthwhile. They would continue to use cheap woodcut cards. Nonetheless, gamblers as well as aristocrats and magi evidently saw utility in the emerging Major Arcana.

The apparent collapse of Tarot-related activity in Italy, at the end of the fifteenth century, is usually attributed to invasion and occupation of the Italian city-states by French forces.<sup>121</sup> Allegedly, French troops developed an interest in the *tarocci* card game and carried it to their homeland and elsewhere. This explanation of the Tarot’s migration to France is plausible, though the gap of 150 years in the historical record—from the Sola Busca deck to the Noblet deck—is worrisome and raises important questions.

Did, for instance, the social elite of Europe stop performing magical rituals requiring expensive, artistic Tarot decks? We have already noted that ecclesiastical hostility toward all kinds of magic led to a shift of priorities within Hermeticism. Perhaps the Tarot found its way into secret occult societies, like Pletho’s, that preserved esoteric wisdom during times of religious persecution. Or perhaps it moved to countries where the religious climate was more accommodating.

In Cornelius Agrippa’s encyclopedic work on magic, published in Germany, one talisman is

described thus: “a king crowned, sitting in a chair, having a raven in his bosom, and under his feet a globe; he is clothed in saffron colored clothes.”<sup>122</sup> We can easily visualize it as a court card, or even a Major Arcanum, in the Tarot. Indeed we can see continuity from Albertus Magnus’ Andromeda and Cassiopeia talismans, through the Major Arcana of the Renaissance, to Agrippa’s talismans and beyond.

The Marseille decks that survive today contain twenty-two Major Arcana, with meanings similar to those of the Italian Renaissance. Etteilla, who allegedly had contacts with an unnamed Italian, may have influenced the structure of published Tarot decks as well as popularizing them for purpose of divination. Etteilla and de Gébelin may both have had access to the high-quality decks of the Italian Renaissance.

Yet in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Éliphas Lévi and Papus in France, and Mathers in Britain used the “folk art” decks of the Marseille type. Waite’s deck was a significant improvement, but in artistry it still fell short of the Renaissance decks. Crowley’s deck, published long after the Golden Dawn’s demise was an attempt to reconstruct “the Egyptian Tarot.” Perhaps it is rich in symbolism, but its artistic value is questionable, and some people feel that it has a low vibration.

The power of talismans lies in their ability to generate images on the etheric and higher levels. Creative imagination can take those higher images and bring to bear the full power of the higher mental subplanes. We know from modern esoteric teachings that magic, and probably divination, require the cooperation of elemental or devic beings. Elementals and lower devas can be conjured by the magi’s will and forced to perform. But the dangers of unwise

occult practices are well known, and the karma of sorcery can act swiftly.

The white magician works under soul guidance, with the help of higher devas. These latter can only be invited to cooperate, and they

will do so only if they recognize purity of motive and an environment favorable to their particular vibration. The work of Geoffrey Hodson has shown that sacred music can attract powerful devic beings.<sup>123</sup> And more generally we know that high devas are attracted by sound and color, which merge on the higher planes. The use of silver and gold leaf in the Renaissance Tarot decks represented the greatest possible investment that could be made in the vibration of the cards. In addition to their monetary value, those two metals

resonate with the Moon and Sun, respectively, or perhaps with the World Mother—Queen of the Angels—and the Christ or Logos.

The use of Tarot cards for purposes of meditation or divination, or their use as talismans in magical ritual, demands decks of high aesthetic quality. Most of us could not afford real gold, but the decks created by Kat Black and Atanas Atanassov are both embellished with gold paint. For a long time aesthetics took a back seat in the creation of Tarot decks, understandably so because of reproduction constraints. But Tarot cards, comparable in their artistry with those of Renaissance Italy, can now be produced at minimal cost. The Black and Atanassov decks may raise some eyebrows, but they make important contributions to the esoteric value of the Tarot and may point the way to even greater enhancements in value.

In addition to acquiring a suitable Tarot deck, something must be done to bring the cards into vibrational harmony with their user. In medieval times it was considered preferable if the

*The Tarot seems to be connected . . . with Hermeticism. Hermetic magic exploited the resonance believed to exist between the natural world and beneficent celestial bodies, or the lives that animated them, It’s methods . . . “presuppose that continued effluvia of influences pouring down on earth from the stars . . . could be canalized and used by an operator with the requisite knowledge.”*

person planning to use a talisman prepared it him- or herself. In Paul Foster Case's *Builders of the Adytum*, students color their own Tarot cards. The notion of consecrating, charging, magnetizing or blessing a talisman offers a hint for successful use of the Tarot. One cannot expect the cards to work right out of the box—or straight from the artist's workshop. Another consideration: Tarot decks should not be shared; one user's vibration may be inharmonious with another's.

Digital processing techniques have greatly facilitated the creation, editing and reproduction of high-quality Tarot images. Typically, however, the images are still printed on cardstock. Display on electronic devices might be a logical next step, making cards obsolete. The "random" selection of a card or spread could easily be accomplished. To what extent electronic display would affect the Tarot's efficacy for divination and magic, or even for esoteric study and meditation, is unknown. Moreover, it is unclear how volatile images on a screen, or the device itself, could be consecrated or magnetized. Yet the issue forces us to consider precisely what we consecrate in the case of conventional Tarot cards: is it the image, or the image together with the medium on which it is printed?

### *The Tarot and Sensa*

Based on what we have learned, what precisely is the Tarot, and whence did it come? From their different perspectives, de Gébelin, Papus, Waite, Tomberg, Jung, and others intuited that the Tarot possessed special significance, greater than they could explain or whose historical roots they struggled to identify.

Tarot cards, other talismans, sacred icons, mandalas, yantras, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Hebrew and Sanskrit letters all draw inspiration from those mighty ideograms of Sensa, the language of high initiates. The images may be relics, consciously or unconsciously recalled from Atlantean times, when, we are told, Sensa was shared openly with humanity; or they may have been revealed in veiled form more recently.

In his landmark book, Dorje Jinpa spoke of a horizontal dimension of Sensa—a language in

the ordinary sense—and also a vertical dimension, captured by notions of the WORD: the Logos' creative and sustaining "communication" with his world.<sup>124</sup> Jinpa made the point that, at our level, Sensa could not be reduced simply to an alphabet, dictionary, and set of grammatical rules; it would extend beyond language, as we use the term, to embrace geometric forms, symbols, and "gestures," or ritual.<sup>125</sup> The use of Tarot cards as talismans in the rituals of ceremonial magic may take us closer to an understanding of Sensa. It may help us, in a small way, draw upon the power of the ancient language as well as on whatever power is specifically invoked. The need for care in selecting a Tarot deck—or its electronic equivalent—arises once again.

These intentionally brief comments are shared in the hope that further work on the nature and function of Sensa will include a focus on its expression through sacred images, texts and rituals. The Tarot should feature prominently in such work.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this article has been to explore the Tarot's origins and complex history, setting aside issues of Tarot symbolism, which are discussed elsewhere in the literature. Selected Tarot cards are reproduced herein to illustrate their evolution over time. The Tarot took shape in Italy, during the fifteenth century, and the oldest extant decks date from that period. During a mere 100 years, the Minor and Major Arcana were conflated, and a set of Major Arcana emerged that have won wide acceptance.

There is little doubt that the Minor Arcana evolved from card games played in medieval China. Significantly, both paper and woodblock printing were Chinese inventions, providing the resources for producing card decks. The westward migration of card games followed the spread of paper and woodblock printing, to India, the Middle East, and finally Europe. Woodblock printing remained the principal means of card production until the development of more efficient image-processing technologies in the twentieth century.

Court cards seem to have been added after playing cards left China. By the time card decks reached the Middle East, and certainly by the time they reached Europe, they closely resembled today's playing cards, with thirteen or fourteen cards in each of four suits. Although specific names varied from place to place, and time to time, the broad meanings of the suits of the Minor Arcana had assumed their final form by 1500.

One of the first applications of the Tarot deck, following conflation of the Major and Minor Arcana early in the fifteenth century, was the game of *trionfi*, in which the Major Arcana served as trumps. Yet we cannot believe that the Major Arcana appeared from nowhere, simply in response to a desire for more challenging games. Neither can the heavy investment of time, effort and money in the artistic Tarot decks of the Italian Renaissance be attributed solely to the nobility's desire for luxury and social status.

The more plausible conclusion is that proto-Major Arcana already existed and were co-opted for gaming purposes. Those proto-Major Arcana were the talismans of ritual magic. Their evolution from the relatively crude medieval forms into the beautiful Major Arcana of the Italian Renaissance ran parallel with increasing interest in, and sophistication of, ceremonial magic. Renaissance magic benefited greatly from the rediscovery of Hermetic magic and Neoplatonic theurgy—both of which were popular in Hellenic Egypt but may have drawn upon the occult practices of earlier periods.

The Renaissance was one of the most dynamic epochs in history, stimulating far-reaching developments in multiple fields of endeavor. We now know that the Planetary Hierarchy took action in 1425 to help raise human consciousness. The elevation of ceremonial magic to new levels of spirituality and emergence of the Tarot may have been part of that effort.

Since the fifteenth century the Tarot has served multiple purposes. Card games using Tarot decks are still played in parts of Europe. But esoteric study and divination have become the primary uses. Tantalizing evidence also draws attention to Tarot cards' continued use in ceremonial ritual. In addition to whatever specific goals such ritual might have, use of the Tarot may offer a way to tap into the power of the ancient *Sensa* language—which, as we have seen, is not only a vehicle for communication among initiates but is also the medium through which the Logos creates and sustains his worlds.

The symbolism of Tarot cards is obviously of great importance. But their aesthetic quality, which rose to a high level in the Renaissance, is also important, no matter what esoteric purpose the cards may serve. We know that the higher devas, who serve as the Logos' agents, are attracted by beauty. Each color is known to attract a particular order of devas. A small, but potentially useful, side effect of enhancing the aesthetics of the Tarot might be to counter centuries-old negative perceptions of this important esoteric system.

**Table 1. Suits in the Minor Arcana**

Most Common Name	Alternative Names	French	Playing Cards*
Wands	Scepters, Batons, Polo Sticks	Les Batons	Clubs
Cups	Chalices	Les Coupes	Hearts
Swords	Daggers	Les Épées	Spades
Pentacles	Coins, Disks	Les Deniers	Diamonds

\* Note that these correspondences are not universally accepted.

**Table 2. Major Arcana in the Modern Tarot Deck**

No.	Most Common Name	Alternative Name	French
0*	The Fool	The Foolish Man	Le Mat
I	The Magician	The Juggler	Le Bateleur
II	The High Priestess	The Popess, Priestess	La Papesse
III	The Empress		La Impératrice
IV	The Emperor		L'Empereur
V	The Hierophant	The Pope	Le Pape
VI	The Lovers	Love	L'Amoureux
VII	The Chariot		Le Chariot
VIII	Strength	Fortitude	La Force
IX	The Hermit		L'Hermite
X	Wheel of Fortune		La Roue de Fortune
XI	Justice	Themis	La Justice
XII	The Hanged Man		Le Pendu
XIII	Death		La Mort
XIV	Temperance		Temperance
XV	The Devil		Le Diable
XVI	The Tower	The Lightning Strike	La Maison Dieu
XVII	The Star		L'Étoile
XVIII	The Moon		La Lune
XIX	The Sun		Le Soleil
XX	Judgment	The Last Judgment	Le Jugement
XXI	The World	The Universe	Le Monde

\* The Fool is sometimes left unnumbered.

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- <sup>1</sup> Arthur E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot: Being Fragments of a Secret Tradition Under the Veil of Divination* (London: Rider, 1911), 4.
- <sup>2</sup> Harriette A. & F. Homer Curtiss, *The Key to the Universe: Or a Spiritual Interpretation of Numbers and Symbols* (New York: Dutton, 1919), 75.
- <sup>3</sup> Paul Foster Case, *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* (Richmond, VA: Macoy, 1947), 1.
- <sup>4</sup> Eden Gray, *The Tarot Revealed* (New York: Bell, 1960), Author's introduction (unnumbered).
- <sup>5</sup> Carl G. Jung, "Visions," *Notes of a seminar given in 1930-1934* (Claire Douglas, ed.). Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1997, 923.
- <sup>6</sup> Signe E. Echols et al., *Spiritual Tarot: Seventy-Eight Paths to Personal Development* (New York: Monroe, 1996), 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Nicole Wendrich, Introduction to Harry & Nicola Wendrich, *A Sephirothic Odyssey: A Journey in Consciousness with the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot*, Llanelli (Wales: Wendrich artHouse, 2016), ix.
- <sup>8</sup> Jean-Louis de Biasi, *The Divine Arcana of the Aurum Solis* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2011), 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Valentin Tomberg (attrib. to), *Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism* (transl.; R. A. Powell, Shaftsbury, Dorset, UK: Element, 1985), 4. Italics in the original.
- <sup>10</sup> But it should be pointed out that not all authorities accept these correspondences.
- <sup>11</sup> In Aleister Crowley's Thoth deck, the court cards are designated Princess, Knight, Queen and Prince. In French the court cards are Le Roy, La Reyne, Le Cavalier, and Le Valet.
- <sup>12</sup> In addition to differences arising from translation from the original French, certain cards have taken on new connotations. For instance, "The Popess" card from the Marseille decks, named for the fabled Pope Joan—and probably intended to offend the Roman Catholic Church—has become "The High Priestess." Furthermore, cards VIII and XI are often interchanged, and the Fool is sometimes placed between cards XX and XXI
- <sup>13</sup> See for example Curtiss & Curtiss, *The Key to the Universe*; (Harriette A. & F. Homer Curtiss), *The Key of Destiny* (New York: Dutton, 1923); Gray, *The Tarot Revealed*; Angeles Arrien, *The Tarot Handbook: Practical Applications of Ancient Visual Symbols* (New York: Tarcher Putnam, 1997); Tali Goodwin et al., *Tarot Fundamentals* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2016); Anthony Louis, *Llewellyn's Complete Book of Tarot: A Comprehensive Guide* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2016).
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot* (Rochester, VT: Destiny, 2004).
- <sup>15</sup> Catherine P. Hargrave, *A History of Playing Cards* (New York: Dover, 1930/2000).
- <sup>16</sup> Mary K. Greer's Tarot Blog: <https://marygreer.wordpress.com>. Last accessed March 2, 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> Israel Regardie, *How to Make and Use Talismans*, undated pamphlet (after 1940), 7. Online: [http://www.oldways.org/documents/ceremonial/regardie/regardie\\_talismans.pdf](http://www.oldways.org/documents/ceremonial/regardie/regardie_talismans.pdf). Last accessed Dec. 3, 2016.
- <sup>18</sup> Migene González-Wippler, *The Complete Book of Amulets and Talismans* (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1991), 203. For comparison, in Christian tradition medals, scapulars and rosaries are blessed prior to use.
- <sup>19</sup> Woodblocking was used to imprint images onto silk, even before the invention of paper.
- <sup>20</sup> The Malmuks originally were slaves conscripted to serve as soldiers. Over time they evolved into a powerful military caste, almost a chivalric order that played significant roles in Middle Eastern affairs from the ninth to the eighteenth century.
- <sup>21</sup> Source: "History of Playing Cards": <http://www.wopc.co.uk/history/1/2/3/4/5>. Last accessed Nov. 24, 2016.
- <sup>22</sup> Critics claim that the title of *thānī nā'ib* never actually existed.
- <sup>23</sup> Images of the Topkapı deck are in the public sector.
- <sup>24</sup> Even the printing of text was prohibited on religious grounds. Printing did not become common in the Islamic world until the nineteenth century.
- <sup>25</sup> Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*, 5.
- <sup>26</sup> Patricia Corbett & Colin Eisler (eds.), *The Prayer Book of Michelino da Besozzo* (New York: Braziller, 1995), devotion for January 17 (pages unnumbered). This book is based on

- an illustrated manuscript in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.
- <sup>27</sup> Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*, 11-12.
- <sup>28</sup> “Cards” 1–10 depict the social hierarchy from beggar to emperor and pope. Cards 11–20 depict the nine Muses and Apollo. Cards 21–30 depict the seven liberal arts and the sciences of mathematics, astrology and theology. Cards 31–40 depict the three genii and seven virtues. Cards 41–50 depict the celestial spheres believed to surround the Earth.
- <sup>29</sup> Among Bonifacio Bembo’s other works were portraits of Francesco Sforza and Bianca Visconti (1462), and the main altarpiece for the Duomo of Cremona (1464–1467). Some art historians have detected two different styles in the Visconti-Sforza deck, suggesting that a second painter may have created some of the cards. Other historians attribute the whole deck to Francesco Zavattari, who, with his brothers, painted a fresco in the Chapel of Monza.
- <sup>30</sup> Lo Scarabeo: Tarocchi dei Visconti by Dal Negro © 2005 Lo Scarabeo srl, via Cigna 110, 10155 Torino, Italy. All rights reserved, used by permission.
- <sup>31</sup> Source: [http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Sola\\_Busca\\_Tarot#Cards](http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Sola_Busca_Tarot#Cards). Last accessed Feb. 18, 2017.
- <sup>32</sup> Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*, 13-14.
- <sup>33</sup> Source: <https://en.camoin.com/tarot/-Tarot-Nicolas-Conver-en-.html>. Last accessed November 18, 2016. See also [http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Nicolas\\_Conver\\_Tarot](http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Nicolas_Conver_Tarot). Last accessed November 18, 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> Images in the public sector.
- <sup>35</sup> S. L. Macgregor Mathers, *The Tarot: Its Occult Significance, Use in Fortune-Telling, and Method of Play, Etc.* (reprint, New York: Weiser, 1888).
- <sup>36</sup> Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians* (transl.; A. P. Morton, reprint, North Hollywood, CA: Wilshire, 1978), 12. The original French edition was published in 1889.
- <sup>37</sup> Several printing runs were made, over a period of years, before the physical quality of the cards was judged to be satisfactory. Source: <http://www.thompsonrarebooks.com/thompson/images/pdfs/waite.pdf>. Last accessed Dec. 15, 2016. See also Simon Wintle, “Rider-Waite Tarot,” September 07, 2013. Online: <http://www.wopc.co.uk/tarot/rider-kaite/>. Last accessed Dec. 16, 2016.
- <sup>38</sup> Illustrations from the Rider-Waite Deck®, know also as the Waite Tarot and the Rider Tarot reproduced by permission of U.S. Games Systems, Inc., Stamford CT 06902 USA. Copyright Games Systems, Inc. Further reproduction prohibited. The Rider-Waite Tarot Deck® is a registered trademark of the US Games Systems Inc.
- <sup>39</sup> Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth: A Short Essay on the Tarot of the Egyptians* (New York: Weiser, 1944).
- <sup>40</sup> Aleister Crowley and Frieda Lady Harris Thoth Tarot © Ordo Templi Orientis. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
- <sup>41</sup> Illustrations from the Golden Tarot reproduced by permission of U.S. Games Systems, Inc., Stamford CT 06902 USA. Copyright © 2004, U.S. Games Systems Inc. Further reproduction prohibited.
- <sup>42</sup> Although Botticelli created works for the Medicis, there is no evidence that he ever painted a Tarot deck.
- <sup>43</sup> Lo Scarabeo: Tarot Botticelli by Atanas Alexandro Atanassov © 2007 Lo Scarabeo srl, via Cigna 110, 10155 Torino, Italy. All rights reserved, used by permission.
- <sup>44</sup> Huson, *Mystical Origins of the Tarot*, 12.
- <sup>45</sup> Wintle, “Rider-Waite Tarot.” See also <http://www.thompsonrarebooks.com/thompson/images/pdfs/waite.pdf>. Last accessed Dec. 15, 2016.
- <sup>46</sup> Wendrich & Wendrich, *A Sephirothic Odyssey: A Journey in Consciousness with the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot, and Golden Dawn Temple Tarot*, 2016.
- <sup>47</sup> J. D. Rockefeller, *A Comprehensive Guide on the Tarot and Its Cards*, (location not specified) CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, 5.
- <sup>48</sup> That said, experimentation continued; the sixteenth-century “Gemini,” or “Minchiate,” deck contained 97 trumps. Some tarochi decks in use today for gaming purposes contain fewer than 22.
- <sup>49</sup> Jacopo Antonio Marcello (1398–1463). Online: <http://trionfi.com/jacopo-antonio-marcello-venetian-proveditore>. Last accessed Jan. 8, 2017.
- <sup>50</sup> To gain insight into the relative degrees of complexity, consider that the number of per-

mutations of  $p$  objects drawn from a population  $q$  is equal to  $q!/(q-p)!$ , where “!” designates the factorial function. The number of permutations of ten cards drawn from a deck of 52 cards is  $5.7 \times 10^{16}$ . The number of permutations of ten cards drawn from a deck of 78 cards is  $4.6 \times 10^{18}$ , roughly eighty times greater.

51 While the Besozzo deck may have been gifted for use in a card game, we do not know whether Besozzo or his patron intended, or would have approved of, such use.

52 The French title was *Etteilla, ou Manière de se Récréer avec un Jeu de Cartes*.

53 Source: <http://meanings-tarot.com/people/etteilla.aspx>. Last accessed Dec. 8, 2016.

54 Antoine C. de Gébelin, *The Primeval World, Analyzed and Compared to the Modern World*, Paris, 1781. Translation quoted in S. L. Macgregor Mathers, “The Tarot,” *Historic Magazine: Miscellaneous Notes and Queries*, (vol. 11, no. 7, 1893), 155-163.

55 Among those who attributed Egyptian hieroglyphics to Thoth/Hermes was the Jesuit occultist Athanasius Kirchner, author of the influential *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1652–1654.

56 “Éliphas Lévi” is a translation of his name into Hebrew. *Zahed*, or *Zahid*, (Arabic: “ascetic”) is a title of respect used in various segments of Islam to denote an initiate. Typically the title is conferred by others, but Constant applied it to himself.

57 Éliphas Lévi, *The Mysteries of Magic* (London: Kegan, 1897), 285.

58 Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 12. Papus may have inherited the idea of a connection with the Romani from Etteilla.

59 The French term *Bohémiens* recalled the protection given to Romani in the Kingdom of Bohemia at a time when their advance into Europe was generally unwelcome. Because of that protection, Bohemia acquired an exceptionally large Romani population. “Bohemians” carried, and still carries, negative associations, as does “Gypsies,” and modern ethnologists discourage both.

60 An itinerant group resembling the Romani visited the Emperor Constantine IX in 1054, offering their services as fortune tellers, ventriloquists and wizards. They were called *Atsinganoi*, a term which originally referred to

a Manichaeen sect but had taken on the more general, derogatory connotation of “untouchables.” In 1350, the German priest Ludolf of Sudheim wrote of a group of Romani-like nomads whom he called *Mandapolos* (literally “frenzied”), a word possibly derived from the Greek *mantis*, meaning a prophet or fortune teller.

61 Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, 8-9.

62 Ibid., 82.

63 Ibid.

64 Clement Salaman, et al., *The Way of Hermes* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2000), 80.

65 “Three Initiates,” *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1912), 17-18.

66 For a discussion of Hermetism and Hermeticism see John F. Nash, “Hermeticism: Rise and Fall of an Esoteric System: Part I,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2009), 39-51; and Part II (Spring 2009), 33-44.

67 The *Emerald Tablet* supposedly was inscribed by Hermes on an emerald and discovered by Alexander the Great in Hermes’ tomb, the Great Pyramid of Giza! But the earliest verifiable version is in an eighth-century work by the Islamic alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan. It is in Arabic and written on paper.

68 “Three Initiates,” *The Kybalion*, 8-9.

69 Aleister Crowley, *The Equinox of the Gods*, London: Ordo Templi Orientis, 1936. The book was based on material circulated privately as early as 1904. The complete text of *Equinox* is available at: <http://hermetic.com/crowley/equinox-of-the-gods/>. Last accessed Nov. 27, 2016.

70 Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*, 8. This work was published in 1944, three years before Crowley’s death.

71 Ibid., 10.

72 Ibid. Writers in the Golden Dawn—with some justification—promoted the spelling “Qabalah,” contrasting with “Kabbalah,” preferred by Jewish scholars. More recent commentators sometimes use “Qabalah” specifically to denote the Golden Dawn interpretation of Kabbalistic teachings.

73 Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah* (rev. ed.; Boston, MA: Weiser, 1935/2000), 22. We should note that esoteric writers are not unanimous in their assignment of particular Tarot

- cards to paths through the Tree of Life. Furthermore, Fortune's correspondences with Hebrew letters differed from those proposed earlier by the Judaic Kabbalist Isaac Luria.
- <sup>74</sup> Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah*, 22.
- <sup>75</sup> Gareth Knight, *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1965/1993), 51.
- <sup>76</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 45.
- <sup>77</sup> *Daemons*, as the term was used in antiquity, referred to spirits of various kinds, most of them beneficent. They should not be confused with *demons*, as understand today. Daemons could more properly be equated to devas.
- <sup>78</sup> R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (Bristol, U.K.: Classical Press, 1972/2002), 107.
- <sup>79</sup> For example, Plotinus proposed a model of the Trinity which competed with—and in the eyes of some commentators was superior to—the one that emerged from the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).
- <sup>80</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchies*, ch. 15.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>82</sup> No clear date can be assigned to the end of “Antiquity” and beginning of the Dark Ages, but a frequently cited one is 529 CE, when the Emperor Justinian closed the Platonic Academy in Athens. Closure of the school essentially brought classical Neoplatonism to an end.
- <sup>83</sup> If, as some authorities claim, the Celtic Church had Egyptian origins, some esoteric teachings may have found their way to Ireland and been absorbed by surviving elements of Druid occultism. We note the role Irish monks played in preserving scholarship while other parts of Europe lay in the Dark Ages.
- <sup>84</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Speculum Astronomiae* (“Instrument of Magic,” transl. unknown), ch. 11. See also his *De Mineralism* (“On Minerals,” transl. unknown), ch. 5. Online: [www.renaissanceastrology.com](http://www.renaissanceastrology.com). Last accessed Jan. 1, 2017.
- <sup>85</sup> Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 162. Patriarch Cerularius is better known for excommunicating Pope Leo IX. Leo returned the compliment, triggering the Great Schism of 1054 between the Roman and Orthodox Churches.
- <sup>86</sup> Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 45.
- <sup>87</sup> Albertus Magnus, *De Mineralibus*, ch. 5.
- <sup>88</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Speculum Astronomiae*, ch. 11.
- <sup>89</sup> G. F. Young, *The Medici* (New York: Modern Library, 1910/1930), 197-198.
- <sup>90</sup> Pletho's religious affiliations were ambiguous, but he came to Italy in 1438 as an Eastern Orthodox delegate to the Council of Florence, convened (initially in Ferrara) in the hope of healing the Great Schism of 1054.
- <sup>91</sup> Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 78ff.
- <sup>92</sup> Nash, “Hermeticism: Rise and Fall of an Esoteric System: Part I.”
- <sup>93</sup> Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993, 34. Ficino's work is a theme running throughout this book.
- <sup>94</sup> Biasi, *The Divine Arcana of the Aurum Solis*, 27.
- <sup>95</sup> Giovanni Pico, *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*. The work was published in Bologna sometime after Pico's death.
- <sup>96</sup> John F. Nash, “Origins of the Christian Kabbalah,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2008), 43-58.
- <sup>97</sup> Biasi, *The Divine Arcana of the Aurum Solis*, 25-26.
- <sup>98</sup> Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 113-116.
- <sup>99</sup> Regardie, *How to Make and Use Talismans*, 7.
- <sup>100</sup> See for example Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn* (Rochester, NY: Park Street Press, 1995), 66, 71, 116, 118, 154.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 398-399. Horniman's reference to “the Moon” suggests that she identified it with the High Priestess. There is no suggestion that she was also viewing the Moon card.
- <sup>102</sup> Regardie, *How to Make and Use Talismans*, 37.
- <sup>103</sup> Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 218.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>105</sup> Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 125.
- <sup>106</sup> Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rules and Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Dawn*, book 4 (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1937-1940), 66-78. The Tetragrammaton is the unutterable name of God, composed—as the noun indicates—of four Hebrew letters: YHVH. Gentiles have

added vowels to create “Yahweh” and “Jehovah,” but we do not know how the divine name was pronounced in biblical times.

107 Biasi, *The Divine Arcana of the Aurum Solis*, 82.

108 Ibid. 86.

109 More limited information for the conventional Tarot deck can be found in Case, *The Tarot*.

110 Sometimes, of course, the turn of a card was manipulated. Cheating is probably as old as are card games themselves.

111 See the discussion in Hargrave, *A History of Playing Cards*, 1-5.

112 *The Oracles of Francesco Marcolino da Forli* (1540) provided instructions for drawing one or more cards randomly from the coins, or pentacles, suit and interpreting the cards for a querent.

113 For a discussion of early examples of divination see Franco Pratesi, “Tarot in Bologna: Documents from the University Library,” *The Playing-Card* (vol. XVII, no. 4, 1989), 136-146. Online: <http://trionfi.com/pratesi-cartomancer>. Last accessed Nov. 25, 2016

114 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I* (New York: Lucis, 1936), 26. Elsewhere we are told that during times of cyclical pralaya, “Egos who are on that particular Ray will take form elsewhere on other globes, and in other chains, and not so much on our planet.” Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925), 439.

115 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, II (New York: Lucis, 1955), 269. Parenthesis in the original. The antahkarana is a bridge in consciousness, built by the disciple, linking the lower and higher aspects of mind and providing contact between the personality and the spiritual triad.

116 The “Egyptian Book of the Dead” was not a single text but a series of texts, written over a period of more than a millennium, offering

advice to individuals, some named, like the Theban scribe Ani.

117 Source: <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/egyptian.htm>. Last accessed Dec. 7, 2016. The word *hieroglyph*, coined by second-century CE church father Clement of Alexandria, is Greek and literally means “sacred inscription.”

118 Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology II* (New York: Bouton, 1877), 235.

119 The existence of these plates has been of great interest to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), who compare them with the plates allegedly discovered by Joseph Smith in New York State. Source: [http://www.bmaf.org/articles/ancient\\_metal\\_plates\\_\\_johnson](http://www.bmaf.org/articles/ancient_metal_plates__johnson). Last accessed Dec. 7, 2016.

120 For example, a common claim is that the words *Tarot* and *rota* (“wheel”) are related.

121 The Italian Wars a series of conflicts from 1494 to 1559 that involved, at various times, most of the city-states of Italy, the Papal States, the Republic of Venice, most of the major states of Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

122 Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (transl.: J. Freake; Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 1993), book 2, ch. 61, 386.

123 See for example Geoffrey Hodson, *Clairvoyant Investigations* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books; 1995).

124 Dorje Jinpa, *Sensa: The Lost Language of the Ancient Mysteries* (Ashland, OR: Pentabarba Publications, 2012), 81ff. See the review of this book in *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2015), 102-105.

125 Jinpa, *Sensa*, 81.

## Book Review

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*A Sephirothic Odyssey: A Journey in Consciousness with the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot*, and *Golden Dawn Temple Tarot Deck*, by Harry and Nicola Wendrich, Llanelli, Wales: Wendrich artHouse, 2016. Available from: [www.wendricharthouse.com](http://www.wendricharthouse.com). Book: US\$40.00, deck: US\$36.00.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was established in 1888, attracted a colorful group of exceptionally gifted people, and made an enormous contribution to the Western Esoteric Tradition. It survived a little more than ten years before splintering, under internal stresses, into a number of derivative organizations that reflected the interests—and in some cases the egos—of prominent former members. New organizations also sprang up, including one sharing the name of the original Order and claiming lineage with it through the graces of Israel Regardie, onetime secretary to the infamous Aleister Crowley. The authors of *A Sephirothic Odyssey* joined this latter-day Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 2004.

The original Golden Dawn made its greatest contribution in the areas of hermetic magic, the Kabbalah, and the Tarot. The latter two are central to an understanding of the present book. Macgregor Mathers, Arthur Waite, and others recognized that the Kabbalah had a long history, both in its native Judaic form and in the Christianized form of the “Hermetic Kabbalah.” Unfortunately, their ability to penetrate the Judaic Kabbalah was limited. Important texts, like the *Zohar* were available only in the original Hebrew (or Aramaic), and, as one commentator observed, Golden Dawn members’ typical grasp of Hebrew was what one could expect from two introductory college courses. Meanwhile, interest in the Kabbalah among Jewish scholars had declined dramatically since the seventeenth-century, when it became associated—with little justification—with the Sabbatai Zevi messiah fiasco. Translation of key texts into English, and the new wave of research by scholars like

Gershom Sholem and Leonora Leet, came too late to help the Golden Dawn.

What emerged was a distinctive form of the Kabbalah—almost an invention of the Golden Dawn—woven into its very institutional fabric. Initiatory grades were associated with sephiroth on the Tree of Life. As members advanced through the grades, they journeyed through the Tree from Malkuth toward Kether.

The Tarot had no Judaic roots. The word “Tarot” is French but is derived from the plural Italian *tarocci*, which may literally mean “trumps” or “triumphs.” Significantly the Major Arcana are still occasionally referred to as “trumps.” In the Middle Ages *tarocci* was a popular card game. But from an early date the Tarot also seems to have played a more exalted role. The oldest extant deck, commissioned by Duke Visconti of Milan in the mid-1450s, shares important characteristics with the magical talismans created by contemporary Hermeticist Marsilio Ficino.

Interest in the Tarot eventually moved from Italy to France. In the late eighteenth century Freemason Antoine Court de Gébelin studied the Tarot’s esoteric symbolism and associated the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Marseille Tarot deck, considered the prototype of modern decks, may date from the same period. A century later, the Tarot became of great interest to French occultists Éliphas Lévi and Papus, and thence to the Golden Dawn. For several centuries Tarot cards have been used for divination, meditation, and esoteric study.

In the Golden Dawn the Tarot became intimately related with the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Correspondences were proposed not only between the Tarot cards and the sephiroth but between the cards and pathways between adjacent sephiroth. The four suits of the Minor Arcana have traditionally been correlated

with the four elements: the Pentacles with earth, Swords with air, Cups with water, and Wands with fire. In the Golden Dawn they were also correlated with the four worlds of the Kabbalah: Pentacles with Assiah, Swords with Yetzirah, Cups with Briah, and Wands with Atziluth. The Kabbalistic pilgrim's path up the Tree, and from world to world, corresponded to a journey through the Tarot deck.

Several members of the Golden Dawn took an interest in the esoteric significance and divinatory meanings of the Tarot cards. As early as 1888 Macgregor Mathers published a manual of divination based on the Marseille deck. Drawing on Kabbalistic analogies, Mathers, Waite, Crowley and others also sought to discern the cards' Hebrew divine and angelic names, and their astrological correspondences. Color symbolism assumed great importance.

Two of the best-known Tarot decks are the "Rider" deck, named for the publisher but developed by Waite and artist Pamela Coleman Smith, and the "Thoth" deck, developed by Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris. The Thoth deck was named for the Egyptian god of writing, who allegedly revealed the hieroglyphic alphabet to humankind. Thoth, in his turn, became identified with the Greek god Hermes and the Roman Mercury. Also popular is the deck created by Paul Foster Case and artist Jessie Burns Parke; Case was founder of the Builders of the Adytum, another Golden Dawn derivative. Hundreds of other Tarot decks have been created, representing a broad spectrum of scholarship, intuitive insight, and artistic value.

Enter Harry and Nicola Wendrich, *A Sephirothic Odyssey*, and a new Tarot deck, which they call the "Golden Dawn Temple Tarot." "Golden Dawn Temple" here refers to the modern derivative organization, whose lineage with its famous antecedent was established by Regardie's participation. By contrast to the members of the original Golden Dawn, the authors—and Nick Farrell, their collaborator during part of the project—had access to a much larger body of literature. They had access to translations of classical Kabbalistic

texts and works by modern Jewish Kabbalists. Their description of the Ain Soph made reference to the creation story that emerged from the Lurianic school of Kabbalism in sixteenth-century Safed, Palestine (pp. 54ff).

The authors had access to the wealth of material on the Kabbalah and Tarot published during the heyday of the original Golden Dawn and, during the past one hundred years, by writers in the Golden Dawn tradition. The Wendriches also demonstrate familiarity with key concepts from the trans-Himalayan teachings. By any standards they did their homework. Finally, and importantly, the project was not rushed through in a few weeks, or even the two years Pamela Coleman Smith took to paint the cards Waite designed. The project extended over seven years.

An interesting feature of the project was the way in which work on a particular card mirrored—or perhaps was driven by—events in the Wendriches' and Farrell's lives. The creators of the new Tarot deck really did experience an "Odyssey" and a "Journey in Consciousness." Nicola Wendrich explains:

Throughout the painting of the deck, invisible agencies would magnetically draw toward us the energies which needed to be expressed. Synchronicities existed within our dreams and events of our outer life, and parallels also occurred with the Golden Dawn Temple. . . . It was clear that the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot was to be much more than a pictorial representation of words and symbols in a manuscript—the paintings were a response to and conduit of both the archetypal energies of the Tree of Life and the modern-day Golden Dawn currents (p. ix).

Clearly the new deck's creators took the work very seriously and grew spiritually in the process.

The Wendriches and Farrell revisited the choice of colors used in the Tarot decks of the original Golden Dawn. Some pigments like magenta, now readily available from art suppliers, were unavailable in the 1890s, or were unusable because of fading or other instabili-

ties. Access to the new pigments allowed the authors to change from a color chart based on red, yellow and blue, as primary colors, to one based on magenta, lemon yellow, and cyan (p. 218). Furthermore, they insisted on mixing the primary colors to produce secondary colors, rather than using ready-mixed paint. Hand-mixing may have recovered some sense of an alchemical process.

The book is well-researched, well-written, and readable. It provides a useful summary of work on the Tarot and Kabbalah within the original Golden Dawn and its derivative organizations. It contributes in a meaningful way to our overall understanding of the subject matter. And it provides interesting insights into a spiritual journey devoted to the production of a new Tarot deck.

But what of the Tarot deck itself? Does the end product live up to expectations? The cards are offered as “suitable for Temple use, as well as for individual meditations and esoteric study.” Divination is not mentioned, but Tarot readers presumably might be interested in acquiring the deck for such use.

Those of us who are not members of the present Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn can only speculate on what “Temple use” involves, and what criteria might govern their value. For other uses, important criteria for any Tarot cards are aesthetic value, the “vibration” they evoke in users’ consciousness, and the quality of symbolism.

Many of the cards have considerable aesthetic value, a tribute to the Wendriches’ and Farrell’s artistic talent. Figure 1 shows a sample of three such cards: the Ace of Swords, the Nine of Pentacles, and The Hermit. These cards also have a vibration favorable to meditation or divination. The authors comment on their symbolism:

The Ace of Swords represents the True Will in action. Nothing can stand against it except oneself, through lack of faith and forgetfulness. . . . Divine signs and omens are given when needed. From the crown hang a palm leaf and an olive branch—symbols of divine faithfulness and encour-

agement in the journey toward the Crown. The symbolism as a whole evokes the path trodden by Yeshua, culminating in His crucifixion (p. 163).

The Nine of Pentacles glows with abundance, success, and potential growth within a chosen field. The glowing angelic hand holds a beautiful rose branch of nine white roses, each touching a pentacle, with two extra buds readying to blossom. . . . The Nine of Pentacles is the final, raw, spiritual energy that has been brought down from the other spheres, ready now to manifest in Malkuth [the lowest sephirah] (pp. 80-81).

The Hermit is a serious figure. His light is all that one needs to see. All else is but a shadow, fraught with danger—the danger of forgetfulness, the forgetfulness of who we are. The ultimate mystery is the self. We are occult—our true heritage and nature unknown to us. But through the knowledge that the light of the Hermit reveals, a new strength is born (p. 29).

The Hermit is not shown standing on a mountain top, as he is in the Waite–Smith and Case–Parke decks. But the Wendriches can point to Golden Dawn precedent, insofar as no mountain appears in the Marseille deck favored by Mathers.

This reviewer’s main concern is that some of the cards have a disturbing or distasteful flavor. Figure 2 shows the treatment of the King of Cups in three different Tarot decks. The Visconti and Waite–Smith decks depict the king as fatherly, nurturing and kindly, whereas in the Wendrich deck he comes across as sinister and menacing. The Wendriches’ description of the King of Cups is somewhat softer:

There is a feeling of transformative energy within the King of Cups, who is placed within Chokmah [the second highest sephirah] where all negative aspects of self have been worked out. This is symbolized by the three great transformative symbols of the scorpion, the eagle, and the serpent, depicted here emerging from a concentra-

tion of Water symbols—the chalice, on which is the sigil of the King of Cups, and upon whose finger is a ring also representing a cup (pp. 178-179).

But even this softer description differs radically from earlier ones. Waite characterized a querent who draws the King of Cups as a “Fair man, man of business, law or divinity” (*The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 1910, 198). Mathers portrayed him as exhibiting “Goodness, Kindness, Liberality, Generosity” (*The Tarot*, 1888, p. 41). And Crowley commented: “He is graceful, dilettante, with the qualities of Venus, or a weak Jupiter. He is amiable in a passive way” (*The Book of Thoth*, 1944, p. 156).

Several cards include depictions of the nude female form, whose treatment sometimes seems needlessly sensual. Nobody would question that the human form can be of the highest artistic value, or that it can symbolize important esoteric truths. But this reviewer would have preferred to see a treatment more typical of classical art. To dwell on the gross physical aspects of the human body may express liberation from conventional tastes, but it is unlikely to promote an elevation of consciousness.

While some of the cards are of commendable value, the deck as a whole does not have a

high vibration. Personally, I would be wary of meditating on all but selected cards, and I would not select this deck for purposes of divination.

In summary, this reviewer recommends the book *A Sephirothic Odyssey* to esoteric students on the grounds that it presents a good summary of traditional and more recent work on the Tarot, as interpreted in the Golden Dawn tradition. The authors’ description of their spiritual adventures during creation of the Tarot deck is interesting in its own right.

On the other hand, I do not find the companion Tarot deck itself to be an improvement on, or even comparable in value with, decks that have been available for a century or more. The deck’s creators clearly have put great effort into it, and it may have played an important role in their own development. But their work may not be fruitful as a service to others. I defer to members of the present Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn to determine its value for internal temple use, but I cannot recommend the Golden Dawn Temple Tarot deck to readers of *The Esoteric Quarterly* for either meditation or divination.

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**Figure 1. Three Cards from the Wendrich Deck**

Ace of Swords	Nine of Pentacles	The Hermit
 <p>△ Ace of Swords △</p>	 <p>▽ Nine of Pentacles ▽</p>	 <p>THE HERMIT</p>

**Figure 2. The King of Cups in Three Decks**

Visconti	Waite-Smith	Wendrich
	 <p>KING of CUPS.</p>	 <p>KING OF CUPS</p>