

Attributes of the Egyptian Tarot

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While not strictly an astrological subject *per se*, one of the more fascinating side- applications of astrology is the attempt to solve the problems of discovering a key which will unlock the full meaning of the symbolism of the still enigmatical Tarot cards, by providing parallels in a symbolism with which we are familiar. The better understood language as we seek something corresponding to the Rosetta Stone. This will be a series of attributions of planets and signs to the cards which is clearly appropriate, and at the same time logical and meaningful in itself.

One field in which it certainly needs to be introduced is that of the order of the cards themselves. Ever since Court de Gebelin first focused enlightened occult attention on the Tarot, in France shortly before the French revolution, there has been an intuitive conviction that there is a correct sequence of the cards, and that this sheds light on their deeper meanings and relationships one with another: in most published Tarot books one particular order has been accepted as the customary or traditional one, and the majority of card users accept that it has the authority of immemorial antiquity behind it. A.E. Waite, however, in *Shadows of Life and Thought* has claimed that this order dates no earlier than 1830, and points out that when Court de Gebelin published the cards in the 8th volume of his Encyclopaedia, *Le Monde Primitif* no numbers were assigned to them. Moreover, the 18th century cartomancer Etteila, who used the sequence from the modern, well-known one. If the presently accepted order is correct, therefore, its justification still requires to be conclusively demonstrated. The correct sequence must be revealed when the correct correlation of the Tarot with astrological symbolism is arrived at, because invariable sequence is an inescapable characteristic of the latter.

The first systematic attempt to shed light on the cards with astrological help was made by the French occultist Eliphas Levi. He assigned the 22 Trumps in the order now accepted as traditional to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in alphabetical order. This at once made an astrological comparison possible since a Rabbinical tradition of attribution of the letters to planets and signs for Kabbalistical reasons had been in existence for centuries. The Hebrew alphabet consists of 12 simple letters, 7 double letters (each with two sounds, one hard, the

other soft or aspirated) and 3 letters called Mother letters. This obviously invites astrological attribution, and sure enough the 12 simple letters are assigned to the 12 signs, in the order in which they appear in the alphabet, beginning with Aries and following through in sequence to Pisces, the 7 Holy planets are assigned to the double letters, and 3 of the 4 elements (Air, Fire and Water) are assigned to the Mothers. ⁽¹⁾

Unfortunately, the light shed upon the Tarot by Levi's direct paralleling of cards and letters did not give much illumination. There is no space here to tabulate every correspondence it produces, but some examples from the signs will give a general idea. The Tarot card called the Moon is assigned to Aquarius, the Sun to Pisces, and the High Priest or Hierophant is paired with Aries. Something is clearly wrong somewhere. [iii]

The next step was taken by the English occult group known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This group pointed out that the Tarot cards, in the order now accepted as traditional, are not numbered from 1 to 22, but from 0 to 21. There was, therefore, room for difference of opinion on where the card numbered 0 should be placed. Levi had begun with card 1 making 1 to correspond with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and continued in order as far as card 21, corresponding with the 20th letter. At that point, however, he inserted card 0 correspond with the 21st letter, and made card 21 correspond with the 21st letter. The Golden Dawn decided this was a bind (it does seem a rather strange procedure) and began instead with card 0, counting through them in order to 21. On examination of the correspondences thus produced, they further decided that cards 8 and 11 had been wrongly numbered in the series and transposed them.

This produces a series which just begins to suggest that sense is somewhere in sight. To take a few examples from the signs once again the card called Strength, now numbered 8 (formerly 11), which shows a woman opening the jaws of a Lion, is assigned to Leo; while Justice, now numbered 11 (formerly 8), which shows a woman holding the scales, is assigned to Libra. Moreover, Death, the skeleton with the scythe, is assigned to Scorpio. Although this arrangement has almost become accepted as sacrosanct by modern followers of the Golden Dawn tradition, uncommitted critics cannot help noticing many very doubtful parallels which still remain. The Moon, for instance, is assigned to Pisces, a very unconvincing attribution, and the Chariot a card with much solar symbolism in it, to Cancer, while the High Priest, or Hierophant, is aligned with Taurus, with which he would appear to have very little to do.

There is also reason of another kind for feeling dissatisfied with the Golden Dawn attributions. There is a lack of consistency in them to the conceptual pattern on which they are supposed to be based. I have already mentioned the switching of cards 8 and 11. That was a departure from the accepted order of the cards on the bases of the system. No one would object to that if adherence to the other bases had been all the more rigid but this was not the case. There was also a departure from the rabbinical tradition. The traditional assignment of the 12 simple letters to the zodiacal signs was followed exactly, but when it came to the planets such very doubtful correlations with the Tarot cards were produced that it was felt some change had to be made. One would have thought that consistency would have dictated a further modification to the accepted order of the cards, but; instead of that, it was decided to

¹ One might be excused for wondering why the three modes, Cardinal, Fixed and Mutable; were not chosen instead of only three of the elements. The three chosen, however, correspond to root potencies which ultimately find their field of manifestation in the fourth, Earth, and they have, moreover, been found more recently to correlate remarkably with the three "new" planets, Uranus, Pluto and Neptune, supposed exoterically to have been unknown to the ancients.

abandon the rabbinical order of assignment of planets to letters. The justification given was the same as that for departing from Levi's placement of the card 0: The rabbinical list was stated to be a blind.

Now, it is true that blinds do occur in ancient occult MSS; however, there is strong reason for thinking that in this case the *Sepher Yetzirah* (the rabbinical document dating from the 2nd century AD. which is the source-book of this tradition) was not making one. The order it gives for the planets is as follows: Sun, Venus Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, with a pair of opposite meanings assigned to each one corresponding to the double letter with which each is paired.

These pairs of opposites are:

Sun: Life and Death
Venus: Peace and War
Mercury: Wisdom and Folly
Moon: Riches and Poverty [iv]
Saturn: Grace and Indignation
Jupiter Fertility and Sterility
Mars: Power and Servitude

In changing the planetary order to agree better with the Tarot cards, the Golden Dawn left these pairs of meanings assigned of the letters, but changed the planets correlated with them. As a consequence, the following arrangement resulted:

Mercury Life and Death
Moon: Peace and War
Venus: Wisdom and Folly
Jupiter. Riches and Poverty
Mars: Grace and indignation
Sun: Fertility and Sterility
Saturn: Power and Servitude

It will, I think be agreed that these meanings are less appropriate astrologically to this order of the planets than they are to the original rabbinical order. Moreover - and far more important - the Golden Dawn planetary order is meaningless in itself whereas the rabbinical one is not. It is the old Chaldean order based on the relative orbital periods of the planets, well known to astrologers as the planetary hour series, from which, indirectly the order of the days of the week is derived. Nor is this the only rabbinical document which used this order. The *Sepher Sephiroth*, as signing the planets to the well-known occult diagram called the "The Tree of Life", uses it beginning with Saturn, as follows: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Strangely enough I have never found this order noticed or recognized for what it is in any commentary on either the Tree of Life or the Tarot Cards, though it leaps to the eye of any astrologer. I am afraid the fact has to be faced that many "authorities" in the occult field - including some who made pronouncements which it is now almost considered heresy to question - really lacked needful basic astrological qualifications.

Clearly a problem like this should have been tackled only by persons skilled in astrology. Occult or Kabbalistical knowledge was, of course, necessary as well, but not enough by itself, for what was being attempted was professedly a correlation of the little known with the well-known. In the cases so far dealt with, however, those trying to solve the conundrum were occultists hoping to use the Tarot as an adjunct to Kabbalistical studies whose knowledge of astrology was really only just sufficient to mislead them into thinking that what they were

trying to do was something easy. As a result, they perpetrated astrological howlers, both in their correlations and, as just demonstrated by not recognizing an important planetary order, which they therefore altered into something meaningless. The task of correlating the Tarot with astrological symbolism is actually not easy. It cannot be accomplished by any quick obvious paralleling of two given series, as in the attempts described. The more one studies the Tarot, the more one realized that many cards all seem to bear symbolism which points in one astrological direction, and that the whole pack is questionably interlinked by some not by any means as yet fully understood system of relationships. One cannot hope for a solution to the enigma save from a Kabbalist who is also a really able astrologer with deep understanding of the profound aspects of astrological symbolism.

The nearest approach to this desideratum we have had so far is the work of [v] Elbert Benjamine, published under the pseudonym, C.C. Zain, in his book, *The Sacred Tarot*. Benjamine was unquestionably a first rate astrologer, as students of his many books will agree, and he also had the requisite intuitional attunement with the cards, using the Egyptian form of the designs which he insisted, on the ground of several different lines of occult tradition and authority to which he had access to be the originals [2] in addition he had an exceedingly wide general acquaintance with the whole occult field and with the basic Kabbalistical tradition. One writer of the Golden Dawn school has tried to cast doubt upon this, describing his Kabbalism as somewhat unorthodox to say the least" and then, after quoting some of his attributions adding the single comment "most of which seem difficult to justify". [3] However, he makes not the least attempt to examine them in detail nor to go into the grounds on which they were based. I hope to show that they were based on quite solid ground Kabbalistically, and also that, taken as a whole, they make far more sense astrologically than the Golden Dawn series.

Benjamine rejected both the Levi and the Golden Dawn attributions *in toto*, together with the modern, "improved" packs of cards and all designs save the Egyptian ones. The others he felt reflected Christian or Mohammedan - influences upon the underlying tradition - where they had not in fact been redrawn to suit some particular interpretation; however, he did not begin entirely from scratch. He accepted the traditional order of the cards, as Levi did in assigning the cards to the Hebrew letters beginning with card 1 for the first letter.

This would appear at first sight of course, to involve him in Levi's system of astrological attributions based on the rabbinical ones to the letters, but Benjamine had seen beneath the surface. The *Sepher Yetzirah* assigns not only an astrological sign or planet to each of the single and double letters, but also a direction. Examination of these makes it clear that a cube is being described whose 12 edges are the 12 zodiacal signs, while the 6 faces and centre are the planets. I give his diagram exactly as it is described in the *Sepher Yetzirah* in Wynn Westcott's translation (4) of the Hebrew text published by Johannes Stephanus Rittangelius in 1642 at Amsterdam, save for one correction made by Paul Foster Case. The latter edition of his own

² By some, these are attributed to the Comte de Saint Germaine; and it is undeniable that a version of the Egyptian designs is associated with the latter, but it would seem probable that he did not originate these himself. More likely he, too, recognized in them the authentic tradition and in consequence, gave the sanction of his name to them.

³ See Gareth Knight, "A Practical Guide to Kabbalistic Symbolism", (*Helios*, 1965), Vol. II, page 229.

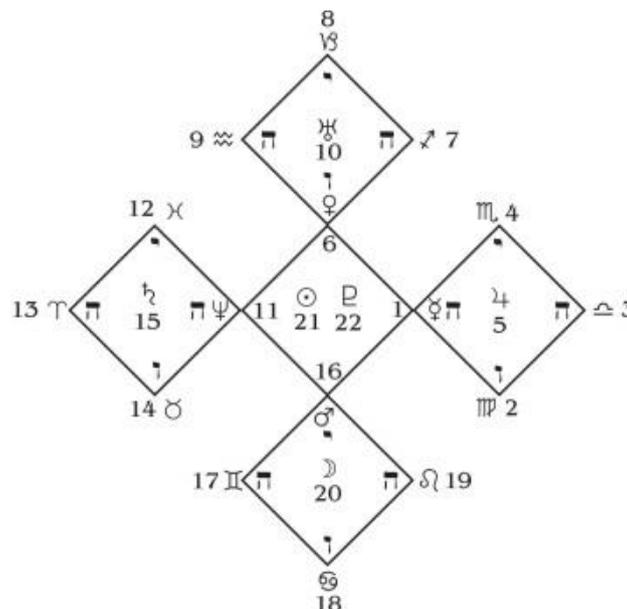
⁴ Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893. There are a number of different translations of the *Sephir Yetzirah* extant, based on different ancient manuscript, and these offer variant readings in certain important sections. The Westcott version is usually held to be the best as it was produced by a scholar who was also an occultist and who, Therefore, appreciated the deeper significances in what he was translating. Benjamine does not explicitly identify the version he used, but on pages 13-14 of *The Sacred Tarot*, he specifies the number of sections in each chapter, viz. Chapter 1-12 sections, Chapters II and III--each 5 sections, Chapter IV-4 sections, Chapter V--3 sections and Chapter VI-4 sections. This makes it unequivocal that it was Westcott's,

work of the Tarot ⁽⁵⁾, but later discovered that the correct reading of the text places Scorpio on SW and Libra on NW and not vice versa as in Westcott (see figure 1)

It will be seen that a planet is assigned to each face and one (Mars) to the centre. I have followed the rabbinical planetary order exactly as it is given in placing them, and it interesting that when one does this, light is at once thrown on a well-known Kabbalistical mantra connected with the archangels of the planets. The archangels of Mercury, the Sun, Moon and Venus are respectively Raphael, Michael, Gabriel and Auriel, and in the ritual of the Kaballistic Cross these are mentioned in the order Raphael-Gabriel; Michael-Auriel. It is usual nowadays to say the ritual in the form: "Before me Raphael, behind me Gabriel; on my right Michael, on my left Auriel" This, however; makes the ritual all take place in one plane, whereas originally it was obviously intended to be a cross formed by the intersection of the horizontal plane by the vertical, and on the cube this is what it is. Mercury (Raphael is placed in the east face and the Moon (Gabriel) in the west The Sun (Michael) is above and Venus (Auriel below. The form of the second half of the ritual must; therefore, originally have been, "Above me Michael and below me Auriel (Not much doubt of this can remain when one remembers that Auriel is also the archangel of the Earth.) The [vi] transition to saying the ritual as if it described a flattened cross in the horizontal plane possibly occurred when Kabbalists moved from low to high latitudes and the Sun appeared to culminate in the South rather than above, but no hint of whether in the cross or flat plane form, is given when the planets are placed on the cube in the "amended" Golden Dawn order.

No directions are assigned to the Mother letters. It has been suggested that these correspond with the three diagonals joining the 6 faces, and this is possible; it is entirely a modern suggestion, however to the old Kabbalists, the Mother letters were distinctly something separate.

Benjamin's brilliant intuition was to use as basis for astrological correspondences to the cards a figure known as the Grand Pentagram. This he illustrates on page 132 of the Sacred Tarot and I reproduce it here.



⁵ "The Tarot", by P F Case (New York, 1947), Macoy Publishing Co.

It will be perceived that it is a figure which resembles a box or cube which has been slit down the edges and then laid out flat, with the sides adhering only at the corners. It is actually not, but it bears an indirect relationship to, the Kaballistic Cube of Space and is from one point of view a symbolic astrological projection of it. Astrologers will recognize a resemblance to the old square type of horoscope figure so dear to the 19th century English astrology of the Raphael school-and this is indeed the key to it. The signs appear in regular order round the figure on the outside corners of the 4 outer squares, beginning with Aries where one would expect to find the 1st house cusp and ending with Pisces on the 12th house cusp. The planets occupy the spaces, apart from 4 which are assigned to inside corners.

One must now take note of words which appear on page 7 of *The Sacred Tarot*. The author of these lessons is not "modest about his acquaintance with the unwritten Kabala," Benjamin. writes, "he has received it fully and has also investigated the written traditions of the Jews." And this seems the proper place to point out that the unwritten Kabala, like the written Kabala, is set forth in symbolic language, with purposed blinds and subterfuges to confuse The uninitiated. We must not, therefore, expect the main key which unlocks the arcanum to have been delivered to us absolutely explicitly. We ourselves have to work out how it fits-and the essential information to enable us to do this has been given.

The horoscope, we know, bears a symbolic relationship to the four quarters of the Earth and Heavens. Its four quadrants, each of three signs, being successively those of the East, South, West and North are, therefore, set forth as squares in the Grand Pentagram diagram. The cube, exactly similarly, is a symbolic picture of the universe as perceived from a particular point in space ⁽⁶⁾ and I have already referred above to the relation of the planets placed in each face to the symbology of the archangels of the different directions. The signs elaborate on the same theme in a very illuminating way. Thus, the first two signs in the western part of the horoscope, and of the Grand Pentagram, are Aries and Taurus, and these appear as vertical boundaries of the west face of the cube. The next two, Gemini and Cancer, are in the next (The southern) quadrant of the horoscope and Pentagram -i.e., in a different "dimension"; therefore, they are shown on the cube as the horizontal boundaries, above and below, which complete the first face. The next succeeding two signs, Leo and Virgo; which lead from the southern to the western quadrant of horoscope and pentagram (one being in each), are also shown as horizontal boundaries on the cube, but as those of a different face ⁽⁷⁾ as we now move round the cube: Following them are Libra and Scorpio, the two main signs (cardinal and fixed) [vii]

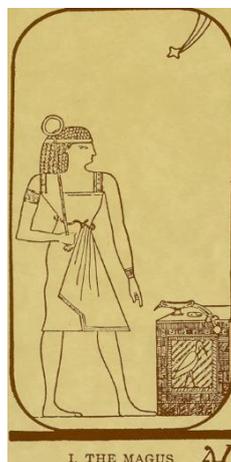
⁶ It is well to remember that although the only accurate projection of the world around us must really be circular or spherical (for this reason modern horoscopes are always drawn as circles), still the prime directions are all at right angles to one another and appear to be perceived by us as straight lines. Therefore, it is also true to say that, in a sense, we also experience the universe in rectilinear mode, and the tendency of the conscious mind is, in fact always to impose linear coordinates upon the fluid curve of visual sensory perception. These, when joined by other straight lines, produce the square or cube figure and this is not really a distortion of actuality, but an accurate diagram of an interior reality, i.e., the mind's own logical interpretation of experience. So long as one realizes what one is doing, it is a perfectly admissible figure to use, one which permits of ready symbolic compartmentalizing of ideas and perceptions, and it was for this reason that the square type of horoscope figure was preferred by all the old astrologers, from medieval times up to the end of the 19th century.

⁷ This is the northern face of the cube, whereas the quadrant of the horoscope is the southern one, but this "discrepancy" is not real but solely the result of the different symbolic approach (3 dimensional on the cube) to picturing the one reality. The actual direction of motion which is pictured round both figures, cube and pentagram, is exactly the same, i.e., anti-clockwise, but since the cube is three dimensional, it must picture the greater movement of the Heavens, that of precession, which turns from east to north Instead of south. The comparatively two-dimensional human affairs pictured by the two-dimensional horoscope are concerned only with the Earth's orbital motion, turning from east to south.

of the western quarter, and these therefore, appropriately bound the western face of the cube as verticals and exact complements of Aries and Taurus on the eastern face. Sagittarius and Capricorn then are the horizontal boundaries, above and below, of this face, complements of Gemini and Cancer; as once again there is a southern quadrant. Finally, Aquarius and Pisces mark the last shift round the cube and the move from the southern back to the eastern quadrant of the horoscope and pentagram, completing the last face of the cube, as it were, in a manner calculated to remind us constantly (since it is a symbol of the All) that the fundamentals of life are three dimensional, and not two dimensional.

Now the Grand Pentagram, thus shown to be a valid symbolical relative of the cube, leads to a correlation with the Tarot cards, when these are placed upon it commencing at the western side (corresponding to the near face of the cube), which is of the greatest interest and which has none of the forced qualities of the Levi and Golden Dawn series. First, however, one must note the way the planets are assigned. This is as follows: Commencing with the right-hand square, one planet (Mercury) is assigned to the corner of it where it touches the central square. This is the start of the whole series. It is followed by the signs Virgo, Libra and Scorpio round the outer corners and then the planet Jupiter is assigned to the centre of the square. The procedure is, the same round each of the other outside squares: first of all, a planet assigned to the inside corner and then three signs to the outside ones, and finally another planet is the centre. At the end of the entire series the Sun and Pluto are assigned to the centre of the inside square. The Tarot cards are now assigned to the figure in the same sequence, beginning with the Magician or Juggler assigned to Mercury and continuing through in their traditionally accepted order. It will be observed that the three outer planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, appear on the figure. These take the place of the three elements, Air, Water and Fire, of the rabbinical tradition, as I have mentioned in a footnote above. The full justification of the substitution will appear when the corresponding Tarot cards are discussed in the course of the exposition of all the cards, in the sequence corresponding to the Grand Pentagram schema, which I propose to embark on now.

Having now demonstrated the Kaballistic basis of his system and shown that Benjaminé's assignments were no mere caprice on his part, I propose to examine each astrological correspondence produced with brief comment. I think this will be the first time this has been attempted by an outside commentator, and it will be a justice long overdue to Benjaminé. Many commentaries and meditations on the inner meanings of the Golden Dawn and Levi attributions exist, but the Benjaminé ones, being supposed to be arbitrary, have been neglected. How much has been lost through this mistaken belief may now appear.



Card I The Magician
Attribution: Mercury

This is a highly appropriate attribution since, in Tarot, the Magician clearly symbolizes the conscious mind and conscious focusing of attention. The Golden Dawn attribution, using the amended (non-rabbinical) order of the Planets, is also to Mercury. [viii]



Card II: Isis or The High Priestess
Attribution: Virgo

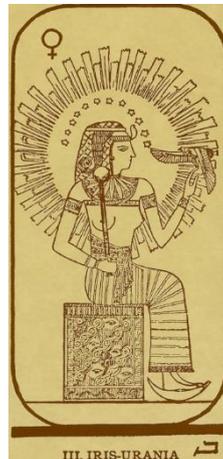
This is also highly appropriate. The figure of Isis as depicted in Egyptian mythology passed in Christian times, without the slightest modification, into acceptance as the standard mode of portrayal of the Virgin Mary.

Certain titles describing different types of mental approach or intelligence given to the Hebrew letters by the ancient rabbis are illuminating in connection with the Tarot attributions. They, together with the indications of position on a cube which indirectly correlates with his own system attributions were undoubtedly Benjamine's reasons for retaining the assignment of cards to letters, even though he rejected the prima fascia astrological attributions which seemed to go with them. In this case the title is "Intelligence of Transparency". In an unsuitable sense this might be taken as a reference to the semi-transparent veil worn by Isis. In a deeper sense it points unmistakably to the Virgin as the one through whom God passes into the world.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to the Moon, and the Moon is certainly also associated with both Isis and the Virgin. There is no other card with which the sign Virgo can be placed as appropriately as with this one, however, the Moon herself and the other her archangel, with which the Moon can convincingly be associated. As will be seen later the Benjamine series leads to a direct pairing with appropriate lunar symbolism in both these cases; the traditionally hallowed association of Isis with the Virgin, therefore, may confidently be taken to be more correct in this case.

Thus, we have the first card paired with Mercury as the positive, self-conscious aspect of the mind, and the second complementarily with Mercury's negative sign, symbolizing experience, classifying and storing everything in the great computer of Memory. Indeed, sub-consciousness is far more efficient than any computer that has ever been designed, for she runs every minute detail of the automatic workings of our bodily organisms, breathing,

temperature maintenance, heartbeat, digestion and assimilation, and countless other functions; but being a woman, she is, like a woman, and must be treated as one. No one who attempts to bully and browbeat his body will get the best response from it, whereas a confident suggestion that one, trusts it to look after its own business, together with considerate respect for its rhythm-her rhythms-produces perfect co-operation. [ix]



Card III: The Empress or Isis Unveiled
Attribution: Libra

The appropriateness of this attribution is strongly brought out by the rabbinical title, "the Uniting Intelligence". To bring together, form relationships, and unite is the special characteristic of the sign Libra. As the Empress, Isis is here manifesting in her role as queen or ruler, and it is well known that female rulership is always at its best when exercised in the Libran way, with tact and charm and instinctive avoidance of too much bluntness and directness. The Golden Dawn attribution is to Venus, which is also appropriate to the rabbinical title. One may question, however whether the Empress does not portray a woman more mature and responsible than the young [x] Queen of Love. An Empress is one who can hold the scales or balances, i.e., dominion and competent to administer justice. Libra suggests all of this, Venus none of it. The title, "the Uniting Intelligence", also hints at the character of Libra as the sign which binds the northern or summer signs of the zodiac to the southern or winter ones at the autumnal equinox, reuniting them, as it were, as the complement to the sword of Aries which divided them at the start of a new year, six months before.

As Benjamin points out, the first four Tarot arcane bear a symbolic relation to the letters of Tetragrammaton, J H V H, or YOD (or JOD) HEH VAU HEH the Name of God usually corresponds to the letter Jod which means "a hand and which is written as a tiny flame-like character poised well above the line down to which all the other letters are brought. It is depicted in the design of the card itself in the Magician's upraised hand holding a wand. Veiled Isis, or the High Priestess, then corresponds to Heh, a window or opening through which one can see. She sits in just such an opening--not the door (Daleth) of the Temple, but the porch or loggia before it--through which, once the veil is parted, one can see the true door. The Empress, or Isis Unveiled, corresponds to Vau, a nail or link, i.e., something which joins or unites. She pictures, in fact the marital state; and is the High Priestess after her union with the

Magician, the negative united with the positive, the "woman clothed with the Sun" of Revelation 12:1 (⁸1)



Card IV: The Emperor or Sovereign Attribution: Scorpio

Card IV, the Emperor, corresponds to the final Heh, the appropriateness of which is set forth in the next section.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Aries, which is not a bad attribution for the mate of the Empress and would have been even better had the Golden Dawn attributed Libra to her instead of Venus; however, when one comes to consider the symbolism of the card, in a more overall sense there are the serious drawbacks to a correlation of Aries with it. The sign is too headstrong and lacking in mature sense of responsibility to befit an emperor. More fixity is needed, and Scorpio is also better because the figure depicted here stands not only for rulership, but also for the embodiment of male sex potency. The rabbinical title is "the Luminous Intelligence" and the reasons given for this, though obscure, also seem to have a flavour of Scorpio about them. They are: because it is that brightness which is the founder of the concealed and fundamental ideas of holiness; and of their stages of preparation. The Word "Luminous", moreover, immediately brings to mind the correspondence of Card IV with the final Heh (window) of J H V H. For the Emperor is both the sex power (Scorpio) and also the sovereign power of Reason, which sees (understands). The alchemical sublimation of the sex power, in addition, eventually leads to complete illumination of the mind

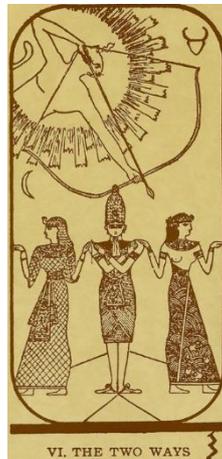
⁸ The full text of Revelation 12:1-2 is an exact description of Card III: "a woman clothed with the sun and the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child...."



Card V: The High Priest or Hierophant
Attribution: Jupiter

This is an excellent attribution--far better than the Golden Dawn one to Taurus, a fixed earth sign, which is almost impossible to justify convincingly. Jupiter has always been associated in astrology with priests and hierarchies.

The rabbinical title is "the Constituting Intelligence" so called because It constitutes the substance of creation in pure darkness, and many have spoken of the contemplations--a description which is illuminated more by meditation than by comment upon it. The meaning of Jupiter as expansion should be kept in mind, for; essentially, this card deals with the processes of expansion of consciousness.



Card VI: The Lovers or The Two Paths
Attribution: Venus

Another excellent attribution, far better than the Golden Dawn one to Gemini despite the alternative title for the card. A far better location for Venus, the Queen of Love, than the Empress, which is the Golden Dawn's choice as we have seen. This is not the purely mental duality or diffuseness of Gemini. The design shows woman in two guises, virtuous and uplifting; and sensual and degrading, both appealing for the love of a man.

The rabbinical title, "the Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence", is astonishingly apposite, both in its suggestion of the eternal power of attraction which woman exerts over man, and because

it should be remembered that Venus, as Ishtar, was the ancient Chaldean Goddess of Victory. The reasons given are: "because it is the pleasure of the Glory, beyond which is no other Glory like to it, and it, is called also the Paradise prepared for the righteous". The use of the word "pleasure" makes the Venus attribution unarguable.



**Card VII: The Chariot or The Conqueror (sometimes called the Chariot of Osiris)
Attribution: Sagittarius**

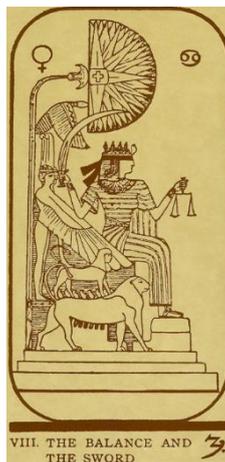
Medieval designs for this card are full of unmistakable solar symbolism. The cart is drawn by two horses, one black and one white (always prominent in solar mythology), and the wheels of the vehicle are set curiously aslant, suggesting that, as the horses pull it, it is being caused to swing in an orbit rather than be drawn directly forward. The Egyptian design leaves out the slanted wheel symbolism and the cart is drawn by two sphinxes instead of horses; a starry canopy over the driver's head and a winged solar disc on the front of the vehicle still convey the same meaning, however. To appreciate the appropriateness of the attribution of Sagittarius to this card, one has to understand the deeper meaning of the centaur symbol. It is not merely a portrayal of the animal in man: it is an intimation that man's physical vehicle (the upper part of the centaur body, and the chariot in the Tarot card) is both supported and propelled by solar energy. If one looks at the position of Sagittarius on the cube, moreover, one sees that it is one of the edges bordering the top face, attributed to the Sun, and that Leo is just to the left of it. Sagittarius is the sign which gives wings to the energy of the Sun, or transforms it into the power of the arrow, and in this connection it is interesting that it has proved to be the sign most prominent in the charts of astronauts, whose rockets must always follow orbital paths to their destinations.

The Golden Dawn attribution of the card is to Cancer, which seems to have little to recommend it. It has been justified on the ground that the Chariot a vehicle and this symbolizes the human body or physical vehicle which is an outer shell for the spirit, but while this is ingenious, it leaves out of account the traditional association of the Chariot with Osiris (a solar figure) and the general impression of vibrant [xii] power and movement given by the card much more than of embodiment. In the Benjamine series the sign Cancer falls in association with the card called the Moon, and this card carries connotation of restriction, darkness and difficulties. This surely reflects much more appositely the intuitive sense that the body is the limiting shroud of the spirit.

The rabbinical title is "the Disposing Intelligence". The reason given that it "provides Faith to the righteous, and they are clothed with the Holy Spirit by it", which may be a reference to

the more religious 9th house connotations of Sagittarius; the Chariot however, being of the first septenary of the Tarot trumps, tends to portray more of the exoteric than the esoteric and religious aspects. (In a general sense, the first seven cards portray the physical plane, the second seven the astral, and the third the spiritual)

We must not forget that the entire spiritual work of the Kaballah has also been called by kabbalists the work "of the Chariot". Man is not to limit and enclose the spirit (Cancer), but is to develop the ability to be a free and glorious vehicle for it on all planes.



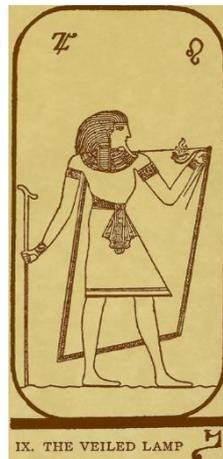
Card VIII: Justice or The Balance
Attribution: Capricorn

This is one case where Benjamin's attribution seems at first sight to be less appropriate than that of the Golden Dawn, which is to Libra, the Scales. However, it must also be admitted that in the actual administration and enforcement of justice Capricorn figures at least as much, if not more prominently than Libra, and it is this point which the Egyptian design seems to be bringing out. The figure of Justice carries a sickle shaped sword as well as the scales, and she sits on a raised dais with a lion at her side and a solar canopy over her head, reminding one that Capricorn is the natural sign of the meridian where the Sun reaches its point of culmination. A connection with the scales also exists by reason of the fact that Saturn, whose house this is, is exalted in Libra, Though Libra itself is rather the house of marriage than of Justice *per se*; thus, in this series, it appears in association with the Empress, as the consort of the Emperor. She may, or course, be the real power behind the throne, as Libran women so often are. The true faculty for seeing both side of a question, is a must for judging and making adjustments accordingly, is also Libran, for it is of the essence of that which harmonizes. Thus it is that which makes a true marriage work, as well as every other relationship or association from the most ephemeral group up to a kingdom or an empire.

Still, the external workings of Justice, meting out rewards and punishments, are Capricornian, and Capricorn is also known for ability to mediate between sides in an entirely practical way, as King Solomon does. It is the sign which appears by far the most frequently in the horoscopes of the popes for this very reason, the Papacy being primarily a pragmatic body mediating between conflicting movements and interests within the Church.

The rabbinical title is "Intelligence of the House of Influence" --"by the greatness of whose abundance the influx of good things upon created beings is Increased" --a clear reference to

the blessings which flow to men and nations from just, impartial and immovable Capricornian administration. [xiii]



Card IX: The Hermit or The Sage
Attribution: Aquarius

To understand the point of this assignment it is necessary to realize that the figure depicted is not a hermit in the popular sense of that term, i.e., a lonely anchorite, but one who has "attained" on the occult path: a "Hermetic". In the medieval Tarot packs it is true that misunderstanding of this fact has led the design to be modified into something resembling the conventional hermit figure, but in the Egyptian pack the true meaning cannot be missed. The man shown is mature, but not old, and instead of being swathed in the conventional cloak and cowl, he is in the act of divesting himself of a square grey cloak, representing material limitations (⁹)

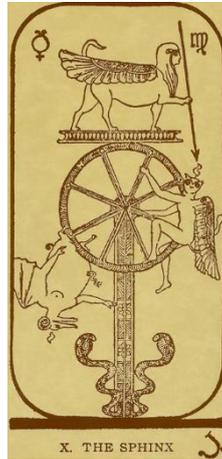
The first essential before there can be any advance on the occult path is the achievement of detachment, and this of course is the Aquarian trait par excellence; the hermetic does not retire from the world, however. On the contrary, he lives in it and may be approached by all, as was the Comte de Saint Germaine, the very type of the Tarot Hermit, or Sage. This too is Aquarian.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Virgo, which makes very much less sense, Virgo being above all the sign of the feminine, i.e., of woman and her mysteries and potential fruitfulness (the ear of corn); therefore, Benjamin's attribution of the High Priestess to this sign, or contrast, it is indeed, an inevitable falling into place in a correct astrological sequence). The only justification that could be advanced for the Virgo correlation is the fact that the sign does have a connection with knowledge and science, and it might, therefore, be argued that there in their ideal perfected form are the hermetic arcanum; the scientific knowledge with which Virgo is associated, however, is the precise analysis and classification of the things (fruits) of this world, and this is but "the Gate of the Sanctuary" (another name for the Arcanum, the High Priestess or Veiled Isis). The true Hermetic Arcanum is a spirituo-intellectual perception, achieved after all classifications have been completed, worked with and meditated upon, and

⁹ I am here describing the design in the Comte de Saint Germaine Egyptian pack, which Benjamin was also clearly referring to in his description of the card in "*The Sacred Tarot*," pages 207-208. The illustration given on page 194, however, while clearly not of a medieval hermit, is of another version of the authentic tradition showing the Sage wrapped in his material plane mantle, but preceded by the two serpents of wisdom.

of true place and function of each specific thing in a total spiritual-material creation. This is Aquarius.

The rabbinical title is "Intelligence of the Secret of All Spiritual Activities", which speaks for itself.



Card X: The Wheel of Fortune
Attribution: Uranus

With this card we reach the first of the attributions to the "new" planets. Uranus takes the place of the element Air in the old rabbinical scheme, which was assigned to the first of the Mother letters, Aleph. Benjamine assigns Mercury to Aleph, and Mercury representing lower mind, is thereby also closely associated with the element Air, which astrologically stands for mind in the general sense, it is of interest, therefore, that Uranus is generally considered to be the "higher octave" of Mercury. Standing here for "the Air of the Wise", its attribution to the Wheel of fortune is most interesting. Meanings which have been given to the Wheel are endless, or course. It is the Wheel of Samsara, of Karma, of rebirth, etc. Underlying all these ideas, however, is another more fundamental one: that of the cyclic nature of the machinery which keeps this manifested universe in being--and it is this which explains why Uranus is rightly attributed here.

What the nature of the essence of the ultimate source of our universe is, we can [xiv] never know. It is incomprehensible by us. Whenever it presents itself to us in a comprehensive form, however, it is as ultimate mind. This was why the ancient rabbis assigned that first mother letter to air. And we now in our quest for understanding of the nature of mind and of the laws which govern the universe, make use of the Uranian faculties at the very limits of human mentation --"mind at the end of its tether", in fact.

It was the discovery of Uranus by Herschel which led humanity to a correct apprehension of the nature and size of the solar system, while studies of perturbations in the orbit (wheel) of this planet led Adams and Leverrier to the discovery of Neptune, and Later on Lowell, Pickering and Tombaugh to that of Pluto.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Jupiter, a planet without known associations with rotation in any form, actual or symbolical, and associated astrologically only with booms, expansion and growth generally, never with ups and downs. Uranus, on the other hand, has always been notorious as the planet of revolution --the turning of that wheel on which the destinies both

of nations and of individuals are spun. It brings down the rich and highly placed and exalts the obscure and lowly. And though the apostles of gradualism try desperately to forestall it's sickening lurch by reform and planned progress (Jupiter), no prediction is more sure that revolutions, like earth- quakes, will continue to occur--unpredictably (Uranus).

The rabbinical title is "Intelligence of Will", a most appropriate title to be correlated with Uranus since it is by means of intense, dominating will that the Uranian always pursues his objectives, with complete disregard of all accepted authority or tradition.



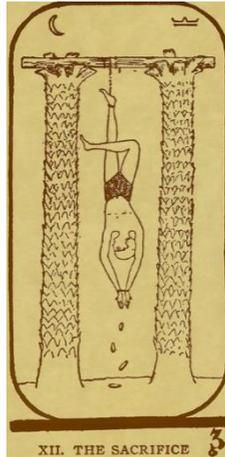
Card XI: Strength or The Enchantress
Attribution: Neptune

This is the second attribution to a "new" planet and Neptune, in this case, stands in place of the element Water, which was assigned by the rabbis to the second Hebrew Mother letter, Mem. Benjamine assigns Aries to Mem, which might seem on the face of it to be a rather startling reversal of the symbolism; but I shall have to postpone discussion of the justification for this till a little later on.

The card we are dealing with here shows a young girl robed in white, calmly opening the jaws of a red lion. It was one of the cards transposed out of the traditional order by the Golden Dawn, who wished to make it correspond with Leo; Benjamine, however, assigning Neptune to it as representative of the Water of the Wise, says the girl is demonstrating mystical self-control over her own animal nature through complete sublimation or reversal of all unregenerate motives and attainment of complete purity. This has led to Nature recognizing her with the ability to rule the animal kingdom, typified by the lion as the king of beasts.

Neptunian's do, occasionally, have this apparently uncanny power over animals as the result of a natural ability to form a link with them upon subconscious levels--the realm of the element water.

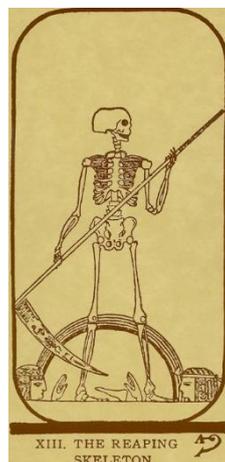
The rabbinical title is "the Rewarding Intelligence," the reason given for it being that it "is so called because it received the divine influence which flows into it from its benediction upon all and each existence." This clarity refers to water and to Neptune. In the medieval packs, the girl wears a lemniscate hat or has an infinity symbol over her head; in the Egyptian pack, however, she wears a headdress consisting of a dove and a small pitcher of water.



Card XII: The Hanged Man or The Martyr
Attribution: Pisces

This is a clearly appropriate attribution to the sign of self-undoing and self-sacrifice. The rabbinical title is "the Faithful Intelligence," and the reason given for this, makes a clear reference to the cross upon which all spirit hangs while in incarnation on the physical plane. It runs: "and it is so called because by its spiritual virtues are increased, and all dwellers on earth are nearly under its shadow."

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Water, and it is pointed out that Water was the first mirror. The Hanged Man hangs head downwards like a reversed minor image, symbolizing the inverted condition of spirit while it is incarnated in matter. This is also appropriate, of course. The sacrificial motif which is so strong an element in the design is better caught by the Pisces attribution, however.



Card XIII: Death or The Reaper
Attribution: Aries

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Scorpio, which has an obvious superficial appropriateness. This group's attribution of Aries is to the Emperor, so the two series transpose in these two cards. Benjamine justifies his assignment here by pointing out first of all that every death is really a birth or beginning of a new cycle. The scythe or sickle (cycle) carried by Death is really a reminder of this from the first moment of life we begin to die, and are always in death while in physical existence until we awaken to spirit.

There are deeper reasons for the assignment, however, as follows: Aries and Libra are the two crosses in the Zodiac. In them the Sun crosses the equator, moving from south to north declination in Aries and from north to south in Libra. Libra corresponds to the Empress in this series, and the movement from north to south declination symbolizes a coming into manifestation via, physical birth or generation. (the Empress is the consort of the Emperor, Symbol of masculine sex potency, and is herself depicted as pregnant) Aries, representing motion in the opposite direction, therefore, symbolizes the process of spirit regaining its freedom in the normal and ordinary course of events via death, but ultimately and ideally via regeneration and transformation. Its emblem is an uplifted sword, an inversion of the Calvary cross of suffering on the material plane and symbol of the transforming Mars force consciously directed.

The association of the letter Mem, to which the card is assigned, with Water now needs to be clarified, Aries is a fire sign--the cardinal fire sign. The Hebrew letter--name, Mem, has the signification "waters, seas." Fire and Water are combined here, then, and the blending of these two is the innermost secret of the alchemical process of Transmutation. The first step on the road to discovering the secret is made by learning how to act upon the universal solvent, the Water of the Wise, Astral Matter complete "realization" of the matter (i.e., intellectually and in the sense of outer achievement) is accomplished when a Spiritual (Fire) body has been built and one can cooperate in full consciousness on all planes, expressing the Spirit (Fire) right down into the material world through the medium of the Water.

The rabbinical title is "the Stable intelligence," reference to this blending which "fixes" both elements. (It is worth adding that, quite apart from this deeper meaning, in the ordinary course of events death ushers each one of us, evolved or unevolved, [xvi] out of this material plane into the plane of astral matter, Water.).

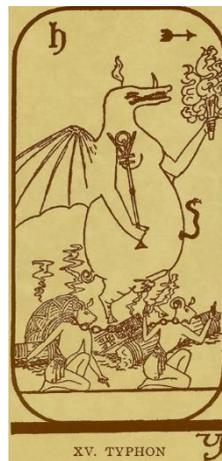


Card XIV: Temperance or The Alchemist
Attribution: Taurus

The design shows a Solar angel pouring water from a golden vase held in his left hand into a silver one held in his right. The meaning is alchemical and is a further development of the theme of the blending of opposites or complementaries. The attribution to Taurus points to the need to make the physical body a true vehicle for the expression of spirit (Gold) -- i.e., one conventionalized cows' horn, the earliest form of drinking vessel, and it stands here for that into which the Divine influx is poured.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Sagittarius. This is justified by claiming that the old meaning of the title, Temperance, was tempering in the sense in which one tempers metals, and by pointing to the Sagittarian's proverbial exploring, foraging and testing propensities. There is, no doubt, some truth in the claim in connection with the title, but the design of the card itself really does not suggest Sagittarius. There is nothing of either the Archer or the Centaur in it. It suggests far more the process by which the Spirit is poured from a higher vessel into a lower, and Taurus, as the astrological symbol par excellence of the physical body, clearly stands here for that vessel which must be tempered by being filled with the spirit

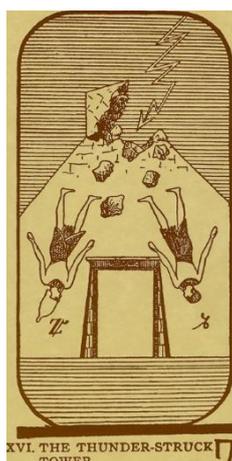
The Rabbinical title is "the Transforming Intelligence," a clear reference to the process which has just been outlined, as the reason given for it makes clear "And it is so called because it gives a likeness to all the similitude's which are created in like manner similar to its harmonious elegancies."



Card XV: The Devil or The Black magician
Attribution: Saturn

This assignment will appeal to many astrologers of the old Saturn-fearing school. Its wider justification rests on an interpretation of the design as the devil-of-false-appearances and the limitations imposed by the physical world, which have to be seen through and transcended. While he deludes, he possesses great and terrible negative power, but the bonds he seems to impose vanish when they are rightly apprehended, and his true function in the Divine scheme of things as the tester then appears. The Rabbinical title, "Intelligence of Probation," is in full confirmation of this as the [xvii] explanation shows: "it is so called because it is the primary temptation, by which the Creator trieth all righteous persons."

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Capricorn, which also introduces Saturn by sign rulership. Clearly, however, the direct attribution is preferable: Capricorn in itself is not a testing sign, but rather a formal and regulative one. Its ambition is always for slow-but-sure advance and progress. The perverted type occasionally manifests "capri-consciousness" --crude sexuality and a hard unfeeling attitude to- wards others --but this is not the crushing, inexorable weight and malevolence one associates with an adverse Saturn influence, and it is this latter which is so well portrayed by the Devil.



Card XVI: The Blasted Tower or The Lightning
Attribution: Mars

The Golden Dawn attribution is also to Mars. Medieval designs show a tall tower struck by lightning, the top, in the form of a crown, being knocked to one side by the bolt. Two figures, one crowned, the other bare-headed, supposed to represent pride and false knowledge, fall from the building. In The Egyptian Tarot the topmost point of a pyramid is struck off by the lightning and the two figures fall from a platform of 7 steps in front of it. Explanations of the picture have varied from the suggestion that it represents the Tower of Babel to more subtle psychological exoteric elucidations. For instance, the platform in the Egyptian design is said to represent seven orders in creation with man placed above them all, while the apex of the pyramid is supposed to picture the concentrated point of his questing, objective mind which, nevertheless, always has its base four-squarley and uncompromisingly planted on the material plane.

Had Benjamin's attributions been purely arbitrary, as is supposed, it would have been logical to expect him to assign Uranus here as the planet of lightning, since he was making use of the "new" planets; however, he did not, and the assignment to Mars is no accident. The explanation for it is a completely Hermetic one.

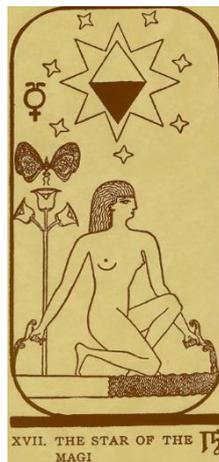
It will be remembered that on The cube, Mars does not occupy a face, but is placed in the centre. It represents that force which is central to the manifestation of the universe. Everything that exists is raised by it, whether it be a building of brick or stone, a structure of human pride or mental prowess, or the manifestation of male sexual potency. It is the natural power implanted by the Creator in the whole of Creation, which enables it to become aware and to be active.

Everything which raises itself from the surface of the Earth becomes a focusing point for the electrical energy in the atmosphere--in Hermetic parlance, for the energy of that sphere of "Air" encircling the Earth to which the Wheel of Fortune and Uranus are assigned. This gradually induces a charge of opposite-but-equal potential to its own in it. Eventually, when the structure is high enough and the electrical potential sufficiently strong, there is a spark. It is this very spark that Hermeticism aims to attract into the structure of human personality as the flash of illumination, after due preparation and with the proper precautions, by deliberate concentration of the Mars force --but when the spark comes, and there is no proper conduction of it into the earth because the personality has become insulated in some way, e.g., through

pride, selfishness, etc., then the results are destructive and the whole false structure is cast down. This is the situation depicted here.

Through the Tarot portrays this warning to the unwary and presumptuous, the [xviii] force involved is real and basically constructive. It is the creative force which eternally renews itself in every new life wherever propagated. It is possible for man to harness it and to attain illumination safely, but his sense of unity with others and dedication to serve them must first be perfected into second nature. The first nature of man is egocentric, as this card subtly suggests by its single tower or pyramid -- and that will not do.

The Rabbinical title is "the Renewing intelligence" --because the Holy God renews by it all the changing things which are renewed by the creation of the world."



Card XVII: The Star
Attribution: Gemini

Here, the design shows a young girl, completely nude, with long fair hair, kneeling and pouring water from two pitchers, one upon the land, the other upon the sea. Above her, seven small stars are clustered round a large central star of 8 points, inside which, in the Egyptian version, is a diamond figure, white at the top, black below, reminding one of the hermetic adage: "As above, so below, but after another manner." To her left in the medieval versions, there is a tree with a bird upon it. In the Egyptian pack, it is a flower with three blossoms, over which hovers a butterfly.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Aquarius, and the appropriateness of the water pouring from the pitchers is naturally pointed out. It is necessary to understand a little of the Hermetic meaning of the card, once again, to perceive the greater appropriateness of the attribution to Gemini.

Firstly, its position on the cube should be noted. It is at the top of the Eastern face, between the Sun and Mercury, and the design pictures the scene as an observer situated at that point might see it. The Sun is above (really in this case, it is the Interior Sun) and the girl is, of course, Venus, naked as she is always portrayed ("be- low" on the cube). Now, Mercury represents the principle of consciousness, which in Hermetic practice is to be combined with the Life Force (the Sun) and to direct it. Situated between the Sun and Mercury, therefore, this card represents the process whereby the mind becomes illuminated by the Life Force. This process

is actually meditation, which, as properly practiced, is a definite scientific technique for opening the mind to receive ideas which are not accessible to ordinary mentation.

In Astrology, of course, Gemini is the chief "house" of Mercury and represents the most objective manifestation of mind. Superficiality is also one of its characteristics. It is the sign of the butterfly mind, and the butterfly here shown is a reference to this. Nevertheless, we must remember that the Gemini symbol is two uprights with lintel and pediment. These are the two pillars at the entrance to the Temple. Those who pass them into the Temple of Hermeticism aim to still the butterfly of the mind and to allow the rays from the great Interior Sun to develop and bring to full activity all the 7 interior stars, or chakras, corresponding to the 7 planets, or stars shown on the card. The duality of Gemini is also referred to, indirectly in the two pitchers. The prime intellectual function that the sign stands for is the division of things into pairs which can then be distinguished, compared, interrelated, and so on. This is the beginning of knowledge, symbolized by the separation of the land from the sea, the "solid ground" from the chaos. And, to comprehend distinctions, the stream of consciousness is shown divided into two in these two urns, from which it pours equally upon both the two contrasted terms till the flow gradually unites again in the Great Ocean, Understanding. [xix]

The Rabbinical title is "The Active or Exciting Intelligence" --"and it is so called because through it every existent being receives its spirit and Motion."



Card XVIII: The Moon Attribution: Cancer

This is a highly felicitous attribution which needs no analysis of the Hermetic meaning of the card to make it clear. One might have thought it could not be missed, since the design, which is of the Moon shining on a gloomy landscape, even shows a crustacean climbing out of a pool in the foreground. The meaning is usually associated with sensationalism and morbid emotionality --Cancer characteristics. Yet, the Golden Dawn attribution is to Pisces, which misses all the lunar symbolism and does not have the same connotation of morbidity.

The Rabbinical title is "The Natural Intelligence." The explanation given is that "by it is completed and perfected the nature of all that exists beneath the Sun," a reference to the function of the moon as ruler of the body of all that reflects the Sun's rays.



Card XIX: The Sun
Attribution: Leo

This equally felicitous attribution also needs no Hermetic analysis to make it clear. The medieval designs show two children playing in a fairy-ring shaped like a solar symbol, with the bright Sun overhead. The Egyptian Tarot shows two lovers trysting in a similar ring. Both representations are as clear portrayals of the 5th house associations of Leo as one could wish for.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to the Sun, itself, (by use of their amended, non-Rabbinical, planetary order) but Leo is even better in view of the card design. The Rabbinical title is "The Corporeal Intelligence" -- "because it forms everybody which is formed in all the worlds, and The reproduction of them." (Could there be a clearer reference to the Sun in the 5th house?)



Card XX: The Judgement or The Sarcophagus
Attribution: Moon

The appropriateness of this is clear enough, since it is the Archangel Gabriel (Arch-angel of the Moon) who sounds his trumpet over the opening graves in the design. Medieval cards also show a square banner descending from the trumpet with an equal armed cross on it, symbol of the Moon Goddess Hecate. Some designs also show a large stretch of water --and sometimes even the coffins floating in water-- which is probably a reference to the Kabbalistical pool of Yesod, ruled by the Moon. The Golden Dawn attribution, however, is to the element Fire, since they attributed the card to the letter Shin, symbol of Fire. This of course,

brings together Water and Fire, as is required in Hermetic symbolism, but clearly it is wrong to attribute a design obviously correlated with Water to Fire. The correct procedure is that followed in the Benjamine series where the designs are always appropriate to the astrological or elemental symbols associated with them, but in which the Hermetic secret [xx] is hinted at by the assignment of the Hebrew letter Mem (Water) to Aries.

The Rabbinical title is "The Collective Intelligence" -- "and astrologers deduce from it the judgment of the stars and celestial signs, and perfect their science according to the rules of the motions of the stars." Here is an explicit reference to Judgment one of the titles of this card and in a most interesting context -- in connection with a perfected astrology. The inner meaning of the passage is revealed by what is pictured. The three figures whom rise from the tomb in the Egyptian card are wrapped in mummy cloths, which are, of course, long spirals representing time, and the three-dimensional coffin from which they are freed is similarly a symbol of three-dimensional space. They are, therefore, persons who are passing, either at death or by reason of conscious mystical development while still possessing a physical body, from the state of being limited to this physical plane and its conditions into the next higher plane.

This is the astral plane, symbolized by water, of which element Gabriel is also the archangel. Now, it is here that the influences dealt with in astrology exists as actual forces, and where, too, the results of our habitual patterns of acting and thinking exist as definite organized thought-cells (crystallized forms in astral matter patterned on our thoughts and activities) which are, in effect, the patterns of our personalities, predisposing us to certain ways of acting and thinking in the future, and also to particular types of experiences in life as other astrological forces act on, or interact with, these organized vortices. It is an important part of the training of an occultist to become aware of these thought-cell centres and to develop the ability to modify them consciously. In this way, as he also becomes fully conversant with the natures and rhythms of the Cosmic astrological forces --the "tides in the affairs of men" --he is gradually freed from slavery to his own crystallized past and learns to use the tides to achieve his own more enlightened purposes, instead of being the sport of fate and unforeseen circumstances like the majority of mankind. One who is able to be aware on the Astral and to act there with full understanding of his own surroundings is in a position to bring this science to final perfection, for he can actually see the centres and the astrological forces acting there. This Rabbinical text could hardly express this whole matter more plainly and succinctly, and when one is once aware of it, it is one of the most telling proofs of all of the correctness of the Benjamine sequence of attributions.



Card XXI: The World or The Adept
Attribution: Sun

Here a young girl appears within, or below, an oval wreath outside of which are placed the 4 beasts of Ezekiel's and St. John's visions. Usually, the meaning is taken to be Cosmic Consciousness.

Benjamin points out that the Sun is the source of all physical, mental and emotional power expressed here, and claims that the card represents perfection, union, and attainment in all three, and also in all the 4 worlds of the Kabbalists, symbolized by the 4 beasts. The Hebrew letter attributed is Shin, symbol of Fire or the Fiery Spirit, with which, of course, the Sun must be identified. The actual attribution of the element Fire is reserved for the next card, "The Fool," however.

The Golden Dawn attribution is to Saturn, because in the group's series this is the last card which, therefore, falls to be paired with the last planet in their amended planetary sequence, which Saturn is. The coupling (which at first sight may not un- [xxi] fairly be described as fantastic) is justified on the ground that the achievement of complete liberation and illumination while still in the physical body implies the fullest acquaintance with every aspect of limitation. This is, no doubt, true in general occult theory, of course, but surely the acquaintance with Saturn is not the final triumphant outcome of the matter, and one does not end with one's eyes firmly upon limitations. One comes to terms with these during the running of the race-- particularly, in Tarot symbology, during the sequence represented by cards 14 to 16, temperance, the Devil, and the Blasted tower, in which Saturn is central in the Benjamin scheme of attributions. The end of the matter is not lead, but alchemical gold, balanced rulership in all three spheres of man's kingdom of body, soul, and spirit, and only the Sun can symbolize this. The Golden Dawn attribution can really only be defended (answerably) in the Humpty Dumpty way by saying that what looks low to you is really highly exalted to me.

The Rabbinical title is "The Perpetual Intelligence" - "Because it regulates the motions of the Sun and Moon in their proper order, each in an orbit convenient for it" (One hardly needs to point to the appropriateness of this in view of the fact that all orbits in the Solar system depend on the Sun.) It is almost incredible to think that all of these Rabbinical titles have been attributed to different cards and astrological parallels by the Golden Dawn.



Card 0: The Fool or The Materialist

Attribution: Pluto

The Fool is really the Key card of the Tarot, and if one can arrive at a satisfactory attribution to it one will have achieved something which could be the clue to all the rest. It really all depends, of course, on where in the series it should be placed. The Golden Dawn system placed it first, and attributes it to Air (on the ground that the Latin "Follis" means both fool and windbag). In the Hermetic system, Air usually ranks as the primary element on the grounds that "all other elements take from and are maintained by Air," as Paracelsus wrote. There has, however, been a tendency in occult circles to challenge the primacy of Air in favour of that of Fire, taken as a synonym of electricity and, perhaps with Uranus's rulership of electricity in mind, some of the Golden Dawn followers now attribute Uranus to The Fool⁽¹⁰⁾ The design itself hardly suggests this attribution, though it must at once be stated that there are different versions of this. The traditional one shows an old blind man carrying a bundle over his shoulder pursued by a dog which has bitten him and torn his clothes. He is stumbling towards a precipice, or in the Egyptian version towards the open mouth of a crocodile which is about to devour him, while overhead the Sun is being eclipsed. In this form the design hardly looks like the beginning of anything. It is clearly an ending, and an unpleasant one.

However, the Golden Dawn, seeing 0 as the beginning, decided to redraw the card to suit their interpretation of it and showed a young child under a rose tree in a spring dawn, holding a grey wolf in check with one hand. Such a radical change clearly required toning down, and the well-known A.E. Waite design is a compromise. It shows a young man clad in a coat with a floral design, carrying a rose in his hand and with his dog barking at his heels, walking carelessly towards the edge of a precipice. The idea is that the precipice symbolizes an imminent descent into manifestation --i.e., a coming out of 0 into 1. (Those who attribute Uranus to the cards presumably suppose it to be appropriate to the sudden change ahead.) [xxii]

This is, of course, is interesting, but on the whole, when one is attempting to interpret something, it is usually wisest to stick to the form in which one receives it. I have already mentioned the Golden Dawn switching of cards 8 and 11 and their rearrangement of the Rabbinical planetary order. Here now is another change, this time in the actual design of a card! Benjamine takes the card in its traditional form, and the attribution to Pluto is justified as follows: There are two sides to Pluto. On the one hand he is the planet of intense material, emotional and sexual excess, producing an eclipse of all vision of spiritual realities (the blindness of the man and the eclipse of the Sun shown in the design) which can only be cured by death and return to one's maker. (N.B.: the crocodile is a symbol of deity in Egyptian mythology, though under the destructive or tempter aspect, identified with Typhon, the devil or adversary, who had a crocodile's head.) On the other hand, Pluto can also be the planet of regeneration, and the Fool can therefore also mean one who has voluntarily become a beggar, blind to his own material well-being; one for whom the physical Sun is undergoing eclipse, but only to reveal the spiritual one, and who will soon be devoured by (i.e., reunited with) the Spiritual Source.

¹⁰ Since the Golden Dawn scheme still retains an explicit attribution for the Element Fire (to card 20) this arrangement rather seems to imply two attributions to Fire and a tacit ignoring of Air altogether! The Benjamine attribution of Uranus to card 10, "The Wheel of Fortune," on the other hand, is in explicit connection with the element Air, both as mind, since Card 10 is the Intelligence of Will, and also on the material plane since electrical charges are induced in the air and manifest as lightning.

The Rabbinical title is "The administrative Intelligence," the reason assigned being "because it directs and associates the motions of the 7 planets, directing all of them in their proper courses." This is an appropriate summing up of the final state of attainment achieved by the regenerated Pluto man or woman in whom the seven interior planets, metals or chakras are properly associated and directed, all in their proper courses. And such a one is very truly an administrator in the kingdom of God on earth. Having achieved rulership in his own kingdom, as symbolized in Card 21, he now demonstrates it externally in all the circumstances of his environment as well.

The fullest significance of this text only appears, however, when one takes it in conjunction with that for the very first card, the Magician, and the letter Aleph which goes with it I deliberately did not give this when I discussed the first card, mentioning the titles only from number 2 onwards, because I wished to reserve it until this place.

The first title is "The Fiery Intelligence" and the reason given for this is "because it is the essence of that curtain which is placed close to the order of the disposition, and this is a special dignity given to it that it may be able to stand before the Face of the Cause of Causes." Now, the interesting thing here is that the very first "Intelligence" is designated Fiery, but is paired with a letter (Aleph) which signifies a breath⁽¹¹⁾, and which is thus the symbol of air. The letter Shin, which signifies Fire, does not appear until the 21st place in the Hebrew alphabet, to be immediately followed by the 22nd and last letter, Tavb, which the same Rabbinical tradition that assigns these titles, recorded in the Sefhir Yetzirah, assigns to Mars, the planet peculiarly associated with Fire. It is clear, therefore, that what this tradition would have us understand is that Fire is both the beginning and end of things, the inspiration or drawing of breath, (Aleph) and the Perpetual (Shin) Administration or Manifestation idea in terms of the Greek alphabet in the words "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," (spoken by Christ, the lamb (Aries, Fire) of God).

The deep appropriateness of the Benjamite attributions now appears, for Mercury, assigned to Card, Aleph, is both the astrological symbol of Mind, which is always associated with the element Air, and also, in alchemical symbolism, one of [xxiii] the names of the Universal Solvent. Now, the Universal Solvent is, of course, the Water of the Wise, and as we have seen in connection with the letter Mem and the sign Aries, the great alchemical secret is its blending with Fire. When this is achieved, and the true tincture of the white with red is made, then philosophical gold results. Moreover, this gold is "potable," i.e., fluid. It is, in fact, the manifestation of the Spirit (Fire) as the solvent itself, permeating and purging all that is dissolved in it: i.e., the aims, aspirations, sense of values and even the whole personality, of the alchemist himself. (The Bible once again expresses the very same idea in Malachi's words (Malachi 3:2) describing the coming Christ: "for he is like a refiner's fire." We must remember that this Christ was to be the manifestation of God in Man, and the root of the word "man" is the Sanskrit "Manes," which means "Mind".)

The "Order of the Disposition", before which Mercury is placed in the text, must, therefore, be understood as the Primal Cause, the disposing source of all forms and orders. Mercury is a curtain before it, because any conception or expression of it in thought or speech (Mercury) can only be a veiling of that which in itself simply is, inexpressibly. Nevertheless, man (mind) is expressly stated in Genesis 1:27 to have been created in the image of God, and it is made

¹¹ The letter--name Aleph signifies "A Bull," but the vocal significance of the letter is simply the intake of breath before utterance.

clear that this is the special dignity with which he has been endowed, just as the text here says, for he was originally intended, and is still destined, to converse as an equal with God, Face to face, And now, Pluto,, assigned to the last letter, which is subtly identified in the Rabbinical tradition with Fire in its unregenerate animal guise (Mars), ⁽¹²⁾ is the astrological symbol of the only means by which this, which is man's destiny, may be regained by him -- i.e., through regeneration. Once the full symbolism is understood, there is no other attribution which can possibly be considered here.

THIS, THEN, IS THE BENJAMINE SERIES. It would appear to be an ample vindication of the traditional order of the cards, whatever the original authority for that may be. It is for readers now to make their own judgment upon the attributions, both in an absolute sense and by confronting them card by card and sign for sign with the generally accepted Golden Dawn ones which I have quoted for comparison. They should also try placing each of the cards representing signs in their positions on the cube and noticing how perfectly each fits and reflects the planets round it. each of the 4 cards round the top of the cube flanking the Sun, for instance, is concerned in some way with Illumination, the Sun and The Chariot being both solar cards, while the Star depicts the Interior Sun and the Hermit the man who has emerged from the bondage and limitations of matter and can now reveal his own light. The uprights on either side of the western face are The Empress and the Emperor, and between them at the foot of the face is Justice being administered on Earth. The design of this latter card is a picture of this exact position, moreover, with the Solar canopy overarching the scene, overhead. The other three sides of the base of the cube are the High Priestess in the North, the Moon in the East and the hanged Man in the South. Each of these is in some way related to Lunar or Water Symbolism, and Justice, the blind- folded figure in the West, is not an incongruous companion for them. Together they surround Venus, the beauty of the Earth, which their collective ministrations produce but reflection of and response to the radiance from above.

Additionally, the two uprights at the sides of the Eastern face are death (or Transformation) and Temperance, the two alchemical cards of the series, placed on either side of Mercury, the Universal Solvent. Alternatively, if the upright are considered with respect to the North and South Faces, then Scorpio and Aries, the two signs of Mars, symbolized as the Emperor and Death, confront Taurus and Libra, [Xxiv] the two signs of Venus, symbolized as the Empress and the Alchemist (or Temperance), the latter the possessor of the Stone of the Wise which confers Eternal Life. Moreover, the secret of the Stone of the Wise is balance of polarities, and as if to make this clear beyond all possibility of mistaking, the Cube completes the picture with a virtuosic display of complementarities. Thus, the Greater Fortune, Jupiter, is placed in the middle of the south face, between Aries and Scorpio, the signs of the Lesser

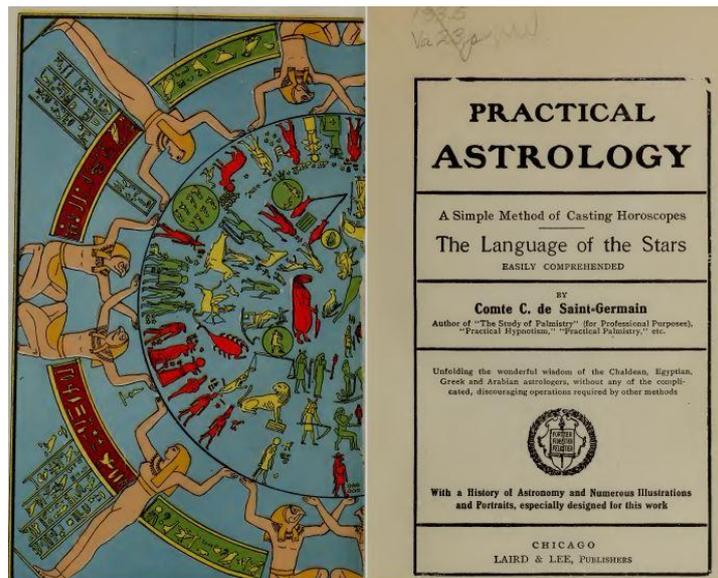
¹² This subtlety, of course, disappears in the Golden Dawn "amendment" which replaces Mars by Saturn. Perhaps it would be well at this point to mention once again that this group felt constrained to make these amendments because they believed that the Tarot card sequence had to fit one definite arrangement arrived at by means of them, just as it stood. The Benjamine approach is a radical departure from this view, for as he says in "The Sacred Tarot," pages 14-15: "Just what the idea is which is...associated with each letter it is a function of the Tarot to reveal, "but in an indirect way, nevertheless, for "as there are 12 zodiacal signs, so there are 12 single letters, although in detail they do not correspond to them." The Rabbinical attributions are no more than half the key to the inward meaning of each letter. Only when the other half is supplied by the discovery of the meaningful astrological series which parallels the card sequence does the full and extraordinary profound significance of the whole scheme become apparent. The examples I have given to illustrate this, such as this one of the redemption of Mars (unregenerate desire) by Pluto (regenerate desire), symbolically associated with the last letter Mem, should be supplemented by a careful comparison of all the attributions which appear in the *Sepher Yetzirah* (Westcott version) with the complete Benjamin series. This is a most illuminating and rewarding exercise.

Infortune, and opposite to Saturn the Greater Infortune which is placed in the middle of the North face between Libra and Taurus, the signs of the Lesser Fortune.

NOTES.

The original was paginated in italics. I have maintained the page numbers in brackets: [iii]

The Tarot card images and descriptions are found in the book, *Practical Astrology. A Simple Method of Casting Horoscopes --The Language of the Stars -- Easily Comprehended*, by Comte de Saint-Germain. First published in 1901 in Chicago, it is probably the first American book containing Tarot images. "Comte de Saint-Germain" is the pen-name of Edgar de Valcourt-Vermont. [\[ONLINE HERE\]](#)
The entire book is [\[ONLINE HERE\]](#) at Archive.org in various formats.



The Brotherhood of Light, founded by C. C. Zain (Elbert Benjamine) is [\[ONLINE HERE\]](#)

And:

[Church of Light: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia](#)

Edited by Samten de Wet, Nieu Bethesda, 9th October 2021.

Prier Wintle, *Elbert Benjamine's Astrological Attributions to the Tarot trumps*, First published in 1969