

A Metaphysical Reading of the Tarot Suits:

Batons

Chalices

Swords

Coins



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Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism

By *Anonymous* (Author), *Robert Powell* (Translator), *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Afterword)

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*** The Tarot of Marseille Images are from:**

www.cbdtarot.com

CBD Tarot de Marseille by Dr. Yoav Ben-Dov



[* **NOTE:** The *Waite-Smith* style Tarot images are based on the 1909/1910 design.]

Also by *TeenyTinyTarot:*

Christianity, Platonism, and the Tarot of Marseille



Batons / Wands

Element = *Fire*
Symbolizes: *Spirit*
(Creative Intelligence)



- **Spirit** (*pneuma*) ≈ Divine Intelligence (cf. *Nous*, *Logos*, or *Intellectus*) / Transcendental Awareness / God's Will / Divine Presence / Authentic Life / Pure Activity / Our Real Will / True Nature.
- Spirit is our **Transcendent Aspect** / Our *Eternal Life* / The Source of Meaning and Purpose; Authentic Inspiration; and True Vocation / The Dynamic Ground of Creative Manifestation.
- Spirit is reflected in and through the medium of the material world (including our apparent bodies and our material circumstances and resources)



Chalices / Cups

Element = *Water*
Symbolizes: *Heart*



- **Heart** ≈ Openness / Receptivity / Attunement / Intuition / Contemplation.
- The Heart is our **Transcending Aspect**—the “organ” through which we become attuned to Spirit, contemplate our authentic/eternal life, and receive the gift of joyous, creative wisdom.
- As our hearts open (in contemplation) we naturally turn *away from* a life of self-indulgent inclination and *toward* our true vocation (whether that appears to be the life of a hermit or a healer; that of a poet, artist, or craftsman; or even that of a scientist, a priest, or a politician).



Swords

Element = *Air*
Symbolizes: *Psyche*
(Discursive Mind)



Psyche (*soul/mind*) ≈ Ego / The Egoic Mind / Instrumental Reasoning / Analysis / Calculation / *Ratio* / Conceptual Frameworks (“ideas”, “beliefs” and “worldviews” that constitute us as “separate selves”).

- The Egoic Mind can be a hindrance or a help— an adversary or an ally—in our Spiritual life.
- On the one hand, "Ego" is that aspect of ourselves that must be **Transcended**— that is, we must transcend the mind-made sense of self (*aka* the "arbitrary personality" or "separate individual") which tends to obstruct the intuition of our *unity with or connection to* God, Nature, and Humanity as a whole.
- On the other hand, the practical *operations* of our lower mind begins to function better than ever once we realize that *we are not what we think*—i.e. *when the egoic mind surrenders to the life of Spirit . . .* (the egoic/analytic mind makes “a wonderful servant, but a terrible master”, as is sometimes said).
- Transcending the ego does not mean fleeing our material existence— rather, from this point forward, we begin to relate properly to the material world for the very first time.



Coins / Pentacles

Element = *Earth*

Symbolizes:

The Material World



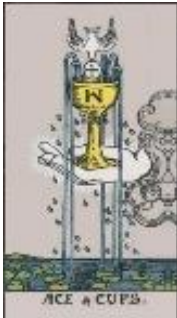
- **The Material World** includes: Matter / Material Bodies, Forms, and Resources / Material Circumstances / The World of Sensation / The Medium of Manifestation, Creation, and Incarnation.
- For the “separate self” (e.g. the power-hungry *individualist* or self-indulgent *consumer*), the material world is understood primarily in terms of fear and desire—a tempting, tormenting battleground of appetites and inclinations especially designed for those who insist on playing *the wheel of fortune* (see the illustration on page 4).
- But for Spirit (and for the person/mind/psyche that is surrendered to Spirit), matter is a magical medium of artistic, poetic, religious, and political expression – *ideal* for those who fully and freely participate in “the respiration of eternity”—*aka the One life, Divine* (see the description of *The Hanged Man* and *The Sun* on page 5).

Two Ways of Living

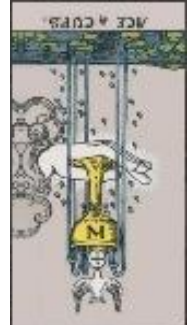
On the left side, we see portrayed (in symbolic form) **the incarnation of Spirit (wands) in the material world (coins) through an open Heart (cups) and a surrendered Mind (swords).**



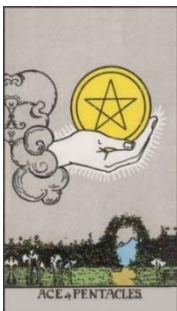
For **those with open Hearts and surrendered Minds**, matter is a magical medium of artistic, poetic, religious, and political expression as they **joyfully participate in One life, Divine** (sometimes referred to as **the respiration of eternity**).



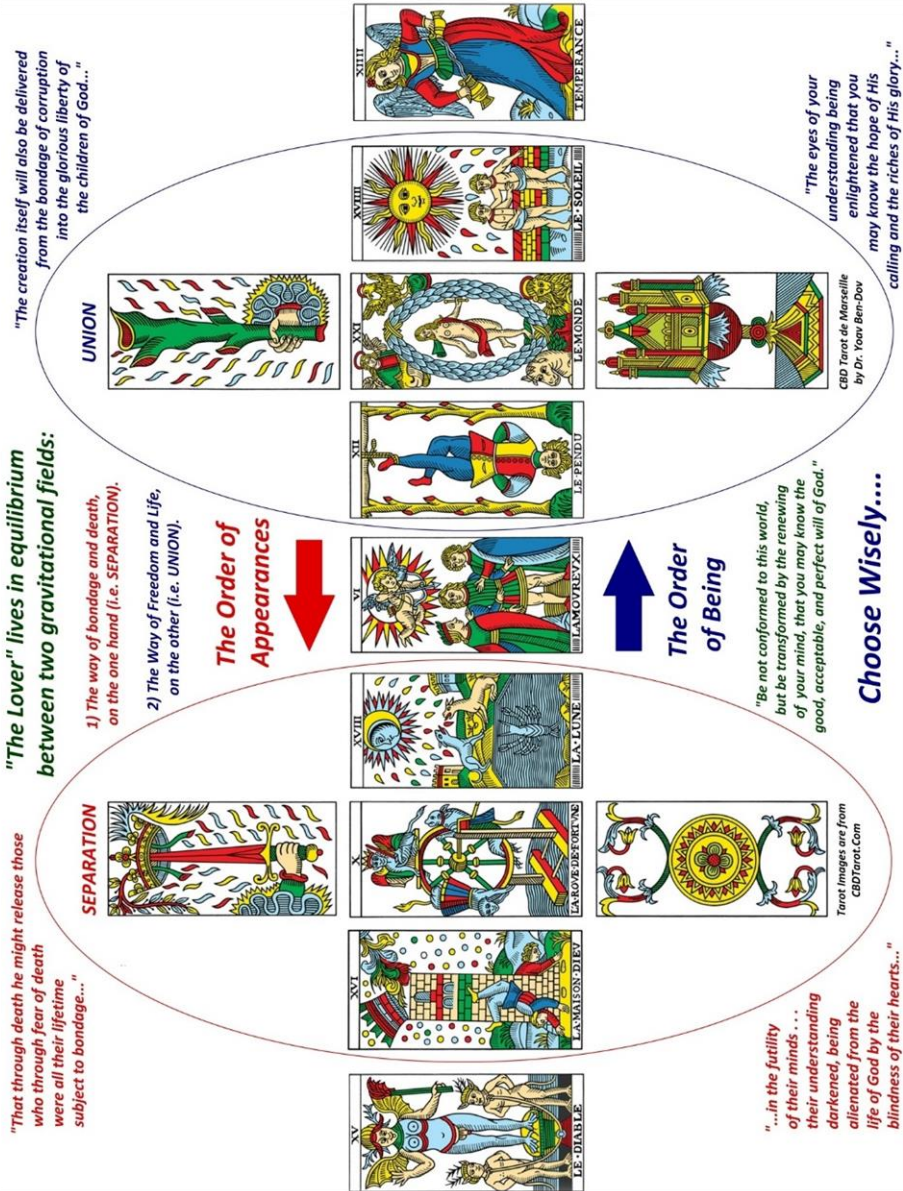
On the right side (in contrast), **when Spirit is obscured by the rule of the separate self (aka ego)**, our Hearts become closed to authentic currents of Spirit (the reality of which, as a consequence, seems dubious, at best).



Closed hearts create a topsy-turvy world dominated by fear and desire as we become increasingly devoted to the pursuit of (personal) **power, pleasure, & prestige**. Nevertheless, **it is never too late to turn our Hearts and our Minds toward home.**



"The reality of paradise is the unity of the macrocosmic solar sphere and the microcosmic solar layer—the sphere of the cosmic heart and the solar foundation of the human heart."
 ~ Meditations on the Tarot, Letter VI, "The Lover" (131).



For additional commentary on this combination of images, see "The Soul's Choice" at TeenyTinyTarot.Com



To *ex-sist* is to *stand-out*... Human existence may be compared to **the pilgrimage of the Fool** who has stepped out of eternity into space and time and become oblivious to the transcendent aspect of his being (cf. *incarnation*; see also "The Myth of Er" in Book X of Plato's *Republic* and "The Myth of the



Soul" in *The Phaedrus*). Like **the prodigal son**, perhaps, we at some point leave our father's house and spend our inheritance on riotous living. Or perhaps (as portrayed in *The Hymn of the Pearl*) we are **children of God** on a Divine mission **who temporarily forget who we are**. Regardless of the metaphor, **it is our destiny to remember who we are and, in the process, to turn our hearts and our minds toward home—toward our one true love!** So doing, we become **The Hanged Man**:

"The Hanged Man represents the condition of one in the life of whom gravitation from above has replaced that from below. Firstly, it should be said that attraction from above is as real as that from below, and that the condition of a human being who has passed, whilst living, from the field of terrestrial gravitation into that of heaven is indeed comparable to that of the Hanged Man of the Card. **This is at one and the same time a benefaction and a martyrdom; both are very real"** (*Meditations on the Tarot*, Letter XII, "The Hanged Man" 307)

"Dear Unknown Friend, the Arcanum 'The Sun' with which we are occupied is an Arcanum of children bathing in the light of the sun. Here it is not a matter of finding occult things, but rather of seeing ordinary and simple things in the light of day of the sun — and with the look of a child. The nineteenth Arcanum of the Tarot, the Arcanum of intuition, is that of revelatory naivety in the act of knowledge, which renders the spirit capable of an intensity of look not troubled by doubt and by the scruples engendered by doubt, i.e. it is the vision of things such as they are under the eternally new day of the sun. It teaches the art of undergoing the pure and simple impression which reveals through itself— without intellectual hypotheses and superstructures —what things are. To render impressions *noumenous* — this is what it is a matter of in the Arcanum 'The Sun', the Arcanum of intuition" (*Meditations on the Tarot*, Letter 19, "The Sun" 552).

Afterword...

It is worth noting that this is a work in progress which has been kept intentionally brief (and very dense) for ease of printing in these few, short pages. Additional clarification and elaboration is definitely in order. In the meantime, suffice it to say that the activity of Spirit cannot be grasped conceptually and cannot be used as a means to some merely personal/egoic end. It is nevertheless the case that the realization of Spirit does indeed constitute the true meaning and purpose of our lives and that such realization does have a practical impact on the world of our experience. Those who would become more attuned to Spirit should, 1) learn to distinguish between “awareness”, as such, and the incessant “mental chatter” which tends to accompany most of our perceptions (i.e. the habitual, usually unconscious “self-talk” which continuously expresses and reinforces our personal fears, desires, judgments); 2) begin to practice *breath awareness* and *inner-body awareness* as an aid to meditation; and 3) begin to anchor their lives in “aware presence” or “alert stillness” — the pristine, lucid *Way of Truth and Life* which leaves unnecessary mental commentary and distracted, ineffective action beneath itself. Honest and sustained self-observation is essential to this work—discursive thought or dialectic is merely preparatory (see the discussion of “concentration without effort” in *Letter I of Meditations on the Tarot*, page 8).

It is also worth noting that while the *Anonymous Author* of *Meditations on the Tarot* cannot always be appealed to as the authority for (or even the primary inspiration behind) every aspect of this approach, it is nevertheless generally consistent with his work. See, for example, the beginning of Letter II, “The High Priestess”, pages 29-31 —and also this brief discussion in Letter XXII:

“Concerning the four “suits”— pentacles, swords, cups and wands — they correspond exactly to the structure of the sacred name YHVH and, consequently, to the four elements. Wands represent the emanating principle, the YOD of the divine name; cups represent the conceiving principle, the first HE of the divine name; swords represent the formative principle, the VAU of the divine name; and pentacles symbolise the principle of form, the second HE of the divine name” (Letter XXII, “The World”, page 654; cf. *Figure 1*, below).

Tetragrammaton (YHVH, IHVH)



The four letter **tetragrammaton** (Greek, ‘four letters’) is the ‘true’ name of the God of the Hebrew scriptures. It never appears complete in written form; only the four consonant letters, **YHVH** (Hebrew, Yod Heh Vau Heh, read right to left), or in the Latin version, IHVH.

Figure 1

The information on the Tetragrammaton (YHVH, IHVH), above, is a screen shot from:
<http://symboldictionary.net/?p=1355>