

Spring 2023

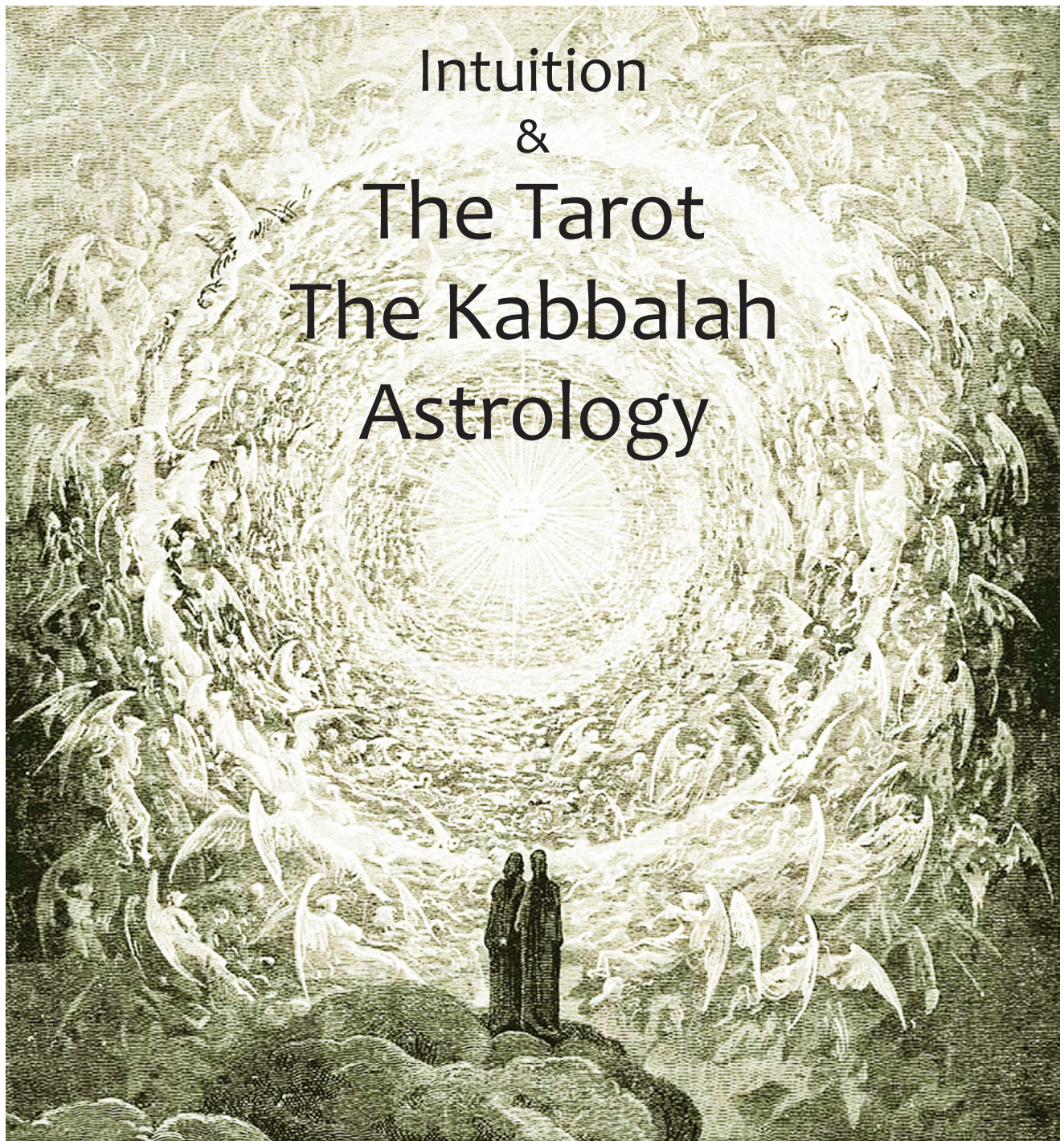
Issue 13

NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

Magazine

Symbolic Imagery





Gustave Dore, Paradiso, Canto 34

From the Editor

Symbolic Imagery

A symbolic image is an enigma because it is the expression of something that cannot be put into words. Logic is about attaching a word to an experience, but there are many things for which language is inadequate, and for that we need symbolic imagery.

'Symbols, by their very nature, are a means of expressing an experience that is in itself expressionless.'

Gershom Scholem

A symbolic image cannot be read passively in the way a book can, because the meaning has to be discovered through active reflection. That is why a symbolic image can be interpreted in more than one way; the meaning depends on the understanding of the individual.

Symbolic imagery is the means to approach the enigmas of life, whether in nature, in human nature, or in the wider world. It is the intuitive mind which prompts us to look beyond what we see. If we have the feeling there is more to the world than the world we see, the study of symbolic imagery can help us to approach this hidden element in a way which will reveal it, rather than explain it away.

The more obvious examples of symbolic imagery - the Tarot, the Kabbalah and Astrology - will be covered here. The study of symbolic imagery leads to progressive insight. Insight is the product of intuitive thinking. If we want to understand symbolic imagery - wherever we may find it - we need to approach it intuitively.

Nascent State magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure. For enquiries, contributions and comments, email:

editor@nascentstatepublishing.com

Jim Blackmann

Contents

The Tarot
and the Major Arcana

Symbolic Imagery
and the intuitive mind

Astrology
and the self

The Kabbalah
and the Sefirot

Spring 2023

Symbolic Imagery

and the intuitive mind

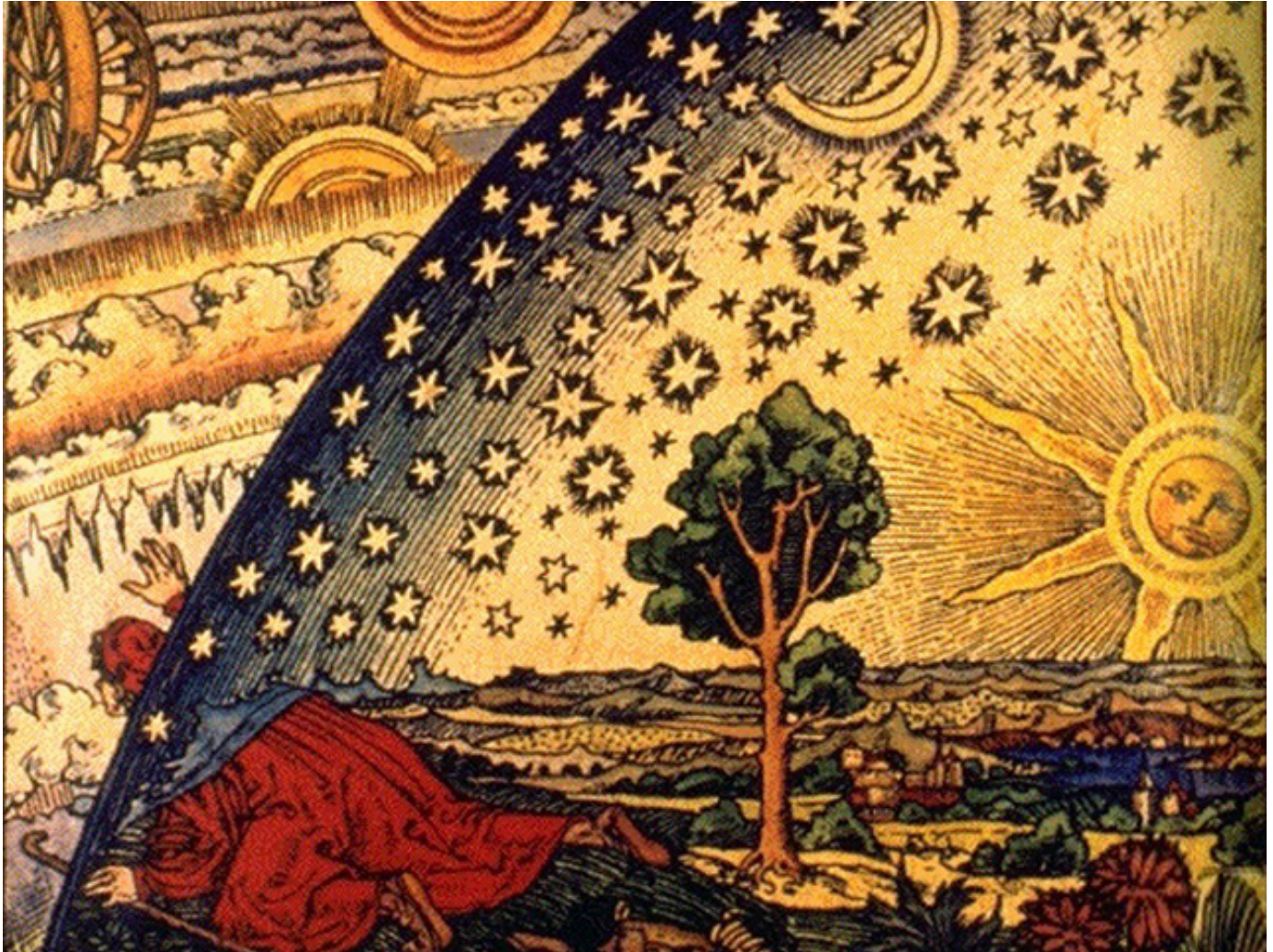


Illustration from Camille Flammarion's *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*, 1888

The examples of symbolism chosen for this edition of *Nascent State* magazine - the Tarot, Astrology and the Kabbalah - are all associated with religious imagery, and so the reader might assume that symbolic imagery and religion are one, but it is not so. There are many secular examples of symbolic imagery - flags, Heads of State, and currencies - but the examples chosen here are those that most clearly demonstrate the nature of symbolic imagery.

Religions, at least the religions of the West, are largely dogmatic, which is to say they are based on an authority telling the individual what to think. Those who feel a natural repulsion about being told what to think are likely to regard themselves as non-religious; indeed this is an

intuitive response to another person attempting to govern our thinking.

Symbolic imagery, on the other hand, is non-dogmatic. It is for the individual to decide the meaning of the image, based on their understanding and insight. Dogma is born of logic, whereas symbolic imagery is born of intuition. The aim of this edition of the magazine is to reveal the intuitive element behind the examples of symbolic imagery provided. No demand on blind-faith is required for the study, only open-mindedness.

To think logically, we have to attach a label to an experience. When we experience the re-emergence of nature in early March, for example, we attach the label 'spring' to it and

Spring 2023

then combine this with summer, autumn and winter, and generalise these under the concept 'the seasons'. The ability to think in this way is highly useful, because it allows us to think in an organised and precise way in life. But it is also highly limiting, because anything which is not included under the label is ignored.

To think intuitively, we have to think in terms of images rather than words. We already think symbolically, but we are not always aware of it. Many of the ideals we live by - 'progress' and 'justice' - are highly symbolic. Logic cannot deal with symbolic imagery, because it conveys too rich a meaning to encapsulate into a single word.

Symbolic imagery can be described as a deliberate enigma; if what is presented is beguiling, intriguing and demanding interpretation, it is because the image draws

attention to what cannot be seen directly. And there is much that is hidden from direct observation. We cannot see the laws of nature directly, but can only infer them, and our inferences are based on our present thinking. What limits what we see is what we think. Symbolic imagery trains the mind to see the world as an enigma.

Nature is an enigma, even if we don't see it that way. The geometry in a crystal, the proportions in the human body, and the perfect blend of colours in a wildflower all point to causes the eye cannot see. If we choose to define an enigma in terms of what we already know, we will not see the enigma, but simply reiterate what we already know. To approach the hidden, we need intuitive thinking. Symbolic imagery can train the mind to think intuitively.



Anima Mundi, from *The Origin and Structure of the Cosmos*, by Robert Fludd, 1617

The Tarot

and the major arcana



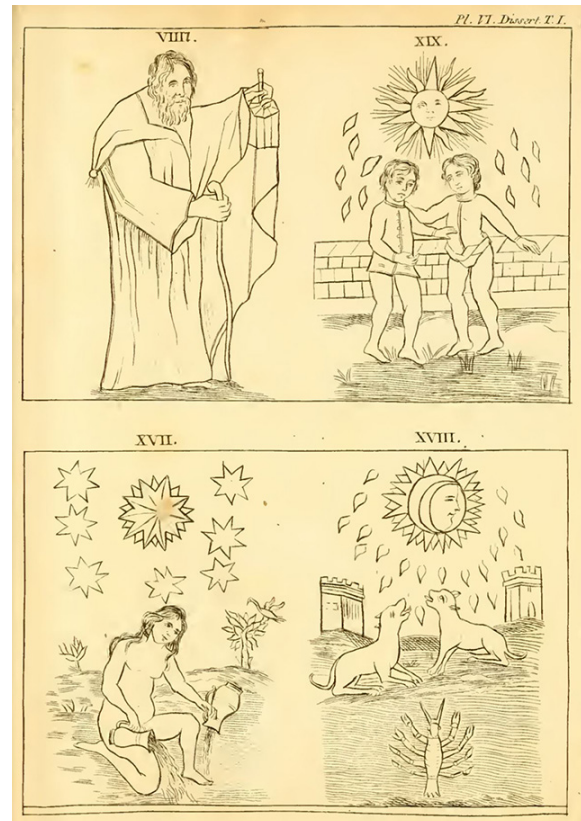
From the Jacquemin Gringonneur tarot, 1392

The origin of the Tarot cards is unknown. It is recorded that a set of playing cards, similar to the Tarot, was produced for the amusement of King Charles VI of France in the 14th century, by Jacquemin Gringonneur. The cards bear a resemblance to the Tarot, but it is unknown whether he invented them or drew on an existing design. Then in Bologna, in the following century, a set of playing cards was produced by Francois Fibbia, and used for playing the game of 'tarocchi', but again, this appears to be an incomplete Tarot.

A. E. Waite, who produced one of the most well-known versions of the tarot cards, the Rider-Waite Tarot, had this to say about their origin:

'We shall see in due course that the history of Tarot cards is largely of a negative kind, and that, when the issues are cleared by the dissipation of reveries and gratuitous speculations expressed in the terms of certitude, there is in fact no history prior to the fourteenth century.'

At some point, the Tarot cards found their way into the hands of the Romani or Gypsy people, who used them for fortune telling. By virtue of their nomadic lifestyle, the cards were spread throughout Europe. That is why the Tarot is associated with either fortune telling or, with the minor arcana (which became ordinary playing cards), gambling.



Sketches from Le Monde Primitif

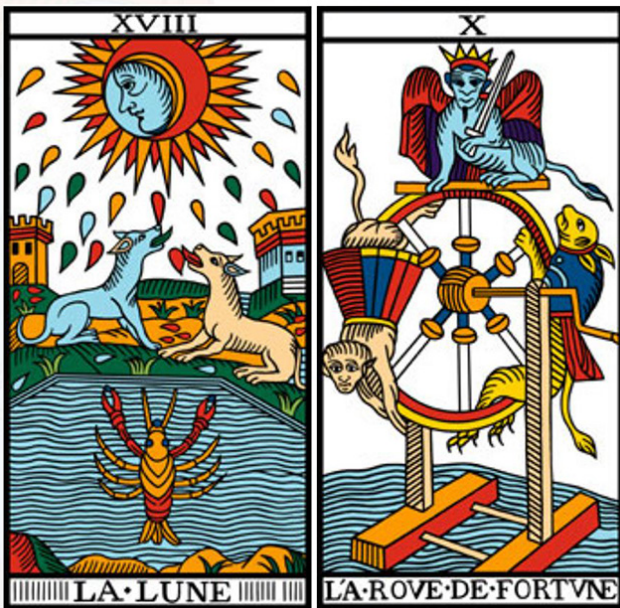
Then in the eighteenth century, Antoine Court de Gebelin produced a series of sketches of the Tarot cards for inclusion in his book *Le Monde Primitif* (1781), in which he drew attention to the allegorical meaning of the Major Arcana. Gebelin believed the cards were Egyptian in origin, and were passed down, secretly, over the ages: 'According to our present thesis the secret

Spring 2023

hieroglyphics, once reproduced on portable tablets, were passed on to the gnostics, then to the alchemists, from where we have inherited them.'

Of course, all of this is unverifiable. The obscurity of their origin, and the common use of the cards, means that the allegorical meaning is presently regarded as a kind of revisionism. Any genuine study of the cards will however demonstrate otherwise. The obscurity of their origin can be accounted for by the period in history when they emerged, which was at the time of the Inquisition, when it would have been dangerous to express any idea which challenged the dogma of the Church.

The meaning of the Tarot, when properly understood, goes far beyond what was acceptable to the dogma of the day. If the allegorical meaning did not emerge until those associated with its origin were suitably lost to history, it was for good reason. The content, particularly of the Major Arcana, is extraordinary.



From the Camoin-Jodorowsky Tarot de Marseille

The images employed in the Major Arcana can be described as syncretic, which is to say they draw on many sources and traditions. The symbolism of the Old Testament can be found in The Lovers, Judgement and The Devil; Pagan symbolism can be seen in The Wheel of Fortune, the High Priestess and The Moon cards; Hermetic symbolism can be seen in The Magician and Temperance, and Astrological symbolism can be found in the Star, the Sun and The World cards. Considered as a work of art alone, the twenty-

two detailed and complex images of the Major Arcana suggest that, if it was the product of a single mind, it would point to genius.

The means to transmit ideas by imagery alone would have prevented the inquisitors - trained to think logically - from being able to pin down any exact and precise meaning to the cards.

One of the most contentious cards - had its meaning been known - was 'La Papesse' or 'The Popess', which depicts a woman sitting on a throne before a veil drawn between two pillars. She is holding a partially covered book in her hands. A female Pope would have been contentious enough, but her depiction was more than a feminine alternative to the father figure of the Church. A. E. Waite regarded the similarities between La Papesse and the Pagan Isis so striking that, in his own version of the pack, he renamed her 'The High Priestess'.

'She is the priestess of mystery, Isis, the goddess of deep night and without her help the human spirit could not penetrate the darkness.'



From the Rider-Waite tarot deck

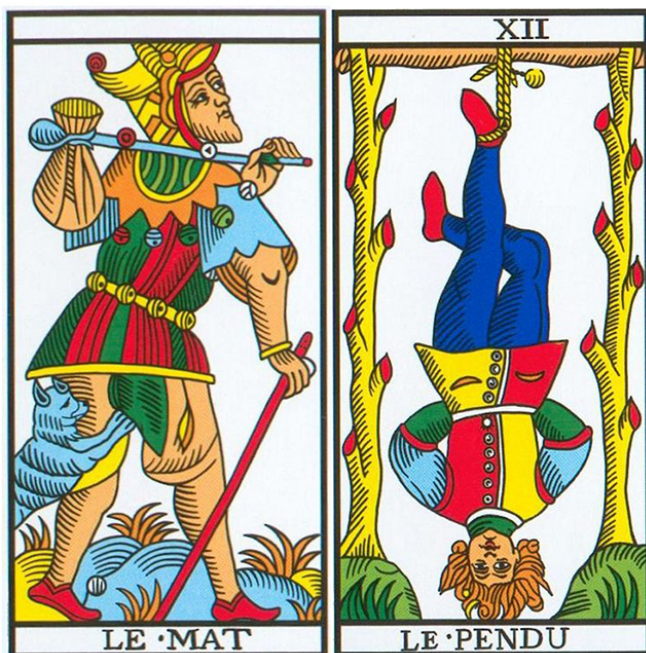
Spring 2023

In many respects, The High Priestess holds the key to the Tarot. Her book represents knowledge, and her veil represents hidden wisdom. To access this knowledge, we have to lift her veil. This embodies the whole approach of the cards and the means by which they transmit their knowledge. If we take what we see at face value, we will learn nothing. The Pagan Isis is the goddess of the Moon, or the reflected light of the Sun. She is intuitive wisdom. Plutarch, the 1st century historian, wrote that the inscription above the statue of Isis read:

‘I am all that has been and is and shall be; and no mortal has ever lifted my veil.’

Each of the cards of the Major Arcana has an overall theme, as well as many lesser ideas, expressed symbolically, within the image. Examples of this can be seen in The Wheel of Fortune, The Moon and The World cards. In addition, many of the cards appear to be twinned, such as The Sun and The Moon, The Emperor and The Empress, The Lovers and The Devil, The Hierophant and The High Priestess, and The Fool and The Hanged Man. If the Major Arcana had been expressed in textual form rather than in symbolic imagery, the exposition of the meaning of each card would constitute the whole chapter of a book. In this way, a highly complex body of knowledge is transmitted through barely a word. As A. E. Waite put it:

‘The true Tarot is symbolism; it speaks no other language and offers no other signs.’



From the Camoin-Jodorowsky Tarot de Marseille

If the meaning of the cards is an enigma, it is a deliberate one. The aim of the cards, in their expression, ambiguity and complexity, is to defy logic and so to ensure the reader continually searches for the hidden meaning. This is not without purpose or aim - mystification for its own sake - but for the intended purpose of enlightening the reader into the hidden nature of the world. This can be seen in The Fool card.

The Fool is depicted as travelling through a barren desert, under a burning sun, carrying a bag, and with a lynx biting at his heels. He wears a Fool's attire, his oddly shaped cap on askew, and he is grinning mindlessly, as though in a dream. In some versions of the cards he is about to walk off a cliff. If he was to wake to realise this nightmare, the grin would soon disappear.

The Tarot cards are an instruction manual in the means to approach the hidden, both in the inner life and in the outer world. The hidden does not just jump out and announce itself to us - we have to actively search for it, and that requires preparation, understanding and insight. If the author of the cards chose to express this symbolically, it is because this approach trains the mind to regard the world as an enigma.

If we approach the cards logically, we will collect a great deal of information about them but never discover their hidden meaning. If the content of the cards could be expressed logically, they would not be such obvious allegories. More so, if we try to fix their meaning with a single explanation, we will deprive ourselves of the continual insights they are capable of providing. As with the veil of Isis, we will never discover 'all that is and was and will ever be'. To understand the Tarot, we have to employ intuitive thinking; indeed it could be said that the cards were created by an intuitive mind of the highest order.

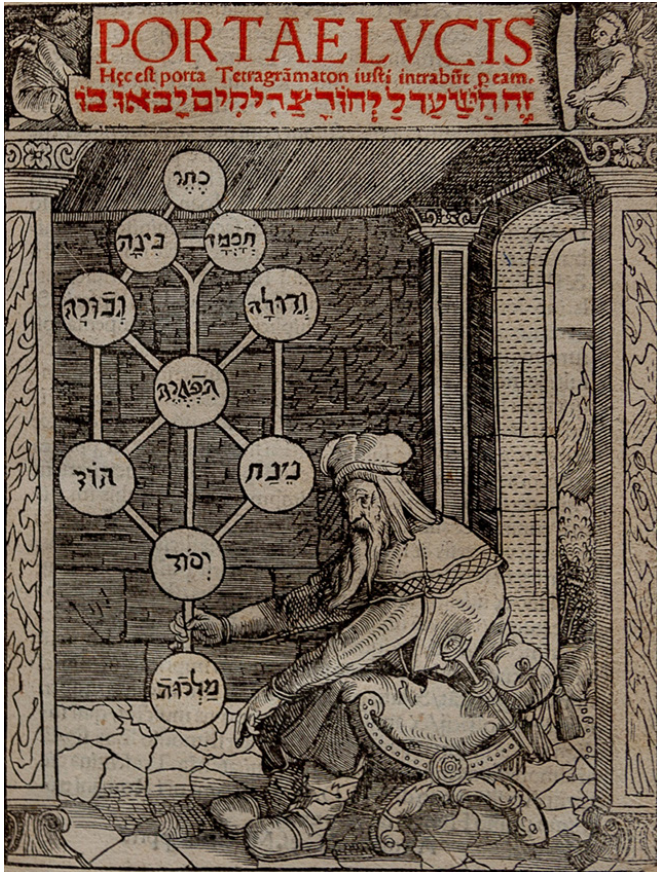
References

- Tarot de Marseille by Alejandro Jodorowsky & Philippe Camoin, 1471-1997
- Antoine Court de Gébelin, *Monde Primitif: Etymological Dictionary Of The French Language*, 1778, p.22
- Plutarch, *Moralia, On the Worship of Isis and Osiris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1936 edn)
- Arthur Edward Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 1911, (London: Rider & Co, 1922 edn)

Spring 2023

The Kabbalah

and the Sefirot



Portae Lucis by Joseph Gikatilla (1248 -1325)

The Kabbalah emerged at the end of the twelfth century. It is probable, and indeed likely, that it existed prior to that period, but it was at the end of the twelfth century, in Languedoc in France, that the first book of the Kabbalah, the *Bahir*, appeared.

The *Bahir* appears, at least on initial inspection, to be no more than a series of commentaries on passages from the Torah, or the first five books of the *Old Testament*, namely *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. Anyone in a hurry would be forgiven for thinking that the *Bahir* was rather boring. It is possible that this was its intention.

It was in Languedoc in France, at the end of the twelfth century, that the Inquisition began. The residents of the town of Beziers - some of whom were Cathars - were massacred, either for being Cathars, or for harbouring them. The emissaries of the Church were ruthless. The Cathars were Christian, but they held views contrary to the

dogma of the Church. Some of these views included the existence of a female deity, a dualistic view of good and evil, the possibility of direct experience of the divine, and the teaching of reincarnation. The Cathars do not appear to have been governed by any strict dogma or by any authority figure, but were encouraged to develop their own understanding, and for that reason they were essentially Gnostics.

That the *Bahir* should have emerged at exactly the time and place where the Cathars were being persecuted, appears to be more than coincidence. Many of the ideas and beliefs held by the Cathars can also be found in the *Bahir*. For example, in the chapter *The Mysteries of the Soul*, reincarnation is discussed:

‘Why is there a righteous person who has good, and (another) righteous person who has evil? This is because the (second) righteous person was wicked previously, and is now being punished. Is one then punished for his childhood deeds? Did not Rabbi Simon say that in the Tribunal on high, no punishment is meted out until one is twenty years or older. He said: I am not speaking of his present lifetime. I am speaking about what he has already been, previously.’

If the *Bahir* appears, initially at least, to be slow going, it may have been with the intention of preventing scrutiny by the Church authorities. The focus of the Inquisition was on the Cathars, and such was its ferocity, that it may have been deemed safer to transmit such ideas through Judaism than through Christianity.



Spring 2023

The second book of the Kabbalah, the *Zohar*, appeared about a century later, in Leon in Spain, when the Inquisition had spread beyond France to include Spain. If little is known about the authorship of the *Zohar* - guesses have been made, but they are no more than that - it is because it would have been highly dangerous to express heretical ideas openly in such a climate. It is interesting to note that few had heard of the Kabbalah at that time, and any study of the *Zohar* would have been held by local groups and probably in secret.



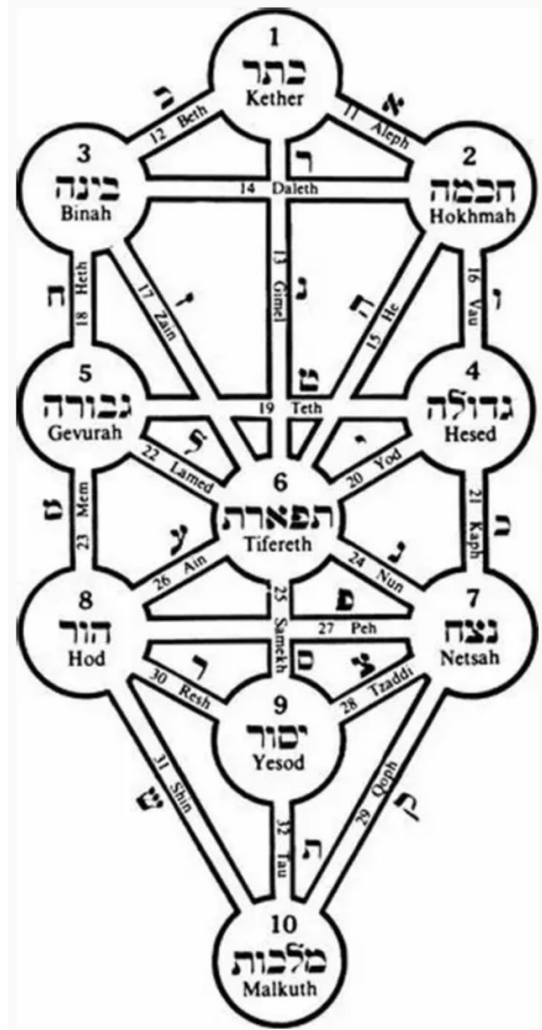
Cover of the *Zohar* c. 1550

Like the *Bahir*, the *Zohar* appears to be no more than a set of commentaries made by 1st Century Rabbis on the meaning of the *Torah*. Lines are taken, examined, and commented on in some detail. The commentaries are often accompanied by illustrative stories, and there is no obvious order to the form of presentation; the method employed is at times not unlike Sufism, whereby ideas are presented in the form of anecdotes and in a not wholly logical order.

As the commentaries progress, the ideas outlined become significantly more than the narrow dogma of the day would have allowed. Indeed, many ideas only hinted at in the *Bahir* are more fully expounded in the *Zohar*. This includes the

existence of a female deity, or the Shekhinah, an inherent dualism in the nature of the world, a developed view of the inner life and, again, in *The Destiny of the Soul*, reincarnation. The commentaries also outline a threefold image of the self, beginning with the soul or nefesh, then the spirit or ruah, and then the super-soul or neshamah. Gershom Scholem defines the neshamah as 'the deeper intuitive power'. From the *Zohar*:

'The 'soul' (nefesh) stands in intimate relation to the body, nourishing it and upholding it; it is below, the first stirring. Having acquired due worth, it becomes the throne for the 'spirit' (ruah) to rest upon, as it is written, 'until the spirit be poured on us from on high' (Isa. 32:15). And when these two, soul and spirit, have duly readied themselves, they are worthy to receive the 'super-soul' (neshamah), resting in turn upon the throne of the spirit (ruah). The super-soul stands preeminent, and not to be perceived. There is throne upon throne, and for the highest a throne.'



The Sefirot, or Tree of Knowledge

Spring 2023

In addition to this view of the self, instruction is also given as to which practices help or hinder the development of the neshamah, and it is stated that resentment is deemed inimical to its proper functioning. The purpose of unfolding the neshamah is to gain insight into the hidden nature of the world. This approach is wholly Gnostic. An outline of this hidden nature of the world can be found in the Sephiroth, or the 'ten emanations of God':

'In the same wise has the Cause of causes derived the ten aspects of his Being which are known as sefirot, and named the crown the Source, which is a never-to-be-exhausted fountain of light, wherefrom he designates himself *eyn sof*, the Infinite.'

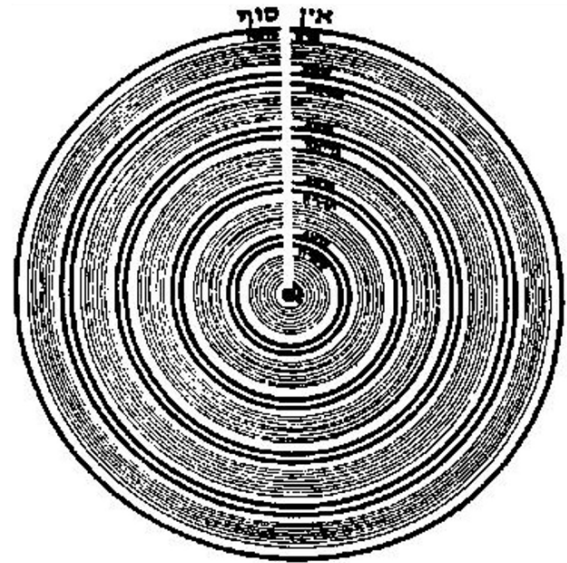


Johann Reuchlin (1455 – 1522)

For the best part of three hundred years, the Kabbalah remained largely unknown. Then in the sixteenth century, a German mystic, Johann Reuchlin, produced *On the Art of Kabbalah*, which further expounded on the ideas in the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*. The greater development of the ideas expounded in the *Bahir* and the *Zohar* suggest that what was published may have been only the thread of private discussions about its content. Nonetheless, Reuchlin's involvement brought what had been a very limited study of some highly unorthodox ideas to a much broader audience.

The Kabbalah, from its very outset, was expounded in symbolic language. There are no

formal statements of truth, no clearly outlined principles and no order to the ideas expressed. This is highly intuitive. As with the Tarot, the reader must make of the images what they will.



The Ein Sof, or 'Endless One'

Henri Bergson, who had a developed interest in intuition, wrote 'The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend'. The aim of the Kabbalah is to provide images to allow the reader to see what is presently hidden. The fuller our store of ideas, the fuller will be our understanding of ourselves, others and the world around us. It is the aim of the Kabbalah to provide the ground for that fuller understanding.

References:

The Sepher Bahir, Author Unknown, 1176, New Edition 2015, Tarl Warwick, *On the Mysteries of the Soul*, p.77

The Zohar, or Book of Splendor, edited by Gershom Scholem, Schocken Books, NY, 1977, p.19

Intuition Workshops

Develop:

Stoicism

Self-awareness

Insight

Balance

Judgement

Bath area only at present

Contact

editor@nascentstatepublishing.com

Spring 2023

Astrology

and the self

Schema huius præmissæ diuisionis Sphærarum .



The origins of astrology predate recorded history. In terms of Western astrology, this can be traced back to Egyptian or Chaldean origins. The existence of ancient Chinese astrology points to a common source, but recorded history does not include anything prior to about three thousand years, and so this would be impossible to state with any certainty. While Western and Chinese astrology share common themes, there is a difference between them, and this indicates a distortion through cultural adaptation.

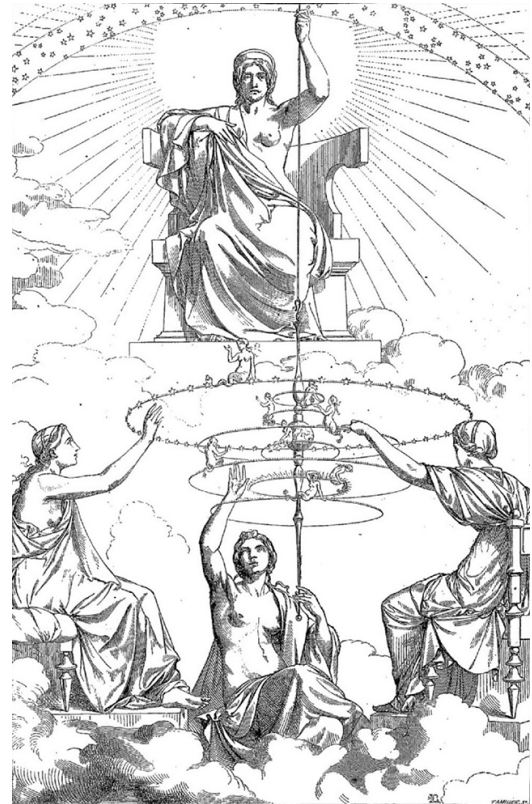
If astrology seems absurd to the modern era, it is owing to the dominance of logic. Logic is nominal, which is to say it works by applying a name or a word to an experience. This can be seen in the words 'astrology' and 'astronomy'; 'astrology' consists of 'astrum' or 'star', and 'logos' or 'meaning', while the 'nomia' of astronomy refers only to the rules or laws governing the movement of the planets. Logic results in a system without reference to meaning, and there can be no astrology in a meaningless universe.

For there to be an astrology, there has to be a correlation between the configuration of the planets and stars, and the date, place and time

of an event here on earth, notably the birth of an individual.

One of the earliest examples of this view of the world can be found in Plato's *Republic*, in the Myth of Er, as told by Socrates. The myth is a depiction of the dead as they depart for the afterworld, only to return again, to reincarnate into a new life and body. The process is governed by the spindle of necessity, which governs the planets.

'The largest (of fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second.'



Spindle of Necessity by Edmond Lechevallier-Chevignard
From this point of view, the time, place and date of our birth is not an accident. If this seems quaint to the modern reader, it is worth noting that Plato is regarded as the founder of Western philosophy, and he stated that the purpose of

Spring 2023

philosophy was to prevent us from drinking too deeply from the river of Lethe, and so forgetting all this:

‘Of this they were all obliged to drink a certain quantity, and those who were not saved by wisdom drank more than was necessary; and each one as he drank forgot all things.’



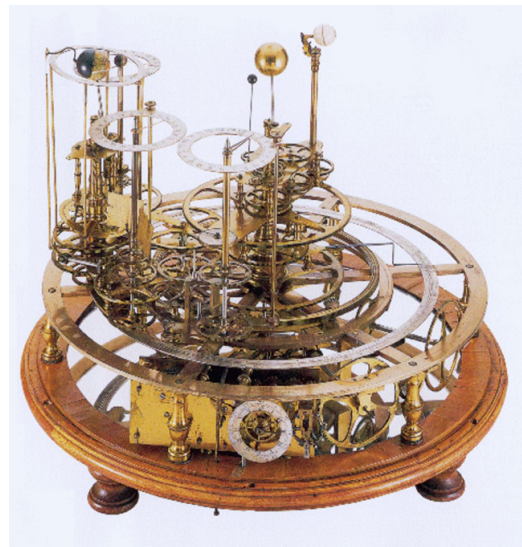
Dante and the River of Lethe, by Gustave Doré, 1832

Prior to the foundation of the Church, the teaching of astrology, inherited from the Greeks, was bound up with reincarnation. Saint Augustine, who laid the foundations for the Church in his book the *City of God*, rejected both. In 529 AD, the emperor Justinian banished all Pagan schools from Roman lands. Then the Church then anathematised or ‘cursed’ the subject of reincarnation, in Constantinople in 553 AD, and forbade anyone to speak of it.

The astrology that continued in the West was associated with the Manichean and Gnostic heresies and could not be spoken of openly. The Renaissance opened up Western culture to Pagan ideas once again. Those who are known to have shown an interest in astrology at that time include Isaac Newton, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Pico della Mirandola and Giordano Bruno. Others who included astrology in their larger works include Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus. Galileo, for example, interpreted Cosimo II de Medici’s birth chart in a manner too exact to suggest dilettantism:

‘Jupiter, Jupiter, I maintain, at the instant of the birth of your highness having at length emerged from the turbid mists of the horizon, and being in possession of the middle quarter of the heavens, and illuminating the eastern angle, from his own royal house, from that exalted throne, looked out upon your most happy birth...’

The secular, or non-religious view of the world, arose at the time of the Enlightenment, from which we draw our present materialistic outlook. Materialism will not allow for a world governed by a mind, and far less by any meaning, and so any attempt to portray the world in terms of meaning is deemed fanciful. This view is dominant in the world today and is the reason why astrology is dismissed as superstition.



Clockwork universe

The most formal expression of astrology can be found in the ‘natal’ or ‘birth chart’. The planets, and their arrangement within the signs of the Zodiac, is presented as a symbolic representation of the character of the individual.

Each of the planets has an attributed meaning. It would take a much fuller exposition of astrology to state the reasons for them, but the given meaning of the planets is as follows: Saturn represents order, structure and rigidification. Jupiter represents inward reflection and wisdom. Mars represents aggression and the will. The Sun is the ego, or the most essential aspect of the self. Venus represents femininity and creativity. Mercury represents spontaneity and quick-wittedness, and the Moon represents dreams and the unconscious. The position of one planet with respect to another is referred to as its ‘aspect’; its aspect can increase or reduce its influence.

Spring 2023

Each of the planets is arrayed within the twelve signs of the Zodiac, drawn from the fixed stars of the ecliptic. The Tropical Zodiac is used in the birth chart, which does not correspond to the Sidereal Zodiac. If a planet is in a particular sign, it alters its influence. This can be good or bad, depending on the planet and the sign. The meaning of each of the signs is as follows: Aries represents the head and thinking. Taurus represents the throat and speech. Gemini represents the arms and activity in the world. Cancer represents the chest and the border between the inner and outer worlds. Leo is the heart and the emotions. Virgo is the womb and innocence. Libra is the navel and balance. Scorpio is the sexual organs. Sagittarius is the thighs and purposefulness. Capricorn is the knees and the most unconscious element of human nature. Aquarius is the lower legs and fluidity, and Pisces is the feet and polarity.



Each of the signs has one of the four classical elements attributed to it. The fire signs are Aries, Leo and Sagittarius. Earth signs are Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn. Air signs are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, and Water signs are Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces. The four elements are themselves symbolic and represent the four temperaments; Fire is Choleric, Air is Sanguine, Water is Phlegmatic and Earth is Melancholic. The planets that determine the temperaments are those that come closest to the Earth, namely Venus and Mercury.

In addition to this, the time of birth will affect

which of the planets and signs are above or below the earth. The influences of those above the earth are direct, and the influences of those below the earth are indirect and therefore unconscious.

It can be seen from this that the depiction of the human personality in the birth chart is a highly complex one. While present day psychology dismisses astrology as superstitious nonsense, the inner life it depicts is far more complex than any materialistic account, limited to nature and nurture, will allow.

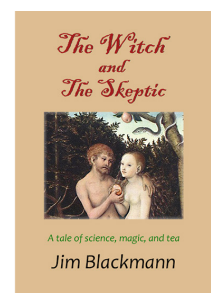
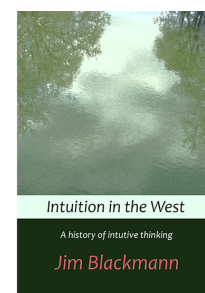
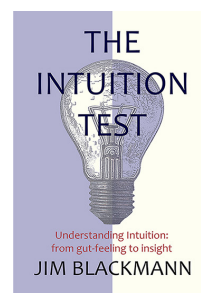
In addition to the birth chart, there is also mundane and judicial astrology, which depict the forces behind world events.

The aim of astrology is to depict both the inner life of the individual and events in the wider world in symbolic terms. The use of symbolic imagery allows for a very complex picture to emerge. Rather than reduce the world down to the mechanical clockwork of astronomy, astrology depicts the world in human, evocative and transcendent terms. If we are content with a purely mechanistic view of the world, we can safely ignore astrology. If we want a fuller understanding of ourselves and the world around us, then the symbolic imagery of astrology can provide this. To do so however, to approach astrology with genuine understanding, we have to use intuition.

References

Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Classics, 1977 edition), 27a, pp. 39-40.

Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius* or *Sidereal Messenger*, 1610, trans. Edward Stafford Carlos (London: Rivingtons, 1880), reprint, ed. by Peter Barker (Oklahoma: Byzantium Press, 2004), p. 3



By the same author:
The Intuition Test
Intuition in the West
The Witch & The Skeptic (a novel)
All available on Amazon