

# ECOSOPHIA

Toward an Ecological Spirituality



## BOOK CLUB POST

### The Doctrine of High Magic: Chapter 1

🕒 June 9, 2021

👤 John Michael Greer

💬 179 Comments



With this post we continue a monthly chapter-by-chapter discussion of *The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic* by Eliphas Lévi, the book that launched the modern magical revival. Here and in the months ahead we're plunging into the white-hot fires of creation where modern magic was born. If you're just joining us now, I recommend reading the earlier posts in this sequence first; you can find them [here](#). Either way, grab your tarot cards and hang on tight.

If you can read French, I strongly encourage you to get a copy of Lévi's book in the original and follow along with that; it's readily available for sale in Francophone countries, and can also be downloaded from [Archive.org](#). If not, the English

translation by me and Mark Mikituk is recommended; A.E. Waite's translation, unhelpfully retitled *Transcendental Magic*, is second-rate at best—riddled with errors and burdened with Waite's seething intellectual jealousy of Lévi—though you can use it after a fashion if it's what you can get. Also recommended is a tarot deck using the French pattern: the Knapp-Hall deck (unfortunately now out of print), the Wirth deck, or any of the Marseilles decks are suitable.

**Reading:**

“Chapter 1: The Initiate” (Greer & Mikituk, pp. 27-38).

**Commentary:**

In this first chapter, as elsewhere in our text, Lévi covers a great deal in a small number of pages and makes few allowances for those who like their instruction cut up into bite-sized pieces. Let's take it one step at a time.

To begin with, we encounter René Descartes' famous dictum, “I think, therefore I am.” That bit of prose has been misunderstood considerably in recent years, so it's helpful to review its meaning here. Descartes in his philosophical reflections was trying to find something he could not doubt, which he could then use as a foundation for philosophy. It occurred to him that the fact that he was doubting implied that there had to be a René Descartes to do the doubting, and so he had his foundation: his own experience of himself as a conscious, reflecting, individual being. That

was the birth certificate of modern philosophy, and the entire trajectory of modern Western philosophical thought from Descartes to Deleuze traces out the way that this core idea was explored, developed, challenged, affirmed, rejected, reframed, and eventually reduced to self-negating gibberish.

Lévi chose a different approach. The divine name that the God of Israel revealed to Moses in the Book of Exodus was אהיה אשר אהיה , *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, “I am that I am.” Lévi applies the same principle more generally: being is being, what exists is what exists. More formally, what you experience exists as an experience, whatever other modes of existence may be hypothesized for it. The basic formula of existentialism—“existence precedes essence”—could almost be Lévi’s formula as well, though he refuses to predicate anything of experience besides the simple fact that it happens, and he doesn’t mope, as the existentialists did, because experience refuses to provide him with the certainties they pined for.

And thought, the form of experience that Descartes took as his standpoint? Thought is the word, *le verbe*, which Mark and I agreed to translate as “the verb” to catch both the meanings of the French word. Less tersely, thought is speech, the net of language in which we try however clumsily to catch what exists. It is always secondary to, and dependent on, the primary reality of experience. When Descartes used the net in an attempt to prove the existence of fish—well, the joke is inescapable: he put Descartes before the horse. The fact that there was definitely an experience being had didn’t prove that some essentially

René Descartesish entity was having it, and it certainly didn't justify the grandiose edifice he built atop that shaky foundation.

Like Descartes, you experience yourself as a center of will, thought, feeling, perception, and that experience exists, as an experience. That doesn't prove that there's a "you" separate from that experience, though of course it doesn't disprove it either. Drawing sweeping conclusions from that experience, of a kind that are not drawn from other experiences—as Descartes did, and as a great many modern Western philosophers did in his wake—is a dubious procedure at best, and its results were tolerably often just as dubious. It took Nietzsche's furious prose to bring philosophy back face to face with the raw data of experience. The encounter was traumatic enough that a great many philosophers are still hiding in their closets waiting for the big bad universe to go away and leave them in peace.

Long before Nietzsche, however, Lévi was already proposing a reliance on experience as such as the philosophical basis for his system of magic. Why does magic need a philosophical basis? Because magic is to philosophy what engineering is to science; it is applied or operative philosophy. It works, as we'll see, with the irrational aspects of the human mind primarily, but in what Lévi calls high magic those aspects are always guided and directed by a clear conscious understanding of principles. Folk magic, like folk crafts, uses traditional rules of thumb to

guide practice; magic, like engineering, uses a conceptual understanding instead.

Experience, as we have noted, includes the experience of self—of yourself as a center of will, thought, feeling, and perception. All other experiences you have relate in one way or another to the collection of experiences that you sum up in the capacious word “me.” What is this collection of experiences? That’s the next theme of this chapter.

Who are you? If you take up magic you will have to confront that question over and over again. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses, your desires and aversions, your passions and prejudices is essential to the successful practice of magic. To be a mage is to be a priest and a king, Lévi says, a priest invoking the astral light and a king over the realities that unfold from that light. If you follow the path of magic you must be prepared to act as a priest and a king (or, we can add, as a priestess and a queen). You will not be ruling over other people, by the way. Your first task is to rule over yourself; your second is to rule over the astral light, the great magical agent to which Lévi devotes many pages to come.

The great obstacle to that priesthood and kingship is slavery to passions and prejudices. By passions are meant instinctive drives, the whole range of cravings and aversions we inherit from the biological ancestors of our species, subject to modification by cultural and personal factors. By prejudices are meant, as the word literally means, pre-judgments, fixed ideas borrowed from our cultures or

created by ourselves. We all have passions and prejudices, and Lévi does not pretend that we can get rid of them. It is simply a question of who will be the master.

Now of course this sort of thinking is unfashionable in some circles nowadays, just as they were unfashionable in some circles in Lévi's time. Romanticism was a waning current by the time he wrote, but there were still plenty of people in Parisian literary and cultural circles who preached the doctrine of wallowing in passion, abandoning reflection, and casting off the oh-so-dreary burden of self-control and self-knowledge. Some of those people dabbled in magic—as of course some of their equivalents still do the same thing today.

Nowadays there are influential cultural trends and schools of thought, with their own ornate philosophical volumes to back them up, insisting that self-control is bad, self-mastery is bad, you should let go of all those bourgeois hangups and abandon yourself to the churning abyss of passion, and so on. If you're interested in looking, you can find entire volumes insisting that schizophrenia is good and sanity is bad, and this sort of thinking has its echoes in some corners of the magical scene. If your idea of the zenith of human potential involves rocking back and forth in a puddle of your own urine while babbling nonsense syllables, don't let me stop you, but, er, that's not what Eliphas Lévi is interested in teaching.

Lévi makes a strict distinction here, and it's one worth making. To attain conscious control over your passions and

your prejudices is to be able to participate freely in the dance of magical forces. To remain subject to your passions and your prejudices is to be a plaything of those forces, and they are careless of their toys. Those are your choices; take your pick.

Granting for a moment that you've chosen the path of high magic, what then? Lévi offers you four disciplines, the four classic magical virtues: to know, to dare, to will, and to be silent. Aspirants to magical power must replace their ignorance with knowledge, their timidity with daring, their passivity with will, and their thoughtless chatter with silence: not just once, in some formal or symbolic sense, but continually, whenever appropriate opportunities presents themselves. This is the most basic and most essential practice of magical training, and it can be carried out in every part of daily life.

As he presents this course of study, Lévi goes deeper into theory. Magic, he says, is the traditional science of the secrets of nature which comes to us from the mages; that is to say, magic isn't whatever you want it to be; it is a specific body of traditional knowledge that reached Lévi's time from a specific source. ("Science," remember, still meant any body of organized knowledge, not just modern science, when Lévi wrote.) The only doctrine of magic is that the visible is a manifestation of the invisible; that is to say, the traditions of magic hold that the world is not an illusion or a lie, that what we experience is in some sense analogous to underlying realities we do not experience. (*Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, what exists is what exists.)

Thus our intellects and our wills are not left tumbling about in a void. The discoveries of the mages of the past are a source of guidance here and now, and the experiences with which we interact are analogous to a deeper reality, unknowable but present. Furthermore, we have another power as potent as these two. That power received very little attention from the popular and educated cultures of Lévi's time. It gets more lip service these days, but its power and potential are still generally neglected. That power is the imagination, which Lévi also called the diaphane and the translucent.

The discovery of the imagination is one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century. Go looking in books on psychology older than that and you'll find that the mind's image-making power is usually neglected, or lumped in with one of the other mental functions. The Romantic movement as the end of the eighteenth century opened the way to a recognition of imagination as a core power of the mind; by the middle of the nineteenth, writers such as Lévi embraced it; by the end of the century fantasy fiction, the great literary expression of imagination unbound, had been invented by William Morris, and the world began to change accordingly. In Lévi's time the imagination was still little regarded, and so he had to spend paragraphs explaining such basic points as the fact that the way you imagine yourself plays a potent role in shaping your experiences in life.

The words "diaphane" and "translucent," by the way, both mean the same thing: something through which light can pass. In this turn of phrase is an essential key to Lévi's





approach, though this chapter does not yet present the lock that the key can open. The imagination, rightly used, is the capacity to create forms through which the light of understanding can pass. It is the third factor that resolves a binary that got a lot of attention in Lévi's book, and at least as much attention in his time: the binary between faith and reason.

Lévi's approach to this binary, which we'll be discussing repeatedly from different angles as these essays proceed, is as straightforward as it is practical. There are things that we are capable of knowing by applying reason to our experiences, he suggests, and there are things that we can't know by that means. Mages, like everyone else, deal with both kinds of things on a daily basis. Being mages, they do so in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, and respond to each of these categories of things with a human capacity suited to it. Those things that can be known are properly addressed through reason; those things that cannot be known are properly addressed through faith. Applying faith to the proper objects of reason, or reason to the proper objects of faith, is to Lévi the basic formula of human confusion.

It's important in this context to understand what Lévi means by faith. He doesn't mean belief in doctrines. (This will become extremely clear as we proceed.) He means an attitude of trust in traditional practices and the myths that frame them. As a Catholic, Lévi attended Mass and accepted that there was a truth of some kind behind the mythic images and ritual practices of his religion. That was

enough for him, and from his point of view, it was a profound mistake for religious authorities to go beyond that and try to make dogmatic claims about what was and was not true about the universe. That was trying to apply faith to the proper objects of reason—trying to claim to know about things that human beings can't know.

Equally, when rationalists denounced religion root and branch and insisted that traditional rituals and myths should be discarded because they weren't rational, they were trying to apply reason to the proper objects of faith, an equally unhelpful act. To apply reason to the things we can know something about and faith to those things that are beyond the reach of the human mind: that was his formula for a working reconciliation between science and religion, reason and faith.

Imagination is central to that reconciliation. Myths and rituals are creations and vehicles of the human imagination, which enables us to approach in symbolic form those aspects of the cosmos we can't understand in any other way. As the diaphane, the imagination establishes forms through which light can pass. How this is done will be made clearer as we proceed.

### **Notes for Study and Practice:**

It's quite possible to get a great deal out of *The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic* by the simple expedient of reading each chapter several times and thinking at length about the ideas and imagery that Lévi presents. For those who want to

push things a little further, however, meditation is a classic tool for doing so.

The method of meditation I will be teaching as we read Lévi is one that is implicit in his text, and was developed in various ways by later occultists following in his footsteps. It is a simple and very safe method, suitable for complete beginners but not without benefits for more experienced practitioners. It will take you five minutes a day. Its requirements are a comfortable chair, your copy of Lévi's book, and a tarot deck of one of the varieties discussed earlier.

For your work on this chapter, take Trump I, *Le Bateleur*—this translates as “The Juggler” or “The Magician.” Your first task is to study it and get familiar with the imagery. Sit down, get out the card, and study it. Spend five minutes doing this on the first day you devote to this practice.

Your second task is to associate a letter with it. Lévi gives you two options, the Hebrew letter א (Aleph) or the Latin letter A. Choose one alphabet and stick to it. The sound values aren't of any importance here, nor is there a “right” choice. You're choosing labels for a mental filing cabinet. Most people can make the necessary association quite promptly, but spend a session exploring it. Sit down, get out the card, and study it. Whichever letter you choose, how does it relate to the card? Many decks make the figure on this card stand in a posture representing Aleph, but don't stop with that. See how many modes of Aleph-ness or A-ness you can find in your card.

The third, fourth, and fifth sessions are devoted to the three titles Lévi gives for the card: Disciplina, Ain Soph, Kether. Sit down, get out the card, and study it. How does discipline relate to the imagery on the card and the letter you've chosen? That's one session. How about the Cabalistic concept of Ain Soph? Or the concept of Kether the Crown, the first sphere of the Tree of Life? Those are the next two. (If you have no previous knowledge about the Cabala, do a little reading online; you just need to have a basic notion of what these terms mean.)

One of the great booby traps awaiting inexperienced occultists inevitably pops up at this point: "But what if I get the wrong answer?" There are no wrong answers in meditation. Seriously, **there are no wrong answers in meditation**. Your goal is to learn how to work with certain capacities of will and imagination most people never develop. Stray thoughts, strange fancies, and whimsical notions do this as well as anything.

Sessions Six through the end of the month are done exactly the same way, except that you take the concepts from the chapter. Sit down, get out the card, and study it. Then open the book to Chapter I of the Doctrine and find something in it that interests you. Spend five minutes figuring out how it relates to the imagery on the card, the letter, and the three titles. Do the same thing with a different passage the next day, and the day after, and so on.

Don't worry about where this is going. Unless you've already done this kind of practice, the goal won't make any kind of

sense to you. Just do the practice. You'll find, if you stick with it, that over time the card you're working on takes on a curious quality I can only call conceptual three-dimensionality: a depth is present that was not there before, a depth of meaning and ideation. It can be very subtle or very loud, or anything in between. Don't sense it? Don't worry. Sit down, get out the card, and study it. Do the practice and see where it takes you.

We'll be going on to "Chapter 2: The Columns of the Temple" on July 14, 2021. See you then!

---

Share this:

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Pinterest](#)[LinkedIn](#)[Reddit](#)[Tumblr](#)[Print](#)[BOOK CLUB](#)[DOCTRINE AND RITUAL OF HIGH MAGIC](#)[ELIPHAS LEVI](#)[OCCULTISM](#)

**« Previous Post**

Toward the Breaking Point

**Next Post »**

In Search of Immortality

## 179 Comments



**Lady Cutekitten of Lolcat** says:

#1. June 9, 2021 at 12:09 pm

Hi JMG,

Speaking of magic, I tried the thing where you open the door and meet somebody. It opened, but there was nobody there, just some nice scenery. Is that supposed to happen the first time, or did I mess up?

---

**Antoinetta III** says:

#2. June 9, 2021 at 12:37 pm

Why does Levy recommend selecting the first letter of the alphabet as the label for a mental filing cabinet? Since the number 1 is already printed on the card, why would this not be used for this purpose?

Antoinetta III

---

**youngelephant** says:

#3. June 9, 2021 at 12:55 pm

JMG, sounds like you gave a big hint about creating mental bodies at the very end. Thanks for naming that.

Commentariat, This chapter dropped some big hints to Lévi's riddles in the intro.

---

**Daniel Kislinger** says:

#4. June 9, 2021 at 1:00 pm

Hello John,

I was only able to get the following tarot card deck: "The Hermetic Tarot" based on the esoteric workings of The secret Order of the Golden Dawn. By Godfrey Dowson. I compared the images on line with the Marseilles deck but I am not able to figure out what the differences in the images might mean and if that makes an impact on my understanding going forward. Shall I use them or continue my search for a Marseilles deck? Thanks in advance.

---

**chuaquin** says:

#5. June 9, 2021 at 1:02 pm

" As a Catholic, Lévi attended Mass and accepted that there was a truth of some kind behind the mythic images and ritual practices of his religion. That was enough for him, and from his point of view, it was a profound mistake for religious authorities to go beyond that and try to make dogmatic claims about what was and was not true about the universe. That was trying to apply faith to the proper objects of reason

—trying to claim to know about things that human beings can't know.”

As a “unorthodox” Christian, I agree with Lévi in that point; faith is a too serious game to reduce it to dogmatism about everything in the universe...

Narrow-minded racionalists make another mistake: they turn reason in a goddess. It's an even more boring claim than Catholic orthodoxy.

---

**David, by the lake** says:

#6. June 9, 2021 at 1:09 pm

John—

Two initial reactions to this chapter and commentary came up for me. First—and I'll admit it has been a good while since I've read any of the philosophical works, so I'm going off of memory—if I recall correctly, Rand's Objectivism began with a similar premise of “existence exists.” (Of course, how one proceeds from that foundation is another thing entirely.)

Secondly, the point of “what we experience is in some sense analogous to underlying realities we do not experience” struck me as being similar though not identical to Plato's analogy of the cave. If I'm understanding this properly, rather than unreal shadows of a “true” reality, what you and Levi are saying is that the things we experience are related to realities we do not (and cannot) experience, but also that



that which we experience is in no way less real because of those connections.

I'll be going over this chapter several times. Much to chew on for the next month!

---

**Clarke aka Gwydion** says:

#7. June 9, 2021 at 2:06 pm

This analysis resonates with me very powerfully, and expresses clearly thoughts and images I had long felt very important. Long, as in from my earliest conscious moments when I studied the emergence of thoughts from the undifferentiated, saw them covered with vague and then more vivid forms, and then being covered with words/concepts. I was maybe fourteen. No one I knew then thought this was either remarkable or important, and I lacked the background to go further.

When I was studying Buddhism under Tibetan sages, we studied Madhyamaka, Yogacharya-madhyamaka, and after a great deal of preparation, finally engaged in attempts at "Mahamudra." To my mind, these almost exactly parallel what we are covering here. Of course, your mileage may vary.

Plenty of people got stuck at pure madhyamaka analysis (reasoning about reasoning to the point of destroying and disabling reason itself—which can be a valuable starting

point but heaven help anyone who stops there) and they considered the yogacarya portion (where the yogi's experience is considered valuable rather than something to disregard) to be more "primitive." In the original meaning of the word, it is. But that is not what Asian or western critics of yogacarya meant.

It's wild to have gone through developing my innate predispositions and understandings with early study of the western mystery tradition and philosophy, then having studied a fully developed Asian esoteric system and to finally at a fairly great age (I'm 72) to come back to the beginning. However far one goes, no matter what one achieves, in at least one sense we are always beginners. Or to quote the great Buckaroo Banzai (who I believe was quoting one of the Tibetan greats, the 16th Karmapa): "Wherever you go, there you are."

I lacked the tools as a younger man (and colleagues also) to benefit from Levi, though I was aware of his work. I'm very grateful for this chance to refresh my soul and mind this way. Please let me know if I'm off base here. I'd hate to go further on a faulty foundation. Ain soph, indeed.

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#8. June 9, 2021 at 2:17 pm

Your Kittenship, sometimes that happens. The next time you do it, try calling out for someone to guide you.

Antoinetta, because the numbers have other uses and meanings in Levi's magical system.

Youngelephant, good. Keep working on it.

Daniel, there are scores of Marseilles decks, most of which can easily be ordered online. Please get one.

Chuaquin, no argument there!

David BTL, good! You can start with "existence exists" and head off in several different directions. You can go Rand's way, which amounts to "existence exists (and my prejudices and value judgments about it are objectively true)." You can go Sartre's way, which amounts to "existence exists (and my prejudices and value judgments about it are flailings in the void)." You can go Lévi's way, which amounts to "existence exists (and my prejudices and value judgments about it are among the things that exist, full stop, end of sentence)."

Doubtless there are other ways as well.

As for Plato, excellent! In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche devotes a chapter to a brief but brilliant analysis of "how the 'real world' finally became a fable." He's taking apart the notion that the world we experience is somehow fake and the "real world" is something else apart from it — a notion that's central to Plato, of course, and to a great many other philosophers as well. What Lévi is saying implies the same thing, though Nietzsche said it more crisply; the world consists of things we can experience and things we can't,



some of the former reflect some of the latter, but all belong to one world.

Clarke, you're not off base at all. It's important to recognize the flaws and limitations of reason, but yeah, if you stop there you end up unable to wipe your own backside because you can't postulate how. The movement from critical analysis of reason to reliance on experience is also something that Platonism went through, leading to Plotinus and the Neoplatonists more generally. I don't know if this is generally true, but my experience has always been that every course of study worth the time ends up circling back around to its beginning. Eliot comes to mind:

"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."

---

**jbucks** says:

#9. June 9, 2021 at 2:17 pm

It sounds like quite a cluttered, busy place in the mind if you have all these influencing how you think and act:

- Memories (personal prejudices)
- Behavioural norms (cultural prejudices)
- The archetypes (the manifestation of the instincts/passions)

– And something else that seems to watch all of these other things, influence them, and be influenced by them

And the imagination seems like a common thread through all of them, and can amplify or change all of them.

I forgot, until your paragraph above, that the word imagination includes the word image, that is, the faculty to create images. If imagination is the thing linking us to the invisible reality, then no wonder mages use visual symbols.

---

**Eric Cole** says:

#10. June 9, 2021 at 2:24 pm

Hi JMG,

Having spent a few sessions studying Le Batelevr I am a bit confused after seeing the image above. All five fingers and palm are in front of the wand in the image on the card from my deck. The wand appears to be suspended mid-air behind the hand of the Magician/Juggler. I suppose he may really be juggling.

I haven't found any other Marseille deck images online showing the same finger placement. Should I get another deck? I wonder what other differences I might stumble across?

–Eric

---

**Tamar** says:

#11. June 9, 2021 at 2:38 pm



JMG,

Once again, thank you so much for creating this space. I have read and will re-read the first chapter as I wait for my Marseille deck and begin the meditation practice.

It seems his first question is, who are you that is embarking on this path? And Oedipus is the cautionary tale? I've always found the story fascinating and wondered about the layers of meaning in it. Now I still wonder about his knowing the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx without knowing the answer. Was it reason without experience and understanding?

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#12. June 9, 2021 at 3:36 pm

Jbucks, excellent. Can you imagine a sound? 😊

Eric, there are scores of different Marseilles decks and every one of them has its own oddities. Don't worry about the oddities of yours; see if you can include them as symbols. What do they represent to you?

Tamar, keep asking those questions. They'll take you far.

---

**Justin Patrick Moore** says:

#13. June 9, 2021 at 3:44 pm

It sounds like this work is going to help us grow new organs of perception.

---

**Augusto** says:

#14. June 9, 2021 at 4:02 pm

Ha! You have a powerful silence, have you been told that before?

I have not finished this chapter but of course I was going to get an answer to my recent experience about the automatic lemniscate drawing among Levi's words and further instructions on what to make of it. Apparently I need to start thinking about crafting a comfortable meditation chair too.

---

**Lady Cutekitten of Lolcat** says:

#15. June 9, 2021 at 5:37 pm

I guess I better get back there quick before some developer pounces and turns all that lovely scenery into a strip mall. ☐.  
Thank you, JMG! That was not easy to do, I really had to concentrate!

---

**Fra' Lupo** says:

#16. June 9, 2021 at 5:50 pm

Know Thyself, n'est pas?

Interesting that the first part of the discussion is a route Alan Watts would also tread in his works in the 20th Century ("On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are," etc.) which although couched in apparently "Eastern" vesture betrays a certain Neoplatonic cut (as I've probably mentioned elsewhere)...

Axé

---

**Phutatorius** says:

#17. June 9, 2021 at 7:36 pm

Would you expand on Wm Morris as the "inventor" of literary imagination? I feel attracted to the Pre-Raphaelites, especially the socialist ones. But what about Bellamy?

My first impression of this chapter: all the talk of the Thebaid, etc, is now absent. So I'm quite ready to suppose that here he is offering hints to solving the riddles that he highlighted in the introduction.

---

**Dylan** says:

#18. June 9, 2021 at 7:51 pm



I've studied the Smith-Waite deck but hadn't examined the Marseilles very closely until this past month. The following thoughts are based on Yoav Ben-Dov's CBD Tarot, a reproduction of the 1760 Nicholas Conver deck, which seems to be where you sourced the image at the head of this post.

One train of thought I'd been playing with on and off with Smith-Waite was arranging the trumps as sets of paired binaries (the Emperor/Empress, Sun/Moon are obvious, but in Smith-Waite the Lovers and the Devil are also clearly made to resemble one another) and then re-titling the cards based on the traits these pairings bring out. For example, if you concentrate solely on the Lovers and the Devil, it's easy to see how they could be re-named Freedom and Bondage. It's a fun puzzle in part because it never quite works out perfectly, no matter how I arrange and re-arrange.

The third or fourth time I laid out all my new Marseilles trumps for study, I noticed with glee that the pairing game is much easier with this deck- perhaps the more uniform colour scheme helps, but also the fact that many of the figures seem to lean and look beyond their frame, as if they were made to interact with each other.

The pairings are different from Smith-Waite, too. Here, L'Amoureux resembles Le Jugement. L'Etoile seems more comfortable alongside La Lune and Le Soleil than Smith-Waite's Star. La Force, La Justice, and Temperance emerge much more clearly as three of a kind. And Le Chariot and Le Pendu, which I had already ventured to pair in Smith-Waite,

seem like much more natural partners here. (It's the squared arch surmounting both). I would re-name these Triumph and Humiliation, or Motion and Immobility.

This game has given me much enjoyable food for thought and I wanted to share it here. Maybe others have had similar reflections?

---

**Dylan** says:

#19. June 9, 2021 at 7:54 pm

Also, "Descartes before the horse" is priceless. Does credit for that redoubtable quip go to you, or did you encounter it somewhere else?

---

**Kimberly Steele** says:

#20. June 9, 2021 at 8:02 pm

Do you know what the object is to the Magician's left is on the table that looks like a clothes iron?

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#21. June 9, 2021 at 8:57 pm

Justin, that's the plan.

Augusto, or learn to get comfortable on the chair you have.



Your Kittenship, that's one of the advantages of the practice.

Fra' Lupo, no surprises there. Watts had a solid background in the mystical end of the Anglican tradition, which is Neoplatonic through and through.

Phutatorius, if you reread what I wrote, you'll find that I named Morris as the inventor of fantasy fiction, not of the literary imagination in general. Last I checked, his novel *The Wood Beyond the World* is still considered the first work of modern fantasy fiction. As for the Thebaid, Lévi likes to come at the same questions from many different angles.

Dylan, good! The pairings are of course quite deliberate in the Waite-Smith deck — the towers in the Moon are visible in the distance in Death, for example. Whether they're intentional or synchronistic in the Marseilles decks is an interesting question, to which I don't know the answer. As for Descartes and the horse, it's not original to me — I'm not sure who coined it.

Kimberly, in the oldest versions of the deck it's an open satchel from which all the other things have been taken.

---

**Goldenhawk** says:

#22. June 9, 2021 at 10:37 pm

Hi Dylan,



Your game of pairing the cards and renaming them is a great idea. Thanks for sharing it!

I played a sort of game too. I used the Knapp-Hall deck. I laid out the Major Arcana on my dining room table in a circle, starting with the Magician and going around clockwise. I put the Fool in the center. Then I walked clockwise around the table and spent a brief time looking at each card. When I got all the way around, I went back counterclockwise and studied them again.

Some of the cards seemed to speak to me. The vivid colors of all the cards *en masse* created a distinct dramatic/emotional energy. I noticed how some of them seemed to mirror or echo each other, or shared certain elements. I noticed how some of them were indoors, and some were outdoors, and how that affected the energy transmitted by the card.

I left them on the table overnight and when I returned in the morning, I had the impression that they'd spent the night communicating amongst themselves. (Kind of like in "Toy Story," where the toys have a secret life of their own when the kid's not around!)

I imagined that they were a group of old friends gathered around my table, and that each of them would have a story to tell me as I got to know them.

It was a nice departure from my usual dry, analytical approach to learning new things.

---

**Phil Ayliffe** says:

#23. June 9, 2021 at 11:05 pm

“I think, therefore, I am. . . I contract, therefore, I’m.”

---

**SiliconGuy** says:

#24. June 9, 2021 at 11:50 pm

“it was a profound mistake for religious authorities to go beyond that and try to make dogmatic claims about what was and was not true about the universe. That was trying to apply faith to the proper objects of reason—trying to claim to know about things that human beings can’t know.

Equally, when rationalists denounced religion root and branch and insisted that traditional rituals and myths should be discarded because they weren’t rational, they were trying to apply reason to the proper objects of faith, an equally unhelpful act. To apply reason to the things we can know something about and faith to those things that are beyond the reach of the human mind: ”

I thought that sounded familiar;

“Non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA) is the view, advocated by Stephen Jay Gould, that science and religion each represent different areas of inquiry, fact vs. values, so there is a difference between the “nets” over which they have “a legitimate magisterium, or domain of teaching authority”, and the two domains do not overlap.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-overlapping\\_magisteria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-overlapping_magisteria)

---

**Valenzuela** says:

#25. June 10, 2021 at 12:57 am

This first chapter seems to have much in common with the first chapter of the Dao De Jing.

“The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and Earth.

The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.

Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.

These two spring from the same source but differ in name;  
this appears as darkness.

Darkness within darkness.

The gate to all mystery.”

---

**RMS** says:

#26. June 10, 2021 at 1:07 am



JMG,

Knowing, understanding, and controlling myself was something I quickly realized was a major necessity of magic from the moment I started studying it – reading your books, and others. It's helped me in profound ways over the years.

I take away from this chapter that message about how the past can still teach us things about today. How even though we aren't living in a time period, there are still reflections of what is today. I also take away the power of the imagination. The power of visualization. The power of how you imagine yourself can change how you act and change you, or how you use your imagination to create say a story can impact the world and change it in profound ways, from the spiritual, to the mental, to the emotional, to the physical. It also reminds me of how people use imaginary numbers to make change in the real, too. There are many applications.

(I'll admit, I starting writing this part before I read your note about the exercises for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th sessions). I'm also thinking about how this chapter relates to the Tree of Life, as Ain Soph and Kether were noted on the title page. Kether is in Ain Soph, and Ain Soph is the divine nature of the Creator. Kether – the crown, just like on the tarot card and the note of the king in Levi, and the point of manifest and unmanifest, you have to be the master of yourself before anything else. Kether as nothing, the thing we cannot



see, the imaginary, the hidden. Also, Kether as the Divine Will, and how that may relate to our own Will and taking the first steps in the work as initiates. Discipline, again, the crown and mastering yourself. Overcoming binaries, coming to peace with certain parts of your being so they don't control you.

I do also take away the power of symbolism. I know that will be very important, and the last exercise you set for us I already feel strongly. The ability to look at symbols, or one image, and see a sea of ideas, concepts, guiding principles inside it. To see what others don't because they aren't looking for it, they don't know it.

In the Manly P. Hall version of the tarot deck, the two serpents around the wand I know may represent Hermes Trismegistus, who Levi mentions, but it could also represent the creation of a tertiary. And the pointing up and the pointing down are evident as well.

Also, the statement "The scabbard is as deep as the sword is long" from Levi comes to mind when I see the dagger and sword on the table. The cup perhaps representing faith, maybe the wand/caduceus representing reason?

The crown on the banner could represent being a king or striving to be, to be the master rather than be mastered, but the fact that they aren't wearing the crown says something to me, too. Perhaps the image of the crown (that symbol) gives the magician that thing of which they work toward, that turning of imagination with reason into form and action.



The natural setting gives the reminder that magic is centered in nature, as well.

I know I will re-read a few times to see things I didn't see the first time. The sphinx keeps coming to mind.

Glad to be reading with you all,

– RMS

---

**BoysMom** says:

#27. June 10, 2021 at 1:53 am

Of course le Verbe promptly triggers in my mind: In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the Beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of Men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. John 1:1-5, KJV (more or less, I make no claims to inerrancy) for those who haven't got bits of scripture stashed at the tips of the fingers of their minds. These verses, by the by, are a fine theme for meditation. Do recommend. All of the books attributed to John are excellent material for meditation, if anyone is somehow lacking such.

M. Levi would have been familiar with the Gospel of John, being a literate man of his time, so I assume his choice of

terminology was deliberately chosen to bring to his readers' minds that passage about creation and salvation.

---

**Eric Cole** says:

#28. June 10, 2021 at 2:11 am

Oh interesting. The visible is a manifestation of the invisible. The visible tarot card provides a scene and set of symbols which can open doors to invisible realms of somethings our minds can not grasp by intellect.

Hm. I see some parallels with magic and the occult in writing a story a scene at a time.

---

**bryanallen** says:

#29. June 10, 2021 at 2:27 am

Greetings and salutations, instructor of High Magic. In studying my "Bateleur" card I'm struck by the number and variety of detail differences between my card (from the 1930 Paul Marteau, de la famille Grimaud edition) and the card that leads this essay. Here's a look at my card:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/jMWvDjneeFKU7VLY6>

The alternation (oh, an "A" word!) of colors, the pair of dice on the table, the lack of green as seen in your card: there are a LOT of differences! I suppose that's one of many challenges: find connections that Levi, and you, are

suggesting, even though my view of the world (my card, my sensorum) differs in many details. Wow, I can see I'll have a lot to meditate on...

Also fascinated in comparing Le Bateleur to The Magician in the Pixie Smith deck; Pixie's rendition is much more detailed but at the same time strikes me as being a bit "hit you over the head" obvious; in both cases there are examples of the four "suites" but on the Marseilles card they're less blatantly obvious. Hmmm. Much to ponder. Gratitude!

---

**Mr O.** says:

#30. June 10, 2021 at 2:33 am

Hi JMG. Thank you for this wonderful analysis. Quick question on associating each card with a letter. In my misspent youth following the GD system I built up a very close relationship with the tarot and Hebrew alphabet but based on the GD attributions which are of course different from Levi. This being the case should I use the Latin alphabet even though I am emotionally drawn to the Hebrew? Or will it matter if I build up another mental filing cabinet of the tarot based on the same code but with different attributions?

---

**Tanya** says:

#31. June 10, 2021 at 3:18 am

Dear JMG and fellow practitioners



So excited to be getting this focused practise under way!

Love your and Mark's book – what a splendid and succinct contribution to the Art – thank you. Levi's introductory chapter is a revelation unto itself.

I loved what you have said about faith and reason. Indeed. And imagination (intuition / development of inherent psychic abilities) forming that third element – the bridge between the two.

I'm seeing how faith relates to the yin, latent, feminine, unknown, invisible, dark, mother, moon aspects. Astral Light. POWER.

And reason the opposite yang, manifest, masculine, known, visible, light, father, sun qualities. Manifest Light. LOVE.

Even though both pillars or aspects each contain love and power, I've "labelled" faith / yin as Power, because it's this invisible Force or womb that drives or underlies Love... and it's this Force that expresses visibly or manifests as Love / Creation.

Unconditional / Universal Love = greater amounts of Power and vice versa.

Infinitely interwoven and relying on each other to "play" their part – to BE. Two sides of the same coin.

With imagination being the middle pillar (of the Tree of Life) – the fine line, representing WISDOM (perhaps even the Ouroboros that holds the two together); and that when brought into the equation, bring a balance between Love and Power.

And from this vantage point, discernment can be made as to when appropriate amounts of Love and Power, or faith and reason, are to be applied in any given situation... using of course the principles “to Know, to Dare, to Will, to be Silent”... which also when practised and embodied lead to increasing levels of Wisdom.

Love that infinite cycle. It’s only going to spiral deeper and deeper. Thank you!

Down the rabbit hole we go...

Yay! 😊

~ Tanya

---

**Darkest Yorkshire** says:

#32. June 10, 2021 at 3:24 am

How does the idea of self-control mesh with what’s known about optimal human performance? For example an athlete performing at their best can’t be thinking about what they’re doing. In *Streetlights and Shadows: Searching for the Keys to Adaptive Decision Making*, Gary Klein describes how

experienced firefighters don't go through a logical analysis of a fire. They take one look at it and know what to do. Forcing them into conscious thought processes would degrade their performance, and this is true in many fields. The best mental structure is a balance between pre-planning – like checklists in planes – but also the ability to improvise.

The phrase that came to mind is 'you only get one chance to be spontaneous'. Subconscious impulse can be so much more creative – don't you risk losing that if you run everything through the filter of self-control? Since you say the best place is midpoint between two extremes, isn't there a place for both?

---

**Helen** says:

#33. June 10, 2021 at 4:23 am

I'm really excited about this bookclub, and where it will take us.

May I ask from those willing to say a prayer for my best friend, my dear girl Molly, one of my dogs. Molly had congestive heart failure that came on suddenly in about July last year.

Yesterday, June 9, I made the heartbreaking but necessary decision to give her a peaceful end before suffering overtook her.

I've prayed continually for her dear soul's safe journey and would ask the same from any of you willing to do so.

I feel so sad and empty right now, it's just me and Milo, so prayers for us would be appreciated too.

The last three years have been exhausting, with mum, then Molly.

This book club may be just what I need, and I hope your prayers will help me to find strength as I grieve my dearest girl.

Helen in Oz

---

**Marko** says:

#34. June 10, 2021 at 4:26 am

May I ask about a specific of a universal wirth deck. If I am not the 999th person to ask such a stupid question.

I noticed that, whereas the picture you posted on the top of the page has many items on the table, my magician only has a sword, a cup and a strange looking coin/medallion/compass on the table. Plus there is a flower growing under the table. On the other hand Levi even mentioned in this chapter, that there are some items placed openly on the table and some are hidden in the bag.

There is no bag on the universal wirth magician, but also there seems to be no bag on the Knapp-Hall magician card.

What I am asking is, is the image sufficient?

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#35. June 10, 2021 at 7:18 am

@Dylan, on the Knapp-Hall deck (available here [http://askthecards.info/tarot\\_card\\_decks/knapp-hall\\_revised\\_new\\_art\\_tarot\\_reading.shtml](http://askthecards.info/tarot_card_decks/knapp-hall_revised_new_art_tarot_reading.shtml)), they actually have 'badges' on the card that give insight to the pairings... for example, the Magician/Juggler has a crown; the High Priestess has two crowns (one above/one below). And then the Empress has a triangle on a light above/dark below background. The triangle has 3 dots in it, which (based on other readings) was how Pythagoras represented the number 3. And then the wheel has a triangle made of 10 dots (which is also significant in Pythagoras' number theory). The Death card's badge is a triangle sticking slightly above a square, and the picture is people with heads slightly above the ground. I read somewhere (I don't have my notes with me right now) that a downward pointing triangle represents the Individuality and an upward pointing triangle represents the Personality, so the badge symbolizes (to me) the Personality being mostly buried in the Elements (or the material?). One pairing that I haven't figured out yet is the Hierophant and the Hermit. They both have five-pointed stars as their badges. I used a lot of the pairings/dualities in my 'final' answer to the Sphinx' (Sphinx's?) riddle ("final" because as I learn more, my understanding grows, and I think I'll find new answers). Thanks for sharing what you found. I've never wanted more than one Tarot deck before... but now I'm really curious to see other decks and if the illustrators want you to interpret their cards differently.

@PhilAyliffe, thank you for the morning LOL.



@Kimberly, one of the symbols associated with Hermes was a satchel. One place I read referred to it specifically as an Illusionist's Satchel. I don't have the same cards as you (and mind doesn't have a satchel at all), so I don't know if this is relevant for your card or not.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#36. June 10, 2021 at 7:26 am

@DanielKislinger,

I bought a Marseilles deck, but decided the symbolism wasn't obvious enough for me. I downloaded the images from [http://askthecards.info/tarot\\_card\\_decks/knapp-hall\\_revised\\_new\\_art\\_tarot\\_reading.shtml](http://askthecards.info/tarot_card_decks/knapp-hall_revised_new_art_tarot_reading.shtml). They are sized PERFECTLY for a 4x6 photo print. I got the Major Arcana printed as photos, got some semi-rigid card protectors (sold at hobby stores and such), and have a nice sturdy deck to use for this study. An option to consider... ☐

---

**Mr O.** says:

#37. June 10, 2021 at 8:09 am

Just started reading as parallel text. Interesting that the French for Initiate (to start) is Recipiendaire (The Recipient). Gives a very different emphasis.

---

**Justin Patrick Moore** says:

#38. June 10, 2021 at 8:27 am

...Some thoughts on Squaring the Circle...

As I pondered the introduction over the last month I had some thoughts about how the phrase "Squaring the Circle" might relate to the riddle of the sphinx. I'm not sure they are coherent thoughts per se.

The symbol of the circle within the square within the triangle within the circle was in my mind. It came to me also while doing the SoP. I had previously had this insight when doing another 7-pointed ritual from another system (the seven points being the 4 quarters, spirit below and above and the seventh the divine spark within).

Spirit below, above & within relate formed the triangle, and the four quarters the square within the circle.

Somehow in my mind this all seemed related to the question in Levi's text, "How does the quaternary become the duality, and how is it explained by the ternary?"

---

**Danaone** says:

#39. June 10, 2021 at 10:35 am

Hi JMG and all. I must admit that I am not currently reading the book you are discussing here, but I would like some advice concerning the crazy day I had Saturday. I knew that

Sat. was going to be a trial, for various reasons, so I looked myself in the mirror before I went out on my errands, and told myself that I was going to be “Her Serene Highness Dana” for that day. Well, the day turned into a madhouse, and I didn’t comport myself as well as I intended, though considering the crazy synchronic stuff that went on, I did pretty well. One of the weirder things that occurred was, I was in a local grocery store, buying a birthday card for my dad, and I passed a very old woman who was trying to take the plastic wrap off of a muffin, so she could eat it. A bag boy helped her while I was shopping. While I was checking out with my purchase, the old woman was standing at the end of my lane, nearly blocking me, muttering to no one in particular – ” A person has to know their limitations...” Yikes! Shades of the CosDoc! So did I invite the crazy when I talked to my mirror? Anyway, I’ve been completely sober for four whole days now...

---

**Celadon** says:

#40. June 10, 2021 at 11:02 am

Lady cutekitten, is the doorway exercise as simple as is sounding? Id like to learn more

---

**Clarke aka Gwydion** says:

#41. June 10, 2021 at 11:18 am

You are discussing self-control as if it was (only) a current application of conscious will, rather than being the result of countless acts of well-considered judgment and action (practice), such as an athlete performs. Conscious will applied in a moment. is a tiny part of the toolkit of self control. Necessary, but not always in evidence. Sometimes self control means to NOT apply self-will but to trust your prior training and the circumstances you find yourself in. That's my take on it, of course, but your concern inspired me to essay an answer.

---

**DENNIS G** says:

#42. June 10, 2021 at 11:20 am

Hello JMG. Feeling pretty good about grasping some of the interesting connections and hoping to add something insightful to the discussion when I realize there's something wrong with my deck. I'm missing my donkey card.

---

**Kay Robison** says:

#43. June 10, 2021 at 12:26 pm

JMG, I got a copy of the Knapp/Hall Marseiles deck from the Philosophical Research Society and the Le Bateleur card in this deck doesn't show the satchel that Kimberly asked about and that Levi mentions in chapter one. If you squint hard at the card I have, there is a indistinct form that lies

under the sword and over the wand on the magicians table and I suppose that could be an empty satchel, but otherwise, no satchel. This seems like an important element to be missing. Do I need another deck?

---

**Adrian** says:

#44. June 10, 2021 at 12:38 pm

Thanks for doing this once again JMG. It's an interesting experiencing incorporating the meditation into my practice. It's a hell of a ride.

I'm afraid my philosophical knowledge isn't as good as it should be (that's the Irish education system for you) but the idea that experience being a priori of essence is fascinating. If that's the case then if I am layering a Trump with "meaning and imagery" is there a parallel process? Is a Tarot card a multilayered object of experiences then am I being layered with meanings too? If that makes sense?

Thanks very much again,

Adrian.

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#45. June 10, 2021 at 12:58 pm



SiliconGuy, fascinating! I've read some of Gould's work and enjoyed it a great deal, but I didn't know he was a proponent of that bit of luminous common sense. Thank you — I'll have to see what he has to say about it.

Valenzuela, good. Wait 'til we get to chapter 2.

RMS, a fine meditation!

BoysMom, Lévi was not only a literate man of his time but a former clergyman and, in his own eccentric way, a Christian. You can bet that he had that passage in mind every time he spoke of “le Verbe.”

Eric, why, yes, that's occurred to me as well. 😊

Bryan, the cards do indeed vary from deck to deck, and yes, meditating on those is a fine idea.

Mr. O, I know people who've done it either way. I'm using the Latin letters, partly to avoid confusion, partly because the Lullian art (which this method riffs off, and which I've practiced) also uses letters, so it's a bit more familiar.

Tanya, another fine meditation! It's good to see that this chapter is inspiring those.

Yorkshire, that's an overly narrow view of self-control. Having self-mastery means among other things that you can choose when to analyze things and when to go with the flow — you're not stuck in either mode, nor do you flip from one to the other when it's inappropriate.

Helen, positive energy en route.



Marko, don't worry about it. When I said that any of the decks I listed was appropriate, I meant that — and yes, I'm aware of the difference in imagery. (I own the Knapp-Hall deck, one of the Wirth decks, and a Marseilles deck.)

Mr. O, we wrestled with the translation of that for a while, because the French word and its exact English equivalent have rather different connotations.

Justin, good. Very good. In the case of the SoP, at least, that's quite deliberate.

Danaone, have you considered meditating on it?

Dennis, er, "donkey card"? I'm not sure what you're talking about.

Kay, when I said that any of the decks I listed was appropriate, I meant that — and yes, I'm aware of the difference in imagery. No, you don't need a new deck — I really did mean what I said.

Adrian, excellent! Yes, that's exactly what you're doing — but in this exercise you're doing it consciously, so you can begin to get some insight into how it happens the rest of the time.

---

**Booklover** says:

#46. June 10, 2021 at 12:58 pm



About what some here have written about self-control: it occurred to me that the attitude of Lévy towards self-control was colored by attitudes of the epoch in which he lived. Nevertheless, it is probably the case that self-control can itself be overdone in the same way as debauchery.

---

**jbucks** says:

#47. June 10, 2021 at 1:35 pm

@Justin, @JMG:

Your thought, Justin, made me resuscitate a draft of a comment I almost made on last month's Levi post. I had said at the time there may have been a 'geometrical' answer to the riddle, and your thought as that related to the SOP just nailed together this draft comment and another discovery I made last year:

– The draft comment: A quaternary is a map of 4 points made by perpendicular lines, but each axis isn't just an opposite of two points, the axis itself is a continuum, so both apparently opposite things are actually the same thing. Levi hints fairly explicitly at this on the last page of the introduction. So 4 becomes 2.

I've read here before that a binary can be resolved by a ternary. So perhaps what makes the axis seem to shift from



being two distinct and opposite things is the perspective afforded by a third position in space, so 2 becomes 3.

– The discovery (that arose from doodling): I can't remember how it came about, it was an accident, but it arose because I was drawing the shape of the SOP on paper. What I mean is, I drew the 6 first elements as they are spaced out on their axes, but not (yet) with the lines connecting them.

That involves drawing 6 points arranged in a circle. Then start connecting the dots to create the axes, and think about the result in 2D, but also in 3D. You'll end up with the 6-pointed star in 2D, but also two inverted pyramids in 3D which are connected at their bases, if you imagine that you're looking at them on an angle. It's an optical illusion!

(I haven't pondered this further yet, but I remember Levi's quote from the introduction about the 'simple and powerful architecture of the pyramids'.)

Now notice what interesting and very familiar magical symbol starts to appear within the shape (twice)... which is hidden in the SOP. And notice how some intersections create the 7th element (Spirit Within) right at the center (the balancing of the elements creates the lunar current). It's very beautiful when it's all drawn out, and full of layered complexity.

Thanks for that comment, some things are clicking together even further now...



---

**Danaone** says:

#48. June 10, 2021 at 2:14 pm

JMG – I’ve been puzzling over the day, and decided to acquire your translation of “The Doctrine” so to follow along with this course. I probably need to work on my self control....

---

**DENNIS G** says:

#49. June 10, 2021 at 2:20 pm

OMG Helen – Yes to prayers. We let a 17 year old Shi Tzu go at home a couple of months ago and our 17 year old Yorkie hasn’t been the same. Those are both good runs for us. I hope yours was the same. I feel for you.

This has always been a problem with Buddhism and other radical deconstructionist conclusions. I don’t want the flame extinguished. I want my loved ones again. I’m still very much attached to the wheel right now.

---

**Dennis G** says:

#50. June 10, 2021 at 2:31 pm

Sorry for being obtuse. Page 33 Levi lays out common characteristics of the uninitiated that require correction. It

occured to me that the Fool card doesn't do me justice. I think I need a Donkey card!  
(“... donkey of Sterne or Apuleius:73...”)

---

**Prizm** says:

#51. June 10, 2021 at 2:43 pm

This month's chapter is personally very challenging. One of the central ideas to "Know Thyself" is uncomfortable. That's why I know that continuing forward will be rewarding. In my life, there are countless things I've begun, made it a week, two weeks, sometimes a month, even a few months but ultimately have given up on. Training the will is going to be of utmost importance. That's undoubtedly part of what the daily five minute meditation on the Tarot cards is about. It occurred to me that having a notebook to record meditations and ideas from them will be helpful, as well as trying to have as set a schedule as possible.

The day before your post came out, I was listening to a Kabbalah related podcast called Spiritually Hungry, in which the subject of the importance of sleep was discussed. It was interesting how the Kabbalah practitioner there suggested that our daily life is an illusion, a lie, and that sleep was needed to reconnect with the source and truth. While some of that idea was useful in supporting the importance of sleep, I didn't like it because it could easily suggest that sleep is the most important thing, more important than the reality of our everyday experiences. So I was glad the topic

of our everyday experiences was brought up, and that it has been suggested that indeed, our everyday experiences are not a lie. Like knowing myself, recognizing what experiences are formed by personal biases and narratives will again be struggle to work through.

There looks to be a lot of light on this path, but I anticipate some treacherous points as well.

---

**Aloysius** says:

#52. June 10, 2021 at 4:41 pm

Rolling on the floor in urine is hilarious. You writing gets better and better,

---

**Goran** says:

#53. June 10, 2021 at 5:43 pm

All literature depends on imagination. Homer needed it to depict gods and monsters, but imagination is equally needed to write a realistic novel, even if it is based on a true story.

However, if modernity is an epoch of imagination (re)discovered and unbound, then this finds literary expression not only in fantasy but even more so in science fiction. In fact (in my opinion) SF is more imaginative than fantasy by an order of magnitude. This shows in extraliterary

cultural influence. The power of imagination of SF is what helped establish so firmly, if you will, the mythology of progress or the secular religion of progress.

This difference in power of imagination between fantasy and SF might seem peculiar and strange. It might be said that imagination in SF is limited a priori so that the world described must seem as if it might be true, under certain conditions. In fantasy there is a priori no limitations to the expression of imagination. So one might expect more powerful results in fantasy literature. Perhaps the reason why it is the opposite is because the power of image created by the mind is measured by how much it approaches the detailed quality of an image produced by the senses (eyes). So the more realistic image imagined the more powerful it is.

---

**Kay Robison** says:

#54. June 10, 2021 at 5:45 pm

Thanks JMG for your response. I will try and pay better attention to what you say. Also I will consider the advice you gave to Bryan and meditate on the variations.

---

**lp** says:

#55. June 10, 2021 at 5:58 pm

A basic procedural question, but how are others spacing out their reading in relation to the posts? I had been waiting to read the chapter until after the relevant blog post, but that seems to be putting me behind the comments section. Perhaps it's better to do my first read through of the chapter in advance of the Wednesday post and then, throughout the month, do the meditations and the second and third reads? Anyone have a good system or suggestions?

---

**John-CoopJanitor** says:

#56. June 10, 2021 at 6:00 pm

This is rather off topic but..

On Kickstarter there is a project called MemoryOS. Basically a game to help you build a Memory Palace. Might even be useful – but initially only on a smartphone. Looks like they are implementing the kind of memory training from the renaissance. <http://kck.st/3uzdR2E>

John – Coop Janitor

---

**Paul** says:

#57. June 10, 2021 at 6:34 pm

In reading this chapter, I was struck by the many similarities to the philosophy of the Order of the Essenes. Even to the point of imagining Mr. Hamner plucking 'thought gems' out

of the last few pages. Did this work influence the Essenes material either directly or indirectly?

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#58. June 10, 2021 at 6:51 pm

@Helen, you and Molly will be in my prayers.

@JBucks, What you described is so cool! You might appreciate this: there is a type of jewelry pendant called a 'merkaba' (do an internet search for 'amethyst merkaba necklace' and you'll see what it looks like). For the Introduction, I did some research on Ezekiel (since Levi said the biblical Sphinx was Ezekiel's cherubim) and the cherubim were either the wheels of the chariot or were pulling the chariot. A few days ago, I was researching Cabala stuff and found a statement about Ezekiel's 'merkabah', which is Hebrew for 'chariot'! I was originally going to meditate on this, thinking the inverted pyramids were the inverted triangles of Individuality and Personality, but you've described a way that they are actually 3D, not 2D. I'll be meditating on this for at least week. Thank you so much for sharing your doodles!!!

---

**randomactsofkarma** says:

#59. June 10, 2021 at 6:59 pm

The imagery I have found on The Magician (Knapp-Hall New Art Tarot):

The Magician is clothed in the colors of the Elements: blue hat (lemniscate) for Water, red and yellow jacket for Fire and Air, green stockings for Earth.

His sleeves and cuffs are edged in triangles. The upper sleeves have triangles pointing down (the Individuality); the cuffs have triangles pointing up (the Personality). Around his neck is a circlet (for Unity), above seven buttons representing the Planes. The placket for the buttons and circlet both appear gold, as is the caduceus held in his hand.

The Magician's left hand holds the caduceus, symbol of magic and the currents of power flowing between the planes. His right hand points downward. This posture implies his left-hand is invoking (from a higher plane) and his right-hand is evoking (to manifestation in this plane).

The four-sided table represents the elements and holds representations of the elements (Cup, Sword, Wand, Pentacles (five coins)). The table was drawn so only three legs show, but could have been drawn so all four were visible, so the three legs represent a trinity. Faith, reason, and imagination result in magic; that trinity supports the tools of the Magician.

The white cuffs and black shoes (above and below) might foreshadow the white and black background of the badge on



the Empress. The Magician's badge has right triangles in the upper left and right corner, resolved into an equilateral triangle in the top center of the badge. This is echoed in the finials of the crown (which rest on a circle).

---

**Dennis G** says:

#60. June 10, 2021 at 7:50 pm

JMG – The Verb. The Word. God. Rational Intelligence as The Highest Principle.

Do you remember Julian Jaynes in the 1970s with his theory of the origin of self reflective consciousness as the claiming and creating of our internal dialog as our own and not of a God or some tribal leader, alive or dead, as evidenced by his examination of the differences in the Iliad and Odyssey characters initial lack of and eventual self reflective actions. He also compared passages from different eras in the bible for the same. There was a Rabbi who passed recently and others keeping his ideas alive. This self awareness and claiming of the Word for ourselves arises around the Axial age. Was it Solomon who calls on 200 prophets for advice about attacking an enemy and they all offer conflicting Words From God they hear in their heads. By John the Baptist time Jewish leadership had had enough of irrationality and were advising fathers to kill or banish offspring who hear the Voice of God. Today we call it Schizophrenia. Or channeling.

Intelligence and Will. We can see our intelligence and work with it. Will – the ability to do work, like energy – willpower. We can't see it. Many Eastern traditions minimize or negate it. We do our work with it.

The Initiate is assumed to exist. Not dwelled on into noexistence. The Eastern denial is only confirmed because the technique of not that, not this leads to it. Thoughts pass like clouds as one contemplates space leads to a unique expansive experience but doesn't leave much left.

Place's "The Alchemical Tarot of Marseille" states it is, "an interpretation of the French Tarot that references Alchemy and Hermetic Texts", strikes me as very well done with added symbolism.

Taking a stab at the symbolism my card character has a white and red shirt divided in half and meeting in the middle, joined in the middle. His cloak and hat are green. To me the white and red, male and female, are 'in' creation. The green hat with white wings – creating also occurs in the head. In his hand is a caduceus with white and red snakes meeting in the middle of a green staff. The table has an interesting green and blue cloth, water and vegetation, depicting images of mixed plants, birds, animal legs, butterflies, embryos(?). On the table from right to left, 3 upside down cups. Cups hold water, fluids take the shape of their container. These cups are not ready to hold water are my first thoughts. Of course the bateleur may be hiding something under them is what I have read. 2 dice – did Einstein say God doesn't play dice with the universe? Luck, odds, chance. Coins are next.

Money is a store of our work value. The ability to purchase or do something. Power(?). Last in the table is 1 knife. I have seen 2 knives on other cards. Knife, sword, the ability to separate. A precursor to naming(?). Reason? The sword of wisdom comes to mind is a comon refrain.

Something needling me is the table legs. For all the differences I've seen in the few decks I've seen, they all show the table with 3 legs. Does that symbolize creation stands on 3 legs?

There is also a symbol on the side of a moon resting on a sun resting on a cross that is explained in the booklet. And a quote, "It must be that all the world which lies below has been set in order and filled with contents by the things which are placed above".

Great card! That's it for these 2 fingers:)

---

**A reader says:**

#61. June 10, 2021 at 8:08 pm

"Toutes les religions se résument dans l'unité d'un seul dogme, qui est l'affirmation de l'être et de son égalité à lui-même, qui constitue sa valeur mathématique."

I'm curious why the sudden reference to mathematical value.

---

**jade dragon** says:

#62. June 10, 2021 at 8:25 pm

Hi JMG,

I was taught to associate Aleph with the Fool and Beth with the Magician. I'm having trouble switching over. How do you account for the discrepancy?

---

**Phutatorius** says:

#63. June 10, 2021 at 8:29 pm

@JMG: You are right about William Morris. I had not realized the extent of his fiction writing.

---

**youngelephant** says:

#64. June 10, 2021 at 8:30 pm

Augusto, would you mind sharing what you learned about your experience/the infinity symbol? I've had similar experiences in dreams and slightly less similar in waking life. Also, no worries if you don't want to or can't. I can do my next reread with it in the back of my mind.

---

**Lady Cutekitten of Lolcat** says:

#65. June 10, 2021 at 8:39 pm

JMG, someone whose name I can't find right now asked me about pathworking, and I'm pretty sure I'm not the one to ask, I didn't do it right. Can you link to your instructions you provided, I can't find them either. (All is lost!)

---

**Dylan** says:

#66. June 10, 2021 at 9:02 pm

@Goldenhawk, thanks for your story! I happen to have a round table of about the right size, and I think I might try that with my cards too.

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#67. June 10, 2021 at 10:26 pm

Booklover, of course. In Lévi's time as in ours, however, the cultural pendulum was way over on the debauchery side, and so emphasizing self-control was (and is) a useful bit of balance.

Jbucks, good heavens. This is fascinating — and yes, it might be part of what Lévi has in mind.

Danaone, it's a good idea for most of us.

Dennis, it's not you being obtuse, it's me having Aspergers syndrome! Thank you for the clarification.

Prizm, good. It's when you feel challenged that you know the rubber is meeting the road and actual inner development is taking place.

Aloysius, thank you. I didn't actually mean it to be funny; back before I got into print, I worked in a lot of low-paid crap jobs, including stints at nursing homes, and I got to deal with schizophrenic patients up close. The people yammering about how schizophrenia is creative and liberating, blah blah blah, need to put in some time doing that; about the third time they have to wash off the feces that a patient has fingerpainted all over his body and the nearest wall, it might just start sinking in how clueless they've been.

Goran, yes, I'm very familiar with those arguments. Science fiction fans like to trot them out whenever the subject comes up, but they don't hold water. On the one hand, by the same argument you've used, realistic fiction ought to be much more powerful in imaginative terms than science fiction. On the other, your claim that in fantasy there is a priori no limitations to the expression of imagination is quite simply wrong. In fantasy the limits are subtler, but they're there: the story still has to make sense to the reader and resonate in some way with his or her experience, and that imposes limitations within which the competent fantasy writer has to work.

Kay, thank you. I've noticed that some issues seem to make people — not just you, a lot of people — so anxious that they lose track of what's been said. That's become much more common of late, and I'm wondering why that is.

Ip, well, I read it before the blog post goes up, but I don't know if that's any help!

Janitor, hmm. I'd rather encourage people to skip the smartphone and do it the old-fashioned way with their own minds.

Paul, that's a good question. Hamner didn't say a lot about his sources, but Lévi's ideas were to be found all through American alternative culture in Hamner's time, so he probably would have picked them up by osmosis even if he didn't read Lévi directly.

Karma, good. You're paying attention.

Dennis, a fine meditation! Yes, all the French pattern cards I know of give the table three legs.

Reader, why, to encourage you to meditate on it, of course.



Dragon, there are various ways to assign the Hebrew letters to the trumps. The way you've been taught is the Golden Dawn system or, more generally, the English system. The one Lévi uses is the French system. Is one right? Well, that four-legged animal barking at you — is it “a dog” or “un chien”?

Phutatorius, William Morris had more creative talent than any thirty ordinary people. Having made his mark as a poet, printer, interior decorator, designer, stained glass artist, weaver, cabinetmaker, and I forget how many other things,

he finally retired, got bored, and invented modern fantasy fiction just to give himself something to do. The man was a force of nature, larger than life in every dimension.

Your Kittenship, you didn't do anything wrong, as I said. You might want to direct your friend to any of my practical books on magic — they all give detailed instructions, though some use the term “scrying” instead of “pathworking.”

---

**Just Another Green Rage Monster** says:

#68. June 10, 2021 at 11:09 pm

I suspect this will do to my visual and symbolic imagination similar things that reading Dante and Milton aloud to myself as a way of improving my understanding of their poems has done with my verbal (the Verb!) facility. Before that, it was just smash here and smash there. ☐

Thanks for this space and these exercises, JMG!

---

**Just Another Green Rage Monster** says:

#69. June 10, 2021 at 11:38 pm

@jbucks #9 – “I forgot, until your paragraph above, that the word imagination includes the word image, that is, the faculty to create images. If imagination is the thing linking us to the invisible reality, then no wonder mages use visual symbols.”



I forgot, until I read *your* comment that the word “image” contains the word “mage.” What to make of *that*? ^

The “experience exists” baseline makes me think of the philosophy of phenomenology, which avoids those potentially unknowable ontological “is” questions in favor of the recognition that phenomena, appearances, experiences, “seem ” in some sense.

Having lots of fun contemplating the visual and conceptual linkages of the card’s imagery to aleph:

- the aleph shape resembles a percentage sign, and that makes me think of quantum mechanics and probability (someone else noted dice)
- the aleph also reminds me of the Sanskrit letter AH written in the Tibetan Uchen script. As with aleph and A, AH is the first letter of its alphabet
- as the first letter, it is a “seed syllable” – every other letter and every possible combinations of letters springs from it – is this also so with the le Bateleur?
- the figure’s hat clearly forms an infinity sign on my card, which connects to that idea of the seed syllable containing everything
- the three legs of that table include a fourth leg that is off screen, in the same way that the infinity sign in the hat is partially hidden by the front of the hat, and the right hand covers one quarter (the portion facing the Bateleur) of the

“coin” on the table – perhaps this represents the invisible from which the visible arises, the silence that comprises the plenitude from which all sounds arise

What will tomorrow’s five minutes bring? This is like *Finnegans Wake*, but I’m writing it...

---

**Booklover** says:

#70. June 11, 2021 at 3:33 am

JMG, I didn’t directly know that Lévi’s time was one of debauchery, but I knew that it was before the Victorian era, and the attitudes of the French in matters of morality were surely not the same than those of the English. That said, there are quite a few things nowadays where the ability for more self-control would be good.

---

**Aloysius** says:

#71. June 11, 2021 at 7:27 am

It’s not the schizophrenic urine that is hilarious. That part is quite sad and as someone who has spent significant time with them (related to one who killed herself) and also had to clean up messes from a dementia patient I have a lot of sympathy for them as well as their caregivers. It was the absurdity of someone so clueless to aspire to that condition that had me laughing out loud. To find some levity in that

darkness is a really good magic trick, even if it was unintentional.

---



**courtinthenorth** says:

#72. June 11, 2021 at 8:39 am

Hello JMG!

I have ordered a Marseilles tarot in the hope of following along with this series but while browsing at Aeclectic Tarot's website I see there is quite the smorgasbord of choices in tarot decks. The Hillbilly Tarot is just one example that caught my attention.

Is it wiser to only have and use one deck or can a person have multiple decks? And if having multiple decks isn't a bad decision, how does one go about selecting additional decks?

Cheers,  
Courtney

---

**Kay Robison** says:

#73. June 11, 2021 at 9:52 am

Hi JMG, your second response definitely caused me to meditate on my on reasons for expressing my first question

about the card. I can't speak for everyone, but this is where reading your response took me.

My first impulse that caused me to ask my original question was to make sure I was doing everything correctly so I wouldn't risk being cast out of this group or appear to be stupid. Cast out? Stupid? That was a useless worry, why was I thinking of that? You said there was no right or wrong answers. Maybe I didn't believe that or better still, I didn't trust my own ideas about what I was seeing in the card. Ah, a distraction then, get lost in the details so you don't have to work on the larger "self knowledge" questions.

Well, one of the "self knowledge" questions that is paramount for me in this particular exchange is my longing to "belong" to a group. It has been a driving force in my adult life. I much prefer to do things with someone else rather than by myself. This drive hasn't gotten me into dangerous groups, but sometimes the groups I joined took a really steep emotional price. I haven't been cast out of any group I joined and I have always left voluntarily, if not necessarily happily. However, I have felt that joining the "wrong" group would have been really easy all through my young adult life and perhaps even now.

Odd mix of fears here, being cast out or joining the "wrong" group and , of course, the distraction technique. All definitely worth a meditation. Thanks again.

---

**jbucks** says:

#74. June 11, 2021 at 10:55 am

@RandomActsOfKarma:

The shape of the merkaba necklace, and the thought about Ezekiel's chariot having the same name as that type of necklace, is giving me even more to think about, thank you!

---

**Justin Patrick Moore** says:

#75. June 11, 2021 at 11:18 am

@JMG: Thanks for the confirmation.

@JBucks... That's awesome. I was going to keep what I wrote to myself as well, but decided on sharing it, and I'm glad I did and am glad you shared your notes. I'm going to try and sketch out what you wrote in my notebook. This gives much fodder for meditation!

Also in Levi's list of powers attributed to the trumps / Hebrew letters... he says of Yod, "to know the laws of perpetual movement and to demonstrate them through the squaring of the circle."

---

@RMS: I believe the other thing on the table in the Knapp-Hall deck is not a dagger, but the swords scabbard. Scabbard's also have their own power's in magical lore. Your mileage may vary on that interpretation though.

---

**Clarke aka Gwydion** says:

#76. June 11, 2021 at 12:20 pm



Regarding the portion of your comment, principally, where you said “By John the Baptist time Jewish leadership had had enough of irrationality and were advising fathers to kill or banish offspring who hear the Voice of God. Today we call it Schizophrenia. Or channeling.”

There’s a great deal more to that issue than I discern in your words, there. In various meditative states, it is common to have verbal dealings with deities and non-physical beings of all sorts without one having to practice either channeling or undergo schizophrenia. Further, it happens that people do have a kind of relationship with their deity that involves verbal communication without, paradoxically, their “hearing” voices. Of course, you’d have to be there or experience it yourself to broaden your possibilities. Failing that, what your words express is the common understanding of our very psychologized age. Even Maimonides is more nuanced regarding this issue (e.g., what is required to constitute a “proper” prophet).

By the Common Era rabbinic period, the rabbis realized their authority and definitively said their voice was more authoritative than the prophetic voice. I seem to remember the term “daughter of the ruach ha kodesh” or the word delivered to sages from some aspect of God being banished for most purposes. I could make a case fo that without invoking their being tired of irrationality. The requirements of a faith in any given era vary over time, and Judaism is a

VERY old faith that has been through changes in era, certainly if you consider the astrological eras (e.g., of Leo, of Taurus, of Aries, of Pisces).

The funny thing is, if you read the Talmud any at all, you soon discover that the rabbis authoritative voice is... authoritatively inconclusive on many points where you'd think they'd easily agree. The resulting decisions the community makes with that material can be tweaked or changed in many cases depending on circumstances. Which is why groups of Jewish communities have their rabbinic courts...

So, in Jewish mysticism, which is to say in its theology (near enough the same thing), this issue, apparently so conclusively dispensed with, is, if I have understood anything of it, far from decided.

---

**Patricia Mathews** says:

#77. June 11, 2021 at 12:24 pm

@courtinthenorth – blast you! Now I've just carved \$23 out of my book budget and put that deck in my Cart. The turning point was seeing "Ma" in the long green gown. Oh, to have such a Ma on my altar! The very essence of the Great Mother in human terms.

Patricia (Shaw) Mathews, whose father came from Western Pennsylvania and never forgot it.



**Happy Panda** says:

#78. June 11, 2021 at 12:37 pm

@jbucks says:

June 10, 2021 at 1:35 pm

*That involves drawing 6 points arranged in a circle. Then start connecting the dots to create the axes, and think about the result in 2D, but also in 3D. You'll end up with the 6-pointed star in 2D, but also two inverted pyramids in 3D which are connected at their bases, if you imagine that you're looking at them on an angle. It's an optical illusion!*

*(I haven't pondered this further yet, but I remember Levi's quote from the introduction about the 'simple and powerful architecture of the pyramids'.)*

*Now notice what interesting and very familiar magical symbol starts to appear within the shape (twice)... which is hidden in the SOP. And notice how some intersections create the 7th element (Spirit Within) right at the center (the balancing of the elements creates the lunar current). It's very beautiful when it's all drawn out, and full of layered complexity.*



You are dipping your toes into the yogic and tantric wisdom of Shri Yantra as well as other kinds of Yantras like the Shiva Yantra. Knowledge like what you self-discovered is



used to create items for ceremonial rituals that have great power. Very specific and different kinds of power for many different purposes.

If you are interested in further research into many of the various yantra shapes that can be discovered I highly recommend the following hardcover book (there is no paperback or ebook options, alas): The Yantras of Deities and their Numerological Foundations – An Iconographic Consideration [ISBN: 978-81-246-0174-7]

It's a very big and stunning book! One of my all-time faves I stumbled across. If JMG ever decides on writing a sacred geometry book I really think he would get a ton of new info from this book that would be useful for such a book.

For a while there I was on a Shri Yantra and Shiva Yantra tear and was hoovering up as much info as I could on it. It was very well developed in India but is now in danger of being lost because the traditional means of passing on the knowledge is disappearing. Lineages that still preserve it say not only do the proportions matter but the particular materials used and in what way they are used matters (do use this next to that, don't layer this material next to that, all 3 of these materials need to be used in exactly these proportions in this way or it won't work even if everything else is right, etc, etc, etc.) In short it was as developed as any kind of engineering science the West came up with.

Quote from book blurb:

*Literally meaning an 'instrument', 'apparatus' or a 'talisman', yantra is a kind of mystical diagram used, in tantra, for both meditation and invoking a divinity, and is believed to possess/arouse occult powers.*

Because Hinduism preserved this knowledge best it comes from that religion's perspective but it gives a good idea of what things can be done. This is one reason why I always try to quietly (or admittedly sometimes not-so-quietly) support JMG's efforts because he's the only spiritual teacher I know of trying to recover and build this kind of information for spiritual-oriented people that have zero affinity for any of the Eastern spiritual traditions.

So there is likely to be a lot of new insights Levi's book will deliver – at least for me – when it comes to mystical shapes and diagrams. Some of the shapes in the tarot cards might have more power behind them than at first glance for all I know.

Oh. Before I forget. According to Sadhguru there's one big reason the Egyptian's settled on the pyramids having certain dimensions for their tombs. It's a shape that's fantastic for collecting the chi responsible for preservation. Since the Egyptians wanted to slow or possibly even halt decay past a certain point they knew to use this (correctly proportioned) shape for their tombs. Once I discovered that I mused somebody could probably riff off that same idea by building home-made "pyramids" to store their fresh veggies longer.

In fact, that's exactly what Sadhguru said to skeptics. If you doubt it go get some fresh veg. Put one out in the open and an identical veg in the (correctly proportioned) pyramid. He says you'll see the pyramid preserves the freshness of the veggies for far longer – up to many months at a time. Long after the open-air veg has rotted away the pyramid veggies will still be quite fresh and fine for eating.

It's a technology who's time has come in my opinion because it needs no petroleum or petroleum refining and long supply chains for long term food preservation for householders. Just be sure you get the proportions right if you build one. Or I suppose you could discover the right proportions via trial and error. □

---

**Happy Panda** says:

#79. June 11, 2021 at 1:23 pm

Ah. I see others have commented on the JBucks post. Yes, I think we are all circling around the same wisdom that can be expressed in different ways. As a Merkabah necklace (yantra for your neck!), a temple, a plowed field, an alter, a ceremonial implement, and when your attention is turned into yourself – you can discover the chi-yantra-ish flows in your own body that make up who you are for this incarnation (if you do the last you are beginning to walk the path of being a Kriya yogi/yogini).

One interesting note I discovered not so long ago. Swadhistana is literally the “abode of the self” in yogic lore – a hint to the kinds of powers and talents its mastery can confer. Might be something for me to discover there, particularly in relation to new insights from Levi’s text. I am so excited about this book club.

Oh, I wanted to apologize to JMG. I know you’ve already written on sacred geometry. I meant if you wanted to write a second or even third edition. The book I listed is filled with diagrams and highlights the various and stunning diversity of powers and numerology conferred by whatever shape is being made as well as the foundations behind it. It really is a stunning book! Just never had the opportunity to mention it until now. I can not stress how awesome a book it is. But that’s just me (ymmv).

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#80. June 11, 2021 at 1:54 pm

Monster, that’s the plan! Magic can also be described as the practical use of the imagination, and most people these days can really use some help learning how to imagine.

Booklover, the Victorian era was a period of extreme hypocrisy, not of extreme morality. London had more prostitutes during the Victorian era than any other city in Europe, and the publication of what they called smut and we’d consider the softest of softcore erotica was a big and

lucrative industry. In France, they were much less hypocritical about it. When Lévi published the book we're reading, btw, Queen Victoria had been on the British throne for 18 years, so it's very much a Victorian phenomenon!

Aloysius, gotcha. I'm sorry to hear you got to share that kind of miserable experience.

Court, you can have as many decks as you like. I own twenty or so; my wife Sara has many more. As for how to select them, why, if you're not planning on using them for a specific course of study like this one, personal preference is as good as any. (The Hillbilly Tarot looks great, btw. Did you know there's also a survivalist deck, the Omegaland Tarot? Here's a sample...)



Kay, thank you for this! I see you've taken Lévi's discussion of self-knowledge seriously; that's a very useful thing to do.

Panda, I'll consider it; thanks for the reference. There are of course varied traditions in sacred geometry, and the work I've done draws primarily on the Pythagorean tradition — rooted in Egypt, revived during the Renaissance, and central to Freemasonry among other things. But it might be interesting to study one of the other currents.

---

**Booklover** says:

#81. June 11, 2021 at 3:48 pm

JMG, obviously I confused morality with pretending to be moral – and I didn't know that Queen Victoria already was on the throne in Lévi's time. So, thanks for the clarification!

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#82. June 11, 2021 at 6:35 pm

When researching things for the Introduction, I found:

- From Wikipedia's "Azoth" entry: "That original spiritual fiery water comes through Edem ("vapor" in Hebrew) and pours itself into the four main rivers of the four Elements." (Manly P. Hall)
- From Chapter 1: "Moses symbolizes it [a formidable secret] as a tree which is at the center of the terrestrial

Paradises, and which is near, which even embraces with its roots, the tree of life; the four mysterious rivers have their source at the foot of this tree, which is guarded by the sword of fire and by the four forms of the biblical sphinx, Ezekiel's Cherubim."

- From Cosmic Doctrine: Cherubim contemplate god and, like prisms, refract the divine power down the planes, stepping it down so the lower choirs can work with it. (in my notes, but I don't know if it is a direct quote or just a paraphrase)

So, Azoth comes through the Tree of Life, guarded by Cherubim (Sphinx), and comes out as the four elements. Then I had the idea that since Cherubim are prisms, the light flows through \*them\* and gets separated into the four elements. I didn't have a metaphor to explain how that happened, though.

Later, I read that the Cherubim are somehow associated with God's chariot. Different sources described their location on the chariot slightly differently, but I didn't think it was relevant to anything, so I didn't worry about it.

But then I read that Merkabah is the Hebrew word for God's chariot and I knew about the merkaba pendant and I thought, hmm... a faceted rock could work as a prism, but how would a rock with that many different facets end up with four elements? (I thought perhaps each face had a different rock for a prism for their eyes and maybe it worked that way.)

Then @JBucks posted his idea about drawing the square pyramids with bases to each other. That would end up with four faces on each end (so an element could flow out of each face) and I had seen a 2D image of that somewhere (the 'picture' page of Chapter 1!) and I thought perhaps the Cherubim, being so close to Divinity, don't have their pyramids intersecting like a merkaba, but in the shape of an octohedron (like a standard D8 dice).

I started researching Merkabah, stumbled into sacred geometry, and found this site <https://www.sacred-geometry.es/?q=en/content/metatrons-cube>. Figure 5 shows the internal structure of the merkaba... an octohedron!

So there must be a way to logically connect the Merkabah to an octohedron. There are 14 vertices, so I didn't think each vertex represented a sefirot. But I didn't know what else they could represent. I finally found

<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Merkabah>. They call the Cherubim "Chayot angels" (but they have four faces, so I'm pretty sure they are the same thing). In addition to four faces, they have four wings. Each angel uses two wings to connect to the wings of two other angels, so the four angels use their wings to create a 'box' "that formed the perimeter of the chariot".

Ding! Ten sefirot and four cherubim add up to 14 vertices! If you look at the merkaba/octohedron picture, you can imagine the structure at an angle so you have three layers... the top and bottom layer each have five vertices (one in the center, connected to four other vertices) and the center layer





having four vertices (the corners of the square of the pyramid bases). If Tiphereth is the center vertex of the top layer, it connects to four other sefirot on the same layer and 4 more sefirot on the inner layer. Malkhut is the center vertex of the bottom layer and the 4 vertices around it can be the Cherubim.

I started working on how to arrange the other sefirot, so they each connected to the ones they were supposed to based on the Yosher/upright configuration of the sefirot, but I discovered that there are different connecting lines, depending on if the Tree is emanating or not (sometimes Malkhut has one connecting line, sometimes three). I haven't spent much time studying the sefirot and the Cabala, so I decided I would put that on hold until I learn more. (And even if humans get 22 paths to travel, maybe other Divine Sparks get other paths?)

This is still very much a meditation-in-progress, but I wanted to share because I know there are people here who are more knowledgeable about the sefirot and maybe they could share some insights.

Also, JMG, I am thinking there are more clues in the picture at the beginning of the chapter. Would you be willing to translate the Hebrew and other text?

---

**David, by the lake** says:

#83. June 11, 2021 at 6:40 pm

John—



I'd originally thought to ask this in the upcoming MM, but given the discussion of imagination here in this chapter, perhaps the question is relevant here as well.

How does one distinguish between visioning and fantasizing? Both are exercises of one's imaginative faculty, but the first is useful (a means to an end, establishing a desired state of being to be attained) and the other is not. I guess I'm thinking of *The Secret* as a well-known example of the later.

But in the nitty-gritty details, what differentiates one from the other? How can we tell if we are straying into the realm of the less-than-useful? You have used the example of making a million dollars in several podcasts—usually as an exercise of will, though imagination undoubtedly plays a role as well—and this certainly was an application of the techniques in the aforementioned beat-seller. In this context, how might one distinguish between functional and dysfunctional uses of the imagination?

---

**Aloysius** says:

#84. June 11, 2021 at 6:52 pm

Last night when sitting down to start studying the card I spaced out for a bit and got an intuitive flash. All these associations came pouring in rapid fire like the "I know Kung

Fu” scene from the Matrix, except I barely remembered one even a second later. It appears that these symbols were familiar from a past life, and now it is time to reclaim them. Also very excited to have an excuse to learn some Hebrew.

---

**Dylan** says:

#85. June 11, 2021 at 8:17 pm

@RandomActsOfKarma, thanks for the tips and the link! I'll have to investigate the Knapp-Hall deck now.

Curiously, the pairings you've named are not at all the ones I would have chosen based on my familiarity with Smith-Waite or CBD Marseilles. This gives further food for thought as to what is archetypal and 'fixed' about the trumps, and what is at play in the freedom of each deck's creator. The only way to know, I guess, is to study a lot of decks! So I'm happy to be discovering the Marseilles during this course of study.

---

**Isaac Salamander Hill** says:

#86. June 11, 2021 at 10:10 pm

Just want to drop a line in- things are very busy here on the farm, and I am already deep into a series of meditations, but I am enjoying tagging along and getting a deeper understanding of Levi.

By the way, for those interested, I posted an interview with a mentor of mine recently, you can find it here:

<https://anchor.fm/plantcunning/episodes/Ep-34-Self-Realization-with-Art-Ticknor-e11jjbv>

When asked “what do you know for sure?” He replies: “what I am.” That is something that I am not yet sure about, and something that Decarte seemed quite far from, but something perhaps Levi can help with. Thoughts happen, but what observes the thoughts?

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#87. June 11, 2021 at 11:01 pm

Booklover, you're most welcome. I'll be talking more about the complexities of Victorian sexuality in next week's post.

Karma, if it's the picture with the hand raised in blessing that casts a shadow of the Devil's head, the Hebrew letters are the name of God יהוה , YHVH, written right side up and then upside down. The full text, in Latin and Hebrew, says “By the benediction of YHVH, the malediction of (YHVH reversed) is shadowed forth.” The point Lévi is making is also made by the Yin-Yang symbol and the light and dark triangles in the upper left.

David BTL, good. The imagination is a tool, and whether it functions or not depends on how it's used rather than the tool itself. The problem with *The Secret* is not that it tries to

use the imagination but that it does so incompetently, applying the tool in an inept way to do things it's not well suited to do. Your imagination can change how you approach the world and interact with people, but it can't make real estate markets keep on going up forever!

Aloysius, a lot of people studied the tarot deck very intensely from the late 19th through the mid-20th century, so this doesn't surprise me at all. Enjoy the adventure!

Isaac, thanks for this.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#88. June 12, 2021 at 7:53 am

JMG, thank you for the translation of the picture. That is added to my list of things to meditate on. ☐

I had some more ideas about the Merkabah metaphor:

· From

<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Merkabah>,  
“The ‘Likeness of Man’ [God in the Chariot/Merkabah] sits on a throne of sapphire.”

· From <https://destinationdeluxe.com/sacred-geometry-explained-healing-benefits/>,

“These [Platonic solids] are templates through which the foundation of life can be expressed. The Greek Mystery Schools 2,500 years ago taught that there were five perfect

3D forms – the tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron, and icosahedron. These Platonic Solids are considered the foundation of everything in the physical world, revealing the unity in all things.” (One solid for each Element: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Ether (Akasha or Spirit or Cosmos)

· From somewhere (didn't save the link because it didn't seem relevant yesterday), everything on our plane of existence was thought to be made of a compound of the five essential elements (represented by the Platonic Solids).

This morning, I was trying to imagine how the light travelled through the Merkabah. The sapphire throne would focus the light into a precise beam. (The first laser used a ruby lens. Ruby and sapphire are both corundum, so they would behave the same, just with different colors.) The sefirot also function like lenses, refracting the light so it can travel to the next sefirot/lens. (And, since everything vibrates, they could shift their focus to direct it to a different sefirot/lens when they needed to.)

Before the light gets to Malkhut, it gets to the realm of the Cherubim (the bottom half of the octohedron, where the four triangles meet at the vertex of Malkhut). Each triangle (which represent a face of the bottom pyramid) represents one of the four elements (not Ether).

Levi says, “To know, to dare, to will, to be silent, those are the four verbs of the mage which are written in the four symbolic forms of the sphinx. These four verbs can be

combined together in four ways and can be explained four times through the others.”

Each face of the Cherubim represent a different verb (a different element) and the verbs can be explained four times through the others (because there are four Cherubim). So how the Cherubim are facing (pun slightly intended) determines what is being brought into manifestation in Malkhut. (For example, if all the eagle faces were in the same direction, that could manifest pure water. All lions would manifest fire. And different combinations of faces would create different things.)

Since the Cherubim are changing the light, they are not just refracting it like lens. They are diffracting it (like prisms) into the components needed to manifest whatever they are trying to manifest, which is then directed to Malkhut.

---

**Sam** says:

#89. June 12, 2021 at 9:53 am

Dear Archdruid, I have always had some slight curiosity about learning about magic but I have always failed to convince the rather sizable cynical side of my brain that I will get something out of it. That made me think – what are the reasons people get involved in the study or practice of magic? I’m guessing an all-encompassing generalization is impossible, but I still would be interested to know what you think on this topic.

As an optional side-question, what do you make of the type of thinking that is oriented towards self-benefit? Am I right to guess that while it is a human universal to some extent, the way it operates in the brains of most modern people is very particularly determined by the oddities of the modern era?

Also, I apologize for asking something not related to the book chapter, I just figured a question about starting to learn magic somewhat fits into the broader topic of starting to learn magic from a particular large and aged grimoire.

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#90. June 12, 2021 at 1:57 pm

Karma, the bit about everything on the material plane being made from the five Platonic solids is, as it happens, from Plato — you'll find it in his dialogue *Timaeus*, which discusses the creation of the cosmos. Your light metaphor is splendid — plenty to meditate on there.

Sam, I can't really speak to why other people take up magic. In my case, from early childhood I had a sense that there was something vast and secret that I wanted, needed, to know about. I spent a lot of my younger years looking into all kinds of odd places for it; I was an expert on werewolf trivia by age ten, for example. When I found my first instructional book on Hermetic magic — *Techniques of High Magic* by Francis King and Stephen Skinner — it was as though all of me, including parts that I wasn't aware of, was



saying “YES.” Looking back, I’m pretty sure I knew going into this life that magic was going to be the core of what I would be doing — not to mention the ticket out of the messed-up emotional state I got from a fairly miserable childhood.

As for the kind of thinking that’s oriented toward self-benefit, I’m not quite sure I know what you’re asking here. We all have to think about benefiting ourselves to the extent of getting enough food to eat, shelter from the weather, companionship, a meaningful life, and so on; nor is there anything wrong with benefiting ourselves so long as we also make room for the reasonable needs and rights of others. Did you have this in mind, or something different?

---

**jbucks** says:

#91. June 12, 2021 at 2:31 pm

@Just Another Green Rage Monster:

I looked for the history of the word ‘magic’ in an etymology dictionary, and traced it back Old Persian, where it may have meant ‘to be able, to have power’.

And if I’m reading it right, the etymology of the word ‘image’ comes from Latin and means “copy, imitation, likeness; statue, picture”.

So it may not be that the two words actually come from the same root, although it does appear both words did get

'filtered' through Old French. Interesting!



@Justin:

Hm! Thanks also for the further meditation fodder about Levi's list of powers and Yod!

@Happy Panda:

Thanks for the book recommendation, I'll see if my local library system has it or if I can get it from Abebooks. This whole exercise has indeed made me more interested in sacred geometry by showing that a lot of meaning can be packed in symbolic form into these abstract geometric forms.

@RandomActsOfKarma:

Thanks for the further meditations on the Merkabah and the octohedron, I'm following along with great interest! And I mixed up my earlier reply to you when I wrote 'Ezekiel's chariot' when I believe it was God's chariot that was named Merkabah. I'm still quite unfamiliar with the biblical stories, and it looks like I will need to do some reading.

---

**Sam** says:

#92. June 12, 2021 at 4:11 pm

Dear Archdruid, thank you for the response. I indeed suspected you would respond in such a way to the first

question, as a generalized answer to that question seemed to be difficult to formulate in a fair way. Out of curiosity, where do you think your sense/need for the vast and secret came from? I know you have spoken previously of your belief about reincarnation, I guess that could provide one possible explanation.

As far as my question about self-benefit, I think the idea came to me after considering the radically different ways people orient themselves to the rest of the world. You have previously written how differently people in the modern world relate to the world and community at large when comparing modern culture to previous cultures. That got me thinking – is it that the previous cultures had the same idea of self benefit as ours, and simply negotiated the balance between self-benefit and the benefit of the rest of the community/world differently? Or is the difference between modern and previous cultures so large that even the concept of self-benefit would have been radically different in the minds of previous cultures – stemming from a radically different understanding of “self” and “benefit”?

---

**Iuval Clejan** says:

#93. June 12, 2021 at 6:43 pm

How does Eckart Tolle’s and other New Agey gurus concept of self compare to Levi’s? I think Levi’s is much more individuated.

**flagg707** says:

#94. June 12, 2021 at 6:51 pm



JMG – or anyone else able to help –

Regarding the image on page 28 of the Greer/Mikituk edition – thoughts/suggestions on sources that might provide a guide on the symbolism or to help unpack the Latin/Hebrew and any historical context?

Or should I wait a time with patience as we work through the books and check back on it later?

Thanks

Mike

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#95. June 12, 2021 at 8:00 pm

JMG,

1. I have added Timaeus to my “to read” list. ☐
2. I had some walking-behind-the-lawnmower meditation today (which is one of the best kinds for me). I think I figured something out, but I have decided I really need to learn more about the Cabala. What do you recommend as the best first Cabala book for someone to read?
3. The Cabala question I have that would let me know if I

figured something out or not... Is Malkhut where all humans are or is it like the first step on the Path?

Thank you!

(and @Jbucks, THANK YOU! I will never look at a D8 the same again...)

---

**Ray Wharton** says:

#96. June 12, 2021 at 8:18 pm

What a sensible reconciliation between reason and faith, very similar to the terms in my own habits of thought. I was talking with a buddy at work about reincarnation, and observed that I wasn't much committed to the factual accuracy of any detail of reincarnation as objective reality, but that there are a whole cluster of, let's say, stories about reincarnation that have become extremely dear to my heart. There are some arguments of reason or evidence I might play with for or against reincarnation if I have cause to indulge in such play, but I frankly don't have much invested in them. I simply value reincarnation stories as meaningful, and don't make the habit of fussing about the precise nature of that meaning.

An interesting series of synchronicity bear mentioning here I believe. First, slightly later in the above mentioned conversation the differences between Taoism and Buddhism was brought up by another harvester in the field. Various things were said, and I figured there wasn't much I knew

about the question that would be of much meaning in the context, still I recalled and told the Chuang Tzu stories of the butterfly dream and the happy fish, as those stories are delightful, and anyone who doesn't know them is likely to find searching them out amusing and interesting. Those little stories are the most important linkage between the Taoist tradition and my habits of thought. The Butterfly story actually makes a good compliment to Ehyeh asher Ehyeh come to think of it. The synchronicity was that a friend I hadn't talked to for months send me a message that afternoon asking for recommendations for a good translation of Taoist texts. Which was most interesting.

So I was thinking of synchronicity, and that it might be a good time to make a reading of the tao again, its been a while. I seen you posted this here essay and I opened it, but wasn't quite ready to start reading, for I had happened across a video essay on an old Anime cartoon I was rather fond of, and decided to give it a watch first. The Anime in question was Ghost in the Shell, a philosophical sci-fi that imagines a future of human cybernetic modification, and proceeds to explore all the ways that such a future would make incoherent the more mainstream notions of self from western culture. Hence the title Ghost in the Machine; with a literal science fiction cyborg machine, is there any room for a ghost of individuality. Good cartoon for people into stuff like that, but the video essay started talking about Descartes Cogito, and all the ways a science fiction world where a person's memories could be hacked, intentionally edited, or even copied, puts a mess in sectors of the Cartesian world

view. “Descartes crafted his maxim if all else is an illusion at least descartes could be certain that he existed because he could think. For hundreds of years and even arguably to this day this maxim is held to be self-evident to be the base of all philosophy.” I pause the video to have a think about Descartes, trying to be fair to the ol’ mercenary; and after having a think I have a whim to start on your essay. Descartes! Some where before I read your mention of Nietzsche I think “what a charming synchronicity with that silly video essay, oh heck lets go finish that first.” What do you know the guy starts on about Nietzsche, putting forward that Descartes notions don’t formally support the notion of a particular entity doing the thinking. The video essay goes on to show examples from the Anime where characters are forced to confront the uncomfortable implications of existing in a cyber-punk story written by a fellow who has a bone to pick with Descartes, not a pleasant proposition. I come back your essay having finished the video, and Nietzsche, covering about the same ground.

Now I have to figure out what my faith concerning synchronicity comes to in practice.

---

**Jon Goddard** says:

#97. June 12, 2021 at 8:49 pm

I’m using the Knapp-Hall deck and am intrigued by the table of all things. In both the Knapp-Hall and Marseilles deck, the table only has three legs showing. In the Rider-Waite deck

that I use for divination, there are two. I thought for years that it was just an artistic effect, but now I don't know. There's plenty of room on all of these cards for all four legs.

And the magician's legs are noticeably apparent under the table on Knapp-Hall and Marseilles. So I asked, well, what supports the four elements? It must be the table.

So, maybe, the ternary supports the quaternary and the quaternary somehow is manipulated by the binary, through human agency.

I never would have thought this using just the Rider-Waite deck. This is going to be fun. Thanks, JMG ☐

---

**Christophe** says:

#98. June 12, 2021 at 9:09 pm

Several comments have mentioned the Bateleur's table having only three legs. The table's placement and the viewer's perspective are certainly decidedly important aspects of this trump, yet the triune nature of the table's legs appears to be just one of their ever-so-many secrets. What has been occluded, and why? From whose perspective?

Whenever I look at this card, I invariably see six legs. If I squint at it, I can even make out four, or two, or three legs...

For a juggler (or a magician for that matter), he doesn't yet seem to have mastered keeping all the tools in his wallet in



play at the same time. He has already picked up his wand, but looks away from it. What has divided his will?

There's also a particularly vibrant growth, like a flame, centered directly under le Bateleur. What will happen as it grows and rises?

---

**Degringolade** says:

#99. June 12, 2021 at 10:11 pm

I am titling this post "The Sharpie Heresy"

JMG: I followed your advice and went and got a "Tarot of Marseilles" deck through the Philosophical Research Society that is numbered as Master Levi uses in his work. I wanted a Knapp-Hall deck because the artwork really appealed to me but I am making due with a Flipbook authored by Teresa Mayville that shows me the Knapp-Hall Deck in a book format. Not nearly as good as a deck, but it is workable.

But at the risk of sounding like an art critic (which I decidedly am not!) the artwork on the Tarot of Marseilles deck is so bad that it actually kinda interferes with my attempts to create the symbol in my head. I realize that this sounds silly, but when I look at the artwork on the Marseilles deck, I just feel like I am being forced to revisit my children's "art fairs" when they were in grade school and those just depressed

me (this nonsense about the inner child's latent artistic talent has never attended one of these torture sessions).

So I made a decision. First I went back to the PRS website and asked to be put on the waiting list should they do a new printing of the Knapp-Hall (I did mention that I really liked those, didn't I/) and second, I dug out my Rider deck and a couple of sharpies and started modifying the Rider deck's numbering to match the Knapp-Hall/Marseilles deck's system.

A much more satisfactory approach to me. I am certain that there are issues with the symbolism, but as I work through the deck ( I am at the L'Imperatrice now) I am hand drawing in what I think are important "stuff" that appears on the other two decks (I bought a pack of different colored sharpies for this task).

Not asking for an attaboy or anything, but I thought that I would pass this on to the other students.....Maybe it will work for them. Please tell me if I violated any serious rule that I didn't know about.

Thanks for doing this course. As a further aside, Dionne Fortune's "The Mystical Qabalah" is a darn sight more approachable than "The Cosmic Doctrine".

John

<https://degringolade.dreamwidth.org/>

**John Michael Greer** says:

#100. June 12, 2021 at 11:05 pm



Sam, yes, I figure it's based on previous incarnations. As for self-benefit, oh, doubtless the latter — no two cultures have the same understanding of what the self is, and while there's some overlap on ideas of benefit — especially where it impinges on the biological — it zooms off from there in many directions.

luval, well, I don't know Eckart Tolle's ideas at all — New Age literature generally isn't something I've studied — so I don't know how they compare to Lévi's ideas.

Flagg707, I'll quote my response above: “the Hebrew letters are the name of God יהוה', YHVH, written right side up and then upside down. The full text, in Latin and Hebrew, says ‘By the benediction of YHVH, the malediction of (YHVH reversed) is shadowed forth.’ The point Lévi is making is also made by the Yin-Yang symbol and the light and dark triangles in the upper left.”

Karma, well, my book *Paths of Wisdom* was written precisely for that purpose, and a fair number of people seem to find it useful. As for Malkuth, it's where all humans are at, and it's also the first step on the Path. We're all on the Path, knowingly or not.

Ray, fascinating. Thanks for this.

Jon, excellent! The table is as much a part of the image as anything else, and its numerical features won't be

accidental.

Christophe, a fine beginning for a meditation or three.

Degringolade, well, you can do as you like, of course, but it's more than just the numbers. See some of the comments above.

---

**Christophe** says:

#101. June 12, 2021 at 11:22 pm

Isaac Salamander Hill wrote, "When asked 'what do you know for sure?' He replies: 'what I am.' That is something that I am not yet sure about, and something that Decarte seemed quite far from, but something perhaps Levi can help with."

Be very happy that you are not sure what you are, and pray that you will always remain so. The only people who trumpet about knowing what they are as being the one thing they know for sure are, unfortunately, not entirely human any longer. As long as we remain fully human, we will never know the full extent of what being human means. We are each a point that can dilate and radiate in an unlimited circle. When we were mollusks, we never knew the full extent of what being mollusk meant. Once we have graduated from humanity, we will never know the full extent of what being graduated from humanity means. It really is as unlimited as Lévi describes.



When people don't graduate, when they give up and become enticed by the Penumbra, something very non-human moves in to inhabit the vessel they leave behind. What that is believes itself to be as powerful as an angel or a god, to be able to fully pass for a human, and to be more unlimited than all the other points. As in, all points are created unlimited, but some are more unlimited than others! Where that craving for power leads to is not a place you want to visit.

Be very careful around people like your mentor. I wasn't about to listen to his (I'm quite certain) captivating voice, but I did look up some transcripts of his interviews. He described his transformation as, "I saw then that I was the featureless space upon which all objects occur," a chilling quote if I ever read one. He continued, "the final nail was driven into the coffin of the ego in an intense (but effortless) period lasting a little over an hour. Strangely enough, my grief was not for Art T. but for the nice old nun who is in charge of hospitality at the monastery and the poignancy of her belief that she is alive and separate."

Anyone who describes their ego as being a "coffin" has developed an oddly adversarial relationship with an aspect of their Self. Anyone who would not feel the deepest grief for the death of their ego, that beloved friend who accompanied and guided us as long as it could, and then laid its own life down when it had become too restrictive to contain our growing Self, has clearly mistaken the incredible strength and love of self-sacrifice for a debilitating weakness.

The poignancy of that nice old nun's belief that she is alive and separate is what allows her to live as a saint, helping others. May we all live so blessed a life! Whatever your mentor felt for her sounds less like grief and more like contempt, disdain, or scorn. Humanity's ability to be separate and deeply connected at the same time, our belief that worlds we cannot see are real and alive within us, and our gift of loving our imperfect, fragile Selves in all their broken facets, including our egos, is what allows us to be able to self-sacrifice and to feel real grief. Those utterly human qualities are infinitely stronger than any contempt and far more enticing than the Penumbra of featureless space. And yet, some still choose the void.

---

**Prizm** says:

#102. June 12, 2021 at 11:41 pm

Contemplating "the Verb" after having meditated on the image *Le Bateleur* brought my mind into some interesting places. My mind decided to contemplate what it was like before humans had developed recognized speech patterns. I realized then that when a sound became a symbol of some meaning, for instance "run", that likely when someone uttered the word run, it had a lot of power, encouraging others who understood to run. This was definitely a form of magic, influencing others to run. As the symbols became more complex, naturally the power changed, yet even to this day, harnessing powerful symbols in just the right way still causes many to react. Trump and his use of Twitter and

speech patterns was a great example. As is modern day advertising. This all made me aware of the power of our speech, the power of symbols, and why it is of great importance to be knowledgeable and wise before using this magic. *Le Bateleur* with his power of three, reminds that there is a connection between everything, With such a great power, naturally there is responsibility but especially because there often will be unanticipated reactions. The layers in symbolism are very complex, and the opposite of for example again, run, doesn't haven't to be walk if the connection is a stressor, which would make the opposite of run, or flight, to be to fight.

---

**Darkest Yorkshire** says:

#103. June 13, 2021 at 5:02 am

I'm just catching up on Magic Monday and saw the post on hte lemniscate or infinity symbol. I noticed if you turn the infinity symbol 90 degrees it becomes an hourglass which has the opposite meaning.

---

**Chris at Fernglade** says:

#104. June 13, 2021 at 7:25 am

Hi John Michael,

I quite enjoyed Lévi's earthy take upon philosophy and can quite readily acknowledge such a pragmatic point of view: what exists is what exists. The thought appeals greatly to me.

We're in for an interesting ride, that's for sure. I tend to believe that we are part of a greater whole, and thus the Golden rule has it's basis, and also the 'whatever is done to the least' has force. How could it be otherwise? The details however are very complicated! ☐

The artists of the Romantic era were very good indeed, and their works hold great appeal. I have the suspicion that they said: This is what may have been, and this is what could be.

Cheers

Chris

---

**Robert F** says:

#105. June 13, 2021 at 8:38 am

From the beginning, the Knapp-Hall deck coaxed me out of one of of my Golden Dawn preconceptions. Instead of being called The Magician, Key 1 is titled Le Bateleur. The primary translation seems to be juggler, which I can certainly relate to – adding another ball (this four-year adventure in consciousness) to those already in the air is a sizable stretch! But some of the alternate translations are equally evocative: acrobat, tumbler, jester, and busker.



An acrobat is someone who uses their physical body skillfully. One of the many ways to view the four elements, the four implements on Le Bateleur's table, is to see them as representing sunlight, water, air, and food, all of which can be used with increasing levels of skill and awareness. A secondary definition of acrobat is "a person who readily changes viewpoints or opinions." This is especially relevant, given Levi's warning that "one who loves his ideas and is afraid to lose them... can close this book, which is useless and dangerous to him." (p. 30)

A tumbler, like a martial artist, needs to be able to take a hard fall, give way to it, roll with it, and then come back to his or her feet. Taking a fall now and then is inescapable. It's what comes after the fall, so to speak, that counts.

Jesters keep things light and entertaining, using jokes, witticisms, funny stories, and seemingly absurd non sequiturs. Yet as the old saying goes, many a truth is said in jest. Gifted comedians utilize this principle to probe, exploit, and potentially alleviate the gnarly subliminal impulses of their audience. So did medieval court jesters, whose amusing banter simultaneously entertained the crowd while covertly instructing and advising the king and queen.

Finally, a busker is a street performer. As with acrobats, tumblers, and jesters, buskers perform in public. But Le Bateleur appears to be alone and somewhere out in the country, not on a street corner or on a stage. Maybe he's performing for an audience of "one." Or perhaps, like any artist, he needs to practice his craft in private. The word busker comes from a Spanish root word *buscar*, meaning to seek; which in turn comes from the Indo-European *bhūd-*



sko, to win, to conquer.

Now this juggler needs to attend to one of the other balls in the air and will return with some further associations with Key 1 once this particular ball is back in hand.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#106. June 13, 2021 at 8:38 am

@JBucks, I am by no means a biblical scholar, but I think when it is referred to “Ezekiel’s Chariot”, they are referring to the chariot that Ezekiel saw in his vision (and in his vision, he saw God’s Chariot). So there may be a fine distinction (are you referring to the metaphor or are you referring to the actual chariot), but I haven’t meditated on that at all and when I read your response, I was not confused by what you said. (Ha. I almost typed “I knew what you meant”, but after meditating on all the hidden meanings in things, I don’t know that I’ll ever be confident to use that phrase again.)

I had another ah-ha moment, which I will write up in a separate post. ☐

@JMG, Paths of Wisdom has been ordered. Thank you for the answer regarding Malkuth. It being both where all humans are and the first step is the bestest answer possible for my metaphor. I’ll work on writing that up now and will get it posted.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#107. June 13, 2021 at 8:41 am



Re: dice on the table

My Magician card does NOT have dice on the table, but I noticed some comments about it from other decks. I don't know if this is relevant, since I don't know what the rest of the cards in the other decks look like, but in my readings I learned that Apollo gave Hermes the gift of divination using dice.

---

**Denis** says:

#108. June 13, 2021 at 8:41 am

After reading Chapter 1 once, I can already tell I want a good quality hardback version of this book. Does it exist? Is it possible to get a limited print run of such a book produced? It would be worth the investment for me personally.

The sentence that jumped out at me on first pass is "The world is a battlefield where liberty battles with the force of inertia by using the active force." I have neighbors with millstones as yard decorations so shuddered with the visual of the follow-up sentence.

I spent some time ruminating on the differences between liberty and freedom since they are not interchangeable although we act as if they are today. The idea that inertia

has more of effect in the world than evil is quite a mind-tripping idea too. Although one look at at the garden beds and I can see how weeds just doing what weeds do and my lack of pulling them up has made quite an impact on the beauty and functionality of the garden.

I appreciate how Levi labels inertia a force and not a state of being. It isn't just laziness or apathy, an amorphous thing, but a defined side of the battle.

I got the mini-size of the Marseille Tarot deck so my cards are the size of credit cards. I could carry them around in my pocket if I wish. This really appeals to me somehow!

---

**Myriam** says:

#109. June 13, 2021 at 9:18 am

The two things which struck me the most about the Bateleur card is first, the infinity symbol on the hat passes in front and behind the head, only very slightly above the location of the third eye, placing the human brain (mind) at the middle where the two tear drops of the infinity symbol meets. For some reason, I get shivers thinking about this and can feel a physical reaction in my own head when I meditate on this.

The second is that if you place a piece of paper along the bottom of the caduceus, and trace a line past on both ends, it passes through the solar plexus and goes to the hand pointing downward, suggesting that the energies invoked

from the higher planes pass through the solar plexus to become manifested. The angle seems very deliberate because the caduceus is not pointing directly up, as you would expect it “above”.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#110. June 13, 2021 at 9:33 am

When I figured out my first final answer to the Sphinx’s riddle, I didn’t post it because it was very specific to my circumstance and, while very helpful to me, probably wouldn’t be helpful to anyone else. And sometimes when I read someone else’s interpretation, it can make it harder for me to figure out my own. (And then there was that “to reveal it is death” comment by Levi, which a lot of people seemed to take to heart in the Introduction post.) I pondered whether or not to post my second final answer to the Sphinx’s riddle, but decided that I should, because if @JBucks had not posted his original comment about the octohedron, I would not have ended up where I am right now. I do not think this is the \*final\* final answer... I am starting to think I will end up with a new answer after every chapter. □

Figure 5 on this page <https://www.sacred-geometry.es/?q=en/content/metatrons-cube> shows a merkaba with an internal octohedron. My metaphor is based on that, so if you haven’t looked at the picture yet, go look at the picture.

Yesterday morning, I woke up with the idea of the Merkabah as a collection of lenses, with prisms at the bottom. It was like I remembered seeing it, but I didn't remember what I saw, so as I tried to build the metaphor, I knew there were things I was missing, but I wrote down what I could remember.

Then, later in the day while cutting grass, a bird flew overhead and cast a huge shadow in front of me (and then on me). I looked up to see the bird (without considering the direction of the shadows) and ended up looking straight at the sun. My internal voice said 'yeah, looking directly at the sun is NOT a good idea' as I turned my head to try to see the bird. Didn't see the bird, but noticed how brilliantly blue the sky was. And I thought, 'ha, if the throne was ruby, the sky would be red.'

And then things started clicking into place.

We cannot look directly at the sun; we'd fry our retinas. We cannot look directly at the Solar Logos; we'd fry our brains.

The Solar Logos sits on a sapphire throne, so the Solar light shining through the sapphire turns blue, so our sky is blue.

But the sun isn't \*on\* the sky, the sun is \*in\* the sky.

The Solar Logos isn't \*on\* a throne, he's \*in\* a throne.

The Solar Logos isn't \*on\* a chariot, he's \*in\* a chariot.

So the Solar Logos isn't \*on\* (or above) the Merkabah, he's IN the Merkabah.

But where IN the Merkabah would the Solar Logos be?

The center.

But there's no vertex in the center. That would just be the plane between the two bases of the pyramids of the octohedron.

But that's like what @Jbucks described, only during the SOP.

But in @Jbucks version, \*I\* am supposed to be in the plane with the elements.

Ah, but the elements aren't on the plane in the center of the Merkabah, they are on the bottom level.

So the Solar Logos is in the center of his octohedron in the middle of the Merkabah. And I'm in the center of MY octohedron at the bottom of the Merkabah. The cherubim/sphinxes are the elements, my Spirit Above is the Solar Logos, and my Spirit Below is... Gaia, who isn't part of the Merkabah proper, but whom I'm supposed to be attuning with. So there are two octohedrons, as above, so below.

Then I wonder how this relates to the Magician card. He's got his Elements ready on the table. He's got his caduceus ready in his hand. He is ready to do whatever it is he's going to do next. And that is Aleph, the connecting line from Malkuth to Yesod on the Cabala, being ready to do the next thing (I think. I haven't read enough about the Cabala to know if that's what it really means. And what is the next thing? I have no idea. But we're only on Chapter One...)

Then I wonder how this relates to the Sphinx's riddle. The clues JMG gave in the introduction were the circle with the cross, the star of two triangles, and a circle. So my new interpretation of that is the circle with a cross is me at the intersection, with the elements/cherubims/sphinxes at the compass points; the star of two triangles is the Merkabah; the circle is unity (the Solar Logos or God). So once I understand the elements, I can use the Cabala (paths) to reach the Solar Logos.

To use Levi's clues (the quaternary to the duality to the ternary), the quaternary are the cherubim, the duality is the central octohedron of the merkaba, and the trinity is God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, since he was Christian).

And much later, the realization of what the SOP really is doing hit me. Or rather, what I am doing when I do the SOP. But again, all this might just be my interpretation for me and you might come up with something completely different. (And if you do, I hope you will post your version!)

---

**Goldenhawk** says:

#111. June 13, 2021 at 10:23 am

Regarding the number of legs visible on the card, I see five: three on the table and two on le Bateleur.

Five = the fifth element

---



**Degringolade** says:

#112. June 13, 2021 at 10:37 am



Hmmmm. OK, all three are laid out in front of me now and I am looking for similarities and differences. For the use of the course I will use the Knapp-Hall flipbook for meditation. But I will try to create a “composite” symbol in my head for when I work through the exercises.

Maybe I am wrong (and it certainly wouldn't be the first time) but from what I am reading, the symbol in your head is the important part. I am likening the learning of the Qabalah to the pain of the first time I learned analytic geometry (or for that matter calculus). You plow and plow for weeks and weeks, despairing of ever getting “it”. Then all the sudden things fall together and you get this epiphany.

But what I did remember is how many times I had to ask folks to “explain that again” and how one person's approach seemed to work to get the point across. It might have been easier if it had been the same person each time, but the “seed crystal” came from every which way.

I really do want to thank you again for the course, I really want to comprehend something that I feel that I missed in my first round of education. Seeing as the scientific/industrial worldview is looking decidedly threadbare, I figure that I should go back to the cleft point that happened in the Enlightenment/Scientific revolution(s) and trace the other route.

**Degringolade** says:

#113. June 13, 2021 at 10:46 am

I have a feeling that the folks “back then” were the same kind of folks that we have around now. Coming out of the world of “Trade Secrets” and “Do Not Compete” clauses and patents locking up ideas, one sees the same kind of behavior in the here and now.

Knowledge is power. Power corrupts. The folks who hid things were born in the same era as the Papacy that didn't allow the bible to be read by non-clergy.

If the knowledge was freely available, my guess is that the desire for secrecy might be explained by a quote from Neal Stephenson's “Quicksilver”.

“Cromwell's England was another matter. Since the Puritans had killed the king and taken the place over, Enoch didn't go around that Commonwealth (as they styled it now) in a pointy hat with stars and moons. Not that Enoch the Red had ever been that kind of alchemist anyway. The old stars-and-moons act was a good way to farm the unduly trusting. But the need to raise money in the first place seemed to call into question one's own ability to turn lead into gold.”

---

**Kirsten** says:

#114. June 13, 2021 at 10:50 am

Dear JMG,

Thank you for this book club – tugging along as a complete novice. I'm not even sure what people here mean when they say "meditation". I bet it's something very different from what suburban moms do at yoga retreats. 😊 Anyway, I'll take a stab at it.

I imagine Le Bateleur as standing at a country fair and getting ready to perform. He is not nervous... too late to be nervous... there is a crowd gathering around him. He's got his tools out. He is ready to perform his tricks... but he hasn't begun yet.

Disciplina... He'll need a lot of it to succeed. School of hard knocks comes to mind. Once he starts performing the ego hits are gonna come and he has to withstand them.

אין סוף... I'm interpreting סוף literally – end, like they used to write at the end of the movies. Something that has no end also has no beginning. Everything is possible... That's because he hasn't started at all. Once he starts he's going to open some options... and eliminate others.

כרת... Very far from realization, manifestation, and earthly reality... Le Bateleur has a long LONG way to go to mastery of his craft and himself. It's up there... a vague thought, a distant possibility, an unrealized passion, a feeling too romantic to be true...

Is any of the above something that can be said to be a meditation?

**Degringolade** says:

#115. June 13, 2021 at 11:06 am

Thank you for pointing this out. I never thought to count the legs of the table (BTW, the Rider Waite only shows one leg). What I found interesting was the way that the leg on the far left comes off at an angle in both the Knapp-Hall and the Marseilles decks. Does this imply some kind of instability?

Pondering away

---

**Phutatorius** says:

#116. June 13, 2021 at 11:16 am

On page 33 of our text: regarding “the Donkey of Sterne or Apuleius...” This passage, together with its footnote puzzles me because I don’t think a donkey plays any important role in “Tristram Shandy.” Sterne’s other novel, however, concerns the lusts and lechery of a consumptive, dying clergyman (which is Sterne himself thinly disguised). Sterne’s other novel is titled “A Sentimental Journey.” Somewhere I read a comment that said “sentimental” is being used in the sense of sensuous or lecherous, so the alternate title might be “A Lecherous Journey.” Make of that what you will, but it’s the nearest I’ve come to being able to understand Levi’s statement about the donkey of Sterne or Apuleius. I especially like a famous passage under “Paris” on pg 71 of my Penguin edition: the “running at the ring of pleasure” passage.



---

**erikalopez** says:

#117. June 13, 2021 at 12:23 pm

i love what you're doing with this book club thing Papa Greer. / it's messing with my head and the innerwebs are too small, have made me crippled somehow over these past two decades, and this reading your book and thinking—no REMEMBERING— gives me ice cream headaches.

this is all necessary. what you're taking on is beautifully epic and optimistic. (smile)

thank you. i bet there are many behind the posts we actually see here, loping behind and along in silence as i am.

but most of all, thank you to those of you with the audacity to post your thoughts. that's what it's gonna take to help us in this mess. the fearless ones who raise hands first while the rest of us in back aren't even sure what we're looking at just yet.

x

---

**Robert Mathiesen** says:

#118. June 13, 2021 at 1:20 pm

Another meaning of Bateleur is “mountebank,” “fraudster.”

When I first looked at the image of the card, what I saw first of all was a man getting ready to fleece some marks on the street using the old three-shell game: Can you guess which of the three shells I have been moving around is the shell under which the pea is hidden? I will bet any money that you cannot.”

In truth, no matter which shell the mark picks, he will lose his bet. The Bateleur “palmed” the pea before he started moving the shells around.

I have this unfashionable notion that (as a rule) the con-artist is also, in his own way, a mage and sometimes even a mystic. All three work with the same deep, pre-verbal awareness of how all our every-day, ordinary means of perception barely convey reality—reality that lies, as it does, far far beyond the reach of any thinking the human body can think and anything the human body can sense.

And this limitation, so kindly built into our material existence, is one of the limitations that keeps us all sane.

“Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / cannot bear very much reality.”

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#119. June 13, 2021 at 2:16 pm

Prizm, excellent! Thanks for this.

Yorkshire, very good. Geometrical relationships are very much worth considering in this context.

Chris, the details are complicated indeed, and trying to make sense of them with a six-inch brain is not an easy task!

Robert F, fascinating — some of those details I didn't know. The Golden Dawn/Rider-Waite version is useful in its own place but it's certainly not the only game in town.

Karma, you're welcome and thank you.

Denis, I'm sorry to say it's currently available only in the paperback edition. You might contact the publisher and hope out loud for a hardback; some publishers listen to that sort of thing. I'm glad you're finding the text thought-provoking.

Myriam, good. Very good. So, yes, you have the pineal gland and the solar plexus being indicated. The physical reaction is a sign worth noting, by the way — that can be a sign that the pineal center is active.

Karma, good heavens. This is fascinating — and thank you for pointing me to the site, which seems to be doing an extremely interesting blend of trad sacred geometry and Buckminster Fuller.

Degringolade, the flipbook is fine. You can certainly compare and contrast, so long as you're aware of the imagery that Lévi is working with. As for knowledge and



power, yes, that's an important part of it, but there's another side. If you were to try to teach analytical geometry to people who didn't understand basic mathematics, think of the muddle they'd make of it — and if they then took their misunderstandings and taught that to other people as analytical geometry, what a mess that would be! Occultism is in a similar quandary; in order to be understood, it requires skills of consciousness most people never learn (and are in fact hostile to learning), and so misunderstandings are rife. Keeping your mouth shut except around people who are willing to learn those skills is usually a better policy — though you can also express what you want to communicate in ways that automatically screen out the clueless.

Kirsten, you can find a detailed discussion of the kind of meditation I'm talking about here (start at the bottom). No, it's not the kind of nonchemical tranquilizer marketed to suburban moms these days! Your comments are solid, though, and each of them is a good start to a meditation in prose.

Degringolade, good. What do you think?

Phutatorius, I haven't read either of Sterne's novels, so I'll be interested to see what comes up in the discussion.

Erika, plenty of minds need stretching these days. Lévi's good at that. 😊



Robert, well, Hermes is the god of con artists as well as mages!

---

**Degringolade** says:

#120. June 13, 2021 at 2:50 pm

As to the crooked leg, the best that I can come up with is that the person using the table for work had better keep a watchful eye on things or the damn thing will tip over and he will have to pick up and start all over again.

What I am finding intriguing is the coins on the Marseilles deck and the coins on the other two decks. On the Rider Waite and the Knapp-Hall the coins are all gold. On the Marseilles deck there appear to be gold, silver, and copper. In this case I like the symbolism of differing levels of value for what he is peddling....seems to me to be likely.

What I am not understanding on the Marseilles deck is the lack of a wand on the table (there is one in the hand of the Bateleur). And for the life of me I can't figure out the feather (or is it an okra pod, I dunno) is doing there.

Finally, I do like the presence of the bag that (if I am understanding correctly) is the one that le fou was hauling around.....a nice tie to the previous card....Now searching to see if there are hints for the next card.

---

**Rusty says:**

#121. June 13, 2021 at 9:39 pm

So am I the only one seeking the Jedi code in the know, dare, will, keep silent thing?

---

**Bonnie Henderson-Winnie says:**

#122. June 13, 2021 at 9:46 pm

Hello JMG and all,

I've been underground, so to speak, for most of the last year and am very happy to have re-checked in over here at (just about) the beginning of the Levi reading/study group launch. I picked up this translation in 2020 and thoroughly enjoyed it then. Looking forward to taking a deeper dive!

As luck would have it, I already have the Conner/Ben Dov Marseilles deck, and a Wirth lookalike if not actual deck (it doesn't have a box or book, but the images match). Which is great because I need to be fairly conservative with the expenditures these days.

It's been a rough but transformative year. Glad for the clean slate though. Nothing like a few disasters to make one's priorities crystal clear.

After that delightful guided meditation through the sabbat of the witches (that seemed to me to be a bit of the Watcher written right in) one of the myriad things that spoke to me

from the text so far was when Levi is discussing the great magical secret, and/or its prerequisites referencing Eve, Psyche, Prometheus, Christ and even Lucifer: curiosity, courage, and love. Yes indeed. I wanted to cheer.

Many thanks, as usual!

Bonnie

---

**Bonnie Henderson-Winnie** says:

#123. June 13, 2021 at 9:47 pm

(re: previous post: apologies, I didn't catch last month's post while we were talking about the introduction. i realize I'm a chapter later for that comment!)

Bonnie

---

**Cliff** says:

#124. June 13, 2021 at 11:49 pm

I don't think I have much to contribute to the conversation. But I will say, Levi's definition of honor is maybe the first one that I've encountered that's ever really struck me. Usually it has seemed to be synonymous with reputation, so it's had a connotation of egotism in my understanding.

Defining honor as aligning one's behavior with the knowledge that we are embedded in a greater, sacred context – now that sounds like an ideal I can get behind.



**Scotlyn** says:

#125. June 14, 2021 at 5:57 am

Hello. One of the first things that jumped out at me on the second reading of the first chapter (Greer Mikituk trans now to hand), was the change in tempo that occurred at the mention of the sphinx's breasts. Just previously the sphinx is said to have the head of a man to possess speech, the wings of an eagle to conquer the heights, the body of a bull to plow the depths and the claws of the lion to make space the left and to the right. That is to say, each feature the sphinx manifests represents a capacity. Then we are told the sphinx has the breasts of a woman, but this is not connected to any power or capacity, instead it is linked to a temptation. The breasts are here said to represent the distracting power of attraction which must be shackled.

Being a possessor of women's breasts, I found this change of tempo and rhythm in the narrative jarred. And so I searched it out and came up with the obvious question – what is the capacity or power represented by the sphinx's female breasts? And then it became apparent that here there is a direct connection to Levi's introduction where he refers to occult philosophy as a "wet nurse" – "wet nursing" after all, is a power conferred upon the sphinx by dint of its possession of female breasts.

The sphinx's breasts also connect in to a passage later in the first chapter on imagination where, among other things,

we find out that “imagination determines the form of the child in the centre of the mother.” That is to say a woman’s womb builds and gives form – around a seed of imagination – to the child, and after it is born her breasts continue to nourish it – feeding nourishment INTO its form – IN-Forming the child so that it can learn and grow. In this way its outward form comes to contain true substance.

So, to the capacities represented by the sphinx’s other manifested characters, we can add the capacities represented by the sphinx’s breasts – the capacity to feed and wetnurse a form – ie to INform it.

---

**RogerCO** says:

#126. June 14, 2021 at 6:36 am

Hi JMG, possibly too late for a reply (a busy few days and I wanted time to read this post), but I’ll make my comment anyway as a note to myself; although of course I’d be delighted to know if you think either of these things relevant.

Firstly I was struck reading this chapter how much the language and style reminded me of some of William Blake’s works. And on second and third readings I started to think there might be correspondence between some of the ideas Levi is expressing and Blake’s way of seeing.

The second thing that struck me was the glimpses of a structure, or at least a way of thinking about the

relationships between entities and ideas, that has echos in Ervin Laszlo's Systems Philosophy, in the particular integrated pluraism and biperspectivism that Laszlo uses as tools to square the mind-body (or mind-brain) problem.

Going further I then recalled EF Schumacher's exploration of levels of consciousness in A Guide for the Perplexed (his final book)

Would Levi have read Blake? I'm pretty sure Laszlo wouldn't have touched Levi with a barge-pole even if he did end up in similar territory in some respects.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#127. June 14, 2021 at 7:18 am

@Myriam,

Thank you so much for sharing your observations. I had noticed the "infinity hat" and stopped with that. I didn't try to take it further until you mentioned the nexus of the symbol being in the middle of his mind.

At first, I thought the blue was for water, but I couldn't think of why that would matter. But I've decided with these cards, everything matters. So the blue meant something, but what could it mean other than water? I had just spent a lot of time meditating on the sapphire throne (and I really liked @Darkest Yorkshire's observation about lemniscate vs hourglass), so I focused on what infinity really meant. Finally

got to “that which persists”, so maybe Individuality (and the caduceus through the solar plexus to the hand being Personality), but that didn’t seem to fit. Then I thought “but *\*why\** does the Individuality exist?” Somewhere is CosDoc, Fortune commented something to the effect that we should feel safe, because we exist in the Mind of the Solar Logos. Ha! We exist in his imagination! So the blue hat represents our imagination and the caduceus (et al) represents our will, the two things that Levi says a Magician needs!

You also mentioned the solar plexus chakra and the third eye. I don’t know much about chakras, but a quick internet search reveals that the solar plexus has to do with willpower (<https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/solar-plexus-chakra/>) and the crown chakra has to do with “interaction and communication with the universe, [and] one’s senses of inspiration and devotion” (<https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/crown-chakra/>). Sounds like will and imagination to me!

And JMG mentioned the pineal gland (and he, like Levi) doesn’t mention things that don’t mean something. So Wikipedia to the rescue... the pineal gland is in the center of the brain, between the two hemispheres, and regulates melatonin. (Melatonin, which influences sleep, which is one of the death’s in CosDoc.) That fits nicely with imagination, where you are bringing an idea into manifestation (so the infinity symbol shows things going from one plane to another, the nexus being our imagination).

I hope this makes sense. It is a Monday morning and I must get ready to go to work, but I wanted to share this so other people could add to it.

Again, thank you for sharing. Seeing the elements on the card was the easy part. But you noticed the really important part—what makes the Magician different from everybody else.

---

**Robert F** says:

#128. June 14, 2021 at 9:48 am

This morning I'm struck by the presence of clouds above and behind the head of Le Bateleur. Last night's dark clouds brought thunder, lightning, and torrential rain. Now white clouds are drifting through a mostly blue sky, causing me to recall the childhood pastime of looking up at the clouds and seeing a menagerie of shape-shifting creatures. Sometimes we were even able to agree on what those slowly mutating phantoms might be.

Clouds (and the weather in general) represent for me the principle of impermanence – everything passes, everything changes. This is the backdrop for the mage's complementary ability to focus his attention on a chosen arena of awareness. Might he essentially be playing the same childhood game of giving names to the ever-changing shapes wrought by fire, water, and air?



Two aphorisms come to mind while looking at Key 1: “You get what you concentrate upon. There is no other main rule.” And “The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same.” Both sayings allude to the ongoing dance between the mutable clouds and the creative powers of concentration.

Another association to the first key is Eliphas Levi’s stoical observation that “to know how to suffer, abstain, and die, these are the first secrets that raise us above pain, sensual desires, and the fear of the void.” (p. 32) Since he has just stated, earlier in the paragraph, that “death is what we call change,” we come back to the shape-shifting clouds and the alternating days of sunshine and rain. Maybe a child taking delight in the clouds, and a gardener welcoming both the sun and the rain, can serve as models when we find ourselves facing “the fear of the void.”

---

**Renaissance Man** says:

#129. June 14, 2021 at 10:08 am

Reading this chapter, three things that came to mind were, first, that so much of what he wrote seems to have permeated western thought in the form of aphorisms and admonishments, viz., he wrote, “les œuvres avant la parole” and we say ‘deeds speak louder than words’, and such. A few of these ideas can be found in earlier writings, but I suspect some of his ideas have seeped into the deeper

unconscious of society.

Second, that he is entirely focused on the religions and mysteries that come from the desert lands. As we've mentioned before, this fixation on the exotic east and the middle east as THE source for ancient wisdom, is probably due to the effective suppression of magic in the west, as you've noted. Not even a hint that anything from Rome or from north of the Mediterranean sea even existed.

Of course, it could also be the problem of access. The information was out there, but if one doesn't have access to find it and doesn't stumble across it, one can never learn it, and even in the latter part of the 20th Century, the vast majority of writings on ancient mysteries still ignored or were ignorant of the wealth of pre-Christian European ideas. Even with your diligent research, you have only been able to piece together fragments.

Third, and three being the number of the counting &c. I see he, in the usual fashion, describes everything in binary form, apparently not realizing that he, himself, is rediscovering a third path, one long overgrown and choked with weeds, even though he only sees it as a bridge.

Bruce

---

**JeffinWA** says:

#130. June 14, 2021 at 11:28 am

Thanks John (and to all the Grove of Commenters) for this book club; quite the adventure.

On page 31 of your and Mark's book, Levi describes trump 1 "He holds one hand up towards the sky....and the other hand is on his chest". My Knapp/Hall Revised Tarot Card #1 shows the right hand pointing down, as others have pointed out, not on his chest. A translation glitch or is Levi misdirecting my attention on purpose?

"Woman shackles you through your desires: be the master of your desires, and you will shackle woman". So true of all desires. Taken out of context, as is so common these days, this would certainly raise some eyebrows in the politically correct swamp LOL

---

**Isaac Salamander Hill** says:

#131. June 14, 2021 at 3:14 pm

@Christophe

Thanks for your concern.

When it comes down to it, I don't know anything for sure, and can only take people on what they say, and what my intuition and reason says about them... I have never met you in real life and don't know who you are, while I have known Art for over ten years.

What Art says about his Realization, and the presence I feel from him, leads me to believe that what happened to him is pretty much the same thing that Franklin Merrell-Wolf, Ramana Maharshi, and Nisargadatta "experienced." From

your perspective they all may have “given up” and become enticed by the “penumbra” but from what they say, they are united with the Absolute. The Absolute is within everybody, is what everything and everybody exist within, and so rather than a deluded entity taking over their bodies, they have Realized their Highest Self... now of course, I don't know whether that's true or not. And I don't think you do either. Could it be possible that what you say is what really happened? Sure. Could it be that Art actually Realized his Highest Self in his lifetime? I think so.

Your ideas about this are apparently informed from working with the Cosmic Doctrine. How do you know that Dion Fortune wasn't being used by malicious entities? I am sure there are many people who would believe that to be the case. It seems to me that you might want to be careful with applying mental frameworks too dogmatically. The CosDoc was intended to train the mind, not inform it, after all. “The only people who trumpet about knowing what they are as being the one thing they know for sure are, unfortunately, not entirely human any longer.” – How can you know this? Are you sure that you are entirely human in the first place? If we all have a divine spark, are not we all more than human?

Art may have had an adversarial relationship with his “ego.” He has a rather cantankerous, contrary, serious personality, and I don't think the personality changes that much. In a way, that doesn't really matter... in the same way that Plotinus had a rather dismal view of the body, but JMG still finds him quite rewarding.

After all, it does seem like working with Art over the years has been very helpful for my development, the same as for working with the teachings of our admirable host. He has always pointed me back on myself instead of relying on him or any other “spiritual teacher”, inspired me to journal, meditate and investigate for myself what my deepest desire is, what I really want, and what I really am. To become my own authority. I do take everything with a grain of salt, and compare different perspectives to my own, and I do reflect on what challenges and confronts me. So thank you for the opportunity to look at this from a different perspective.

---

**Peter Van Erp (aka Peter Khan) says:**

#132. June 14, 2021 at 5:16 pm

Each time I look at the Bateleur, I have more questions.

The 4 objects on the table in the Wirth Tarot are of course the 4 Minor Arcana.

In the Cup: is that blood or wine? If blood, is it the San Graal or Sang Real, to follow a popular book from the 70s (later adopted by Dan Brown). Is it water which has become wine?

The Stave or Wand or Caduceus: most are directional, but this is not. It looks to me like the baton whirled by a cheerleader, and the Bateleur looks as if he is about to cast it into the air, distracting your eye from what he does on the table.

The Sword and the Coin are set on the table, with the Bateleur's hand resting on the coin near the sword's grip.

The Bateleur is a beardless youth. He is on the path to mastery, but he probably thinks he's further than he actually is.

*Disciplina*: to learn the use of the sword and the baton take physical discipline, while controlling wine and wealth take mental discipline.

With every comment I read here, I see yet more in the card.

Robert Mathiesen's post on the con-man reminds me of a magician I saw on the street near Harvard Square near 40 years ago. He had three cups, with an orange. Follow the cups, where's the orange? Each time we would guess wrong, of course, but his level of skill with that orange, much larger than the classic pea, kept us entranced. Finally we **knew** we had the right cup, and he picked it up to reveal.... A grapefruit! A GRAPEFRUIT, that was larger than the cup holding it. With that level of skill, we were only too happy to fill the hat he passed around. So Robert, the con-artist was a mage. His will changed our consciousness.

---

**pyrrhus** says:

#133. June 14, 2021 at 6:04 pm

Thanks for this! i'll only add that in my experience as a tarot reader, the Magician is often a trickster, whose statements

can't be taken at face value, and that colors my perception of this masterful card...

---

**tomriverwriter** says:

#134. June 14, 2021 at 10:35 pm

I'm struck by this passage from Levi. "The directors of consciences have with time become as ignorant as the common man, the blind tired of following the blind, and nobody wanted to submit to trials which lead only to doubt and despair: the path of the light had been lost."

Karen Armstrong's book "The Narrow Gate" seems to describe this. It is her story of her novitiate in a Roman Catholic convent. All of the initiates underwent severe ascetic scourging, but in the end, it was meaningless, because the nuns leading them had become ignorant and the light had been lost.

---

**youngelephant** says:

#135. June 14, 2021 at 10:46 pm

Interesting and helpful article on Ain Soph –  
<https://gnosticwarrior.com/ain-soph-the-endless-one.html>

---

**Cliff** says:

#136. June 15, 2021 at 12:00 am



On the discussion of the table legs, I feel like there's an intuitive link between the person being a juggler and a possibly unstable, physically impossible table.

He's an illusionist and a charlatan. The eye is drawn towards the big flashy wand he's holding, and then to the hat and the objects on the table. But his empty hand is pointing to the earth, yes, but also at the table (at least in the Knapp-Hall deck). So maybe there's an underlying meaning to the effect that the big flashy trick of the illusionist is to *cover up* the fact that there's something weird, possibly miraculous, going on with the table. The table itself seems like a good symbol for day-to-day reality.

The uninitiated are taken in by the flash and the dazzle. The initiate looks towards the hidden.

On science fiction, I've arrived at the stance that it's essentially a branch of fantasy, with its own overlapping sets of conventions. Warp drives and clones and nanotechnology, rather than spells and dragons.

It's just that a good many authors and readers mistake it for being, in some way, more realistic than fantasy, somehow indicative of the future.

For instance, *The Martian* by Andrew Weir is a painstakingly researched story, as scientifically accurate as he can make it. But he wrote it before we discovered that Martian soil is



chock-full of poison, and anyhow no one is surviving on Mars without robust magnetic shielding. So the book is a painstakingly researched fantasy of life on Mars. Put it on the shelf next to Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, read it and have fun, and call it a day.

And if science fiction does have some predictive element to it, I would argue that so does fantasy, in its own way.

---

**HELEN** says:

#137. June 15, 2021 at 7:05 am

Hi JMG,

Apologies for the late comment on this week's Magic Monday, I thought today was yesterday!

I came on to post my thoughts on the Marseille Magician, others may have already mentioned this, but I'm still to read all the comments.

Anyway, here's my ten cents worth:

The image on the Marseille decks generally shows a street magician, or "Jongleur" with his bag of tricks on his table, ready to entertain the crowd.

He is the Mercurial "Trickster" tempting his audience to try and outwit him – for a price. From our study perspective, we can see him making the sign of "as above, so below" with his arms, but it can also mean, "look at my right hand doing these amazing magical signs and signals, not my left".

He would have spent hours and hours practicing and honing his skills to the point of perfection, so that they would have almost become automatic.

His mind would need to be sharp, to counteract any situation presented by his audience.

He would need charm and wit to draw in and hold his crowd, keeping them entertained and not angry, despite taking their money.

He would need to be fit and agile, and ready to perform under many different circumstances, including stuffy, crowded areas, as well as out in the open as depicted, perhaps under a sweltering sun.

The secret of his success must surely have needed to include the dictum; To Know, To Dare, To Will, To Be Silent.

Perhaps, the spiritual, inwards side of existence (La Papesse, anyone?) was something he would take time to contemplate further on his life. For now, the material world and all its possibilities beckons!

Yes, I am a tarot junkie and I don't actually know the total number of cough, cough decks I have, cough. But I love them all! (I also don't know how many of JMG's books I have! hehe)

JMG, you mentioned you have the Arthur Rackam Tarot, do you have the John Bauer or Edmund Dulac decks? All three are beautiful, though art-wise, as far from a Marseille as you can get!

To you, JMG, RandomActsOfKarma and any others I may have missed, thank you for your kind thoughts and prayers for my dear, very sadly missed girl Miss Molly Moo, and for Little Milo Boy, and me. If I knew how to attach a pic I would.

To all commenters from last month's Introduction edition, for what it's worth, I had many similar thoughts to those that were posted!

Kind Regards,  
Helen in Oz

---

**HELEN** says:

#138. June 15, 2021 at 7:26 am

To Dennis G, thanks so much for your kind prayers, and best wishes and prayers to you and your furkids. I will light an incense for you all. Dog lovers of the world unite!

To RandomActsOf Karma, I may have mixed you up with Dennis G. Apologies if I did.

I'm still a bit spaced out to be honest

Helen in Oz

---

**HELEN** says:

#139. June 15, 2021 at 7:42 am

To Karma, I just (re) read your comment #58, so I wasn't as spaced out as I thought. Once again, thanks.

To Dennis G an incense called Good Fortune has been lit, and love and prayers sent your way. I thought it was an appropriate one as you mentioned "the wheel"

Helen in Oz

---

**Dennis G** says:

#140. June 15, 2021 at 8:23 am

The Place deck strikes me that Le Bateleur is emerging from and rising above the table.

Phonically. Le Bateleur. The Battler? A struggle?

---

**Dennis G** says:

#141. June 15, 2021 at 8:45 am

Many are called but few are chosen. Would it be more accurate to say many are called but few choose.

---

**HELEN** says:

#142. June 15, 2021 at 8:48 am

Karma #88,



In Oswald Wirth's book Tarot of the Magicians, he assigns the four elements to, To know, Cup, to Dare, Sword, to Will, Wand, to be Silent, Pentacle.

It's a pretty dense read, I've only skimmed the first few chapters from a pdf.

I believe the hard copy book contains all the majors as pullout cards at the back.

Re the Chariot/Merkaba. On the World card, the images in the corners represent the four Evangelists, the four Elements, the four fixed Zodiac signs and the four Seasons. Probably more than that too. Four directions?

The Aces of the minor arcana

Water, Air, Fire, Earth

Blue, Yellow, Red, Green

I think I've also read somewhere that the image of the hermaphrodite represents Christ.

Lots of connections

Getting late here, I better be off to bed

Blessings,

Helen in Oz

**jbucks** says:

#143. June 15, 2021 at 8:57 am



@RandomActsOfKarma, @JMG: About RandomActsOfKarma's ongoing thought-provoking comments, the query on Magic Monday about how, for Earth's planetary spirit, our Malkuth is its Kether, and JMG's response:

That line of thought made me try to connect to Druid Revival teachings, which may be a fruitless endeavor, but something interesting arose. I am still reflecting on whether Awen corresponds to Ain Soph, or whether Ain Soph corresponds more to the raw nwyfre that comes from the Cauldron of Annwn, which also is connected to the telluric current. This whole line of thought arose because I recalled something that you, JMG, once said about Golden Dawn magic in that it was more focused on the solar current and through a movement from the earthly reality of Malkuth up to Kether (forgive me if I've grossly misrepresented this). If I haven't misrepresented it, then what follows makes the assumption that Golden Dawn magic uses the Cabala, and the Cabala seems to de-emphasize the role of the telluric current.

In the Druid Revival teachings, which strive to balance the solar and telluric currents, there is the concept of the realm of Annwn, the spirit world, which if I understand correctly is a shadow, an inverse, a mirrored reflection of the realm of earthly reality, which is metaphorically below our realm and connected to the center of the earth, and it also is the realm of the telluric current.



In the Cosmic Doctrine book club, we learned about evolution and involution, about how forces descend through the planes into manifestation in physical reality (involution) while forces/beings that are in manifestation currently in earthly reality will eventually evolve back upwards through the planes to spirit.

It seems to me that the shape of the Cabala, the Tree of Life, could be showing this journey of evolution, and appears also to show involution as well. I wonder, though, assuming that the spirit world of Annwn is a mirrored reflection of our own, if there is also a 'mirror Tree of Life' that is literally upside-down that maps the journey that spirits take through this process of involution. That would imply that there is a source of energy/spirit that exists 'underneath' and acts as a counterpoint to Kether, from which beings from Kether involve toward.

On the other hand, this could be a clumsy attempt at mashing together two different systems. But it is still interesting to contemplate and compare two different sets of symbols.

---

**Dennis G** says:

#144. June 15, 2021 at 1:26 pm

Helen, Thank You so much.

---

**Clarke aka Gwydion** says:

#145. June 15, 2021 at 2:29 pm



To underscore your point (assuming I understood it), meeting people with a high degree of apparent realization (rather than claimed realization, quite another thing) is a fascinating thing. The one thing that unites them all in the material world is that their personalities, rather than becoming flattened or unified with one another, have become more themselves as it were, more vividly who they likely were before something happened and realization emerged in them. Cranky bad-tempered regular people who become to whatever degree enlightened frequently retain the appearance of being cranky and bad-tempered. The testimony of traditions is that the effect of their qualities often changes rather than the appearance. But not always.

One person I knew who was bopped on the head (with a metal dorje) quite hard by an apparently upset HH Dilgo Khyentse, Rinpoche, for example, rather than developing a concussion, seems to have had a chronic chemical poisoning dissolved. It was affecting his mental states and hence his Buddhist practice. Medical experts confirmed the before and after. Similar phenomena were reported about Khyentse Rinpoche's more difficult blessings.

Once I met a Native American elder who was ordinary to all outward appearances, living in a double-wide in a poor community. I found his teaching is quite simple (choose to do good, avoid doing evil), but it seems he lived by it and for



weeks afterwards I was in an exalted state after being next to what felt like a literal hot radiator of goodness.

Yet another Native American of the same community, also highly respected, had major trickster qualities, but led his students to impressive realization if they did as he told them to even if it made no sense to them. He was an herbalist/healer who spent time in Federal penitentiaries for being a conscientious objector during WW2. Meanwhile, he seemed quite ordinary. A reforming alcoholic. But when I spent a night in the company of his caregivers when he was in hospital, tribal spirits challenged me in the liminal state about whether I had any business being there and they were specifically defending him. Once they were satisfied (it took some doing) I was allowed to sleep. He was highly valued in his community as an elder and obviously was similarly valued by the spirits overseeing that community.

I've met any number of Tibetan higher-ups. Some had titles and one felt and saw nothing in terms of realization from them. Others had achieved great things but had few titles, and could transport you in a moment into a magical place. And on and on. I don't believe, by the way, that they were without flaws. And not all of them were likeable.

Each of them was vividly different from the other. And each had qualities far beyond my ken. I think we can't be too quick to judge the realization of another, or decide what it means. We live in a magical world: the evidence is all around us, but most of the time we just don't see it.

We tend to think that “enlightenment” is one boring thing resembling a bright light, and it manifests in exactly one boring uniform manner (goody-two-shoes sainthood) and so on. Such boringness is one excuse we can use to avoid entering the path to attainment. We fear losing ourselves. What we really fear is becoming ourselves. I strongly suspect that the closer one comes to the higher levels, the more differentiated (and even different in what we manifest) one becomes. Even the goody-two-shoes St. Theresa of Lisieux had “chewy” qualities. I never made it a project to meet such people, by the way, I just have. What fun!

---

**John Michael Greer** says:

#146. June 15, 2021 at 3:06 pm

Degringolade, good. One note, though — in these decks, the Fool is not the previous card!

Rusty, er, what’s the Jedi code?

Bonnie, welcome back to the discussion! I hope things stabilize for you from here on in.

Cliff, honor is stunningly misunderstood in today’s world, and Lévi’s definition is a good way to get back to a more useful understanding.

Scotlyn, Lévi belonged to a different era and I doubt it ever occurred to him that women would read his book. (Male and

female cultures were very sharply distinguished in his time.)

That said, a good useful meditation; thanks for this.

RogerCO, I haven't encountered anything in Lévi's writings that suggests he knew Blake, and you're doubtless right about Laszlo — btw, you're very nearly the only other person I've ever met who knows about Laszlo's systems philosophy, so thank you for this! I think that what's going on is that Lévi, Blake, Laszlo, and Schumacher were all venturing into the same territory from different starting places, and they ended up describing the same landscape in similar terms.

Robert F, thanks for this — a good solid reflection on the card and the teachings.

Renaissance, it's been standard in European culture for centuries to fixate on the ancient eastern Mediterranean as the source of everything that matters in culture. The first very tentative steps away from that fixation had been taken before Lévi, but it really wasn't until the late 19th century that the doors really started to open. As for binaries, stay tuned... 😊

JeffinWA, he was doubtless relying on whatever version of the Marseilles deck he could get in Paris at the time. Lots of little details like that vary from pack to pack. As for the raised eyebrows, yep — here again, as I noted to Scotlyn above, in Lévi's time male culture and female culture were sharply differentiated and it probably never occurred to Lévi that women would read his book. It was a different age.

Great Khan of Potlucks, thanks for this! That's a great story.



Pyrrhus, good. That's been my experience of the card as well.

Tomriverwriter, Armstrong's experience is apparently shared by a lot of people. It's the standard way that a tradition fades out — the forms remain but the meaning and energy that once filled them dissipate.

Youngelephant, thanks for this.

Cliff, a fine meditation! As for science fiction, well, yes. I've been reflecting on that a lot recently, having finished a sequel to *The Fires of Shalsha* (it's at the publisher) and thus having had to revisit my one previous venture into interstellar science fiction. SF makes a great example of the possibilities and limits of what some avant-garde mages call a "hyperstition," a narrative so compelling that it convinces people that it's true. Lots of people embraced the science fiction hyperstition as simple truth, and some continue to insist that we really are going to get our tickets to Tatooine any day now...but the universe shrugged and said "No." It's an extremely useful object lesson in the limits of magic.

Helen, many thanks for this! I don't have either of the two decks you mentioned, and I don't have the Rackham tarot as such — I've got the Ring Cycle tarot, which is made from his illustrations for Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* and is really first-rate.

Dennis, many call but few choose — that is, many make lots of noise with their mouths, but few follow it up with focused will and action...

Jbucks, fascinating. No, you're not misrepresenting the GD system — and seeing how different ways of understanding fit together can be a very productive practice indeed.

Clarke, thanks for this! Certainly this fits my experience of people I'd consider spiritually advanced — they are the opposite of bland sweetness and light.

---

**Justin Patrick Moore** says:

#147. June 15, 2021 at 3:30 pm

A few thoughts after a few sessions:

Primum Mobile – Perpetual Motion – A Juggler Juggling – Infinity

---

**Justin Patrick Moore** says:

#148. June 15, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Speaking of hyperstition (@Cliff & JMG) and something that comes up here from time to time...

...I saw this at work today....

a new book called “Starship Therapise: Using Therapeutic Fanfiction to Rewrite Your Life” by Larisa Garski and Justine Mastin

...It really really does blend pop psychology with pop culture (and it about made me want to puke). (The obsession with superheroes is something I just don't get.)

I'm not sure if this is healthy.

Instead of confronting the Shadow they ask readers to look into “radical” self care based on a character from a HBO tv series. (The phrase “self care” just sounds like a synonym for consumerism without feeling guilty to me!) Instead of dealing with the limits placed on us and our planet, just imagine you have a replicator!

& yet I love Imagination and all its powers. I think Imagination, harnessed, and Active, can be therapeutic. Yet this book just reeks of escapism to me, much more than therapy.

Anyway, thought that might amuse and/or frighten and/or at least be a data point for others here who are observing this.

Meanwhile, I've seen those who suffer from TDS, also to be manifesting a strong recidivist Trekkie virus. I knew the prime directive was getting into peoples heads, but I've seen it deepen now up close with someone I know very well. I don't think this book will help them.

Getting my popcorn now.



**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#149. June 15, 2021 at 6:45 pm

@JBucks, the synchronicities abound! I started reading Paths to Wisdom today. I am just doing a quick read (to get a feel for everything and only taking notes on Kether and Ain Soph for now) and am only up to page 68 (in the eBook) but there is a bit that is very similar to your idea of a mirrored reflection. I like that you are relating back to the Druid Revival teachings. I will need to work on that, but it will take a while to get there, so I have saved a copy of what you wrote and will probably have questions for you later.

@Helen, absolutely no need to apologize. I have been in a similar circumstance as you and I truly empathize. Thank you so much for the correspondences you've identified. I will add them to my notes and ponder them in a bit. First, I must finish my first read-through of my new book.

@Young Elephant, thank you for the resource!

@JMG, I have started Paths of Wisdom. I absolutely love it. It is very dense and there is no way I can digest it all before we start on Levi's Ch. 2, so I am just getting an overview of the theory sections first and then will start chewing on bite-sized chunks that relate to each chapter. I think. My other idea is to make copies of all the versions of the Cabala on transparency paper (to the same scale), so I can stack them on top of each other and color code different parts and

compare different perspectives without scrolling back and forth. One of the things I have always appreciated about your writing (whether books or blogs or MM) is that you have figured out (at least, it seems that way to me) how everything fits together... it's one big cohesive understanding. I hope to get there someday.

To anyone who has been building a Merkabah metaphor along with me... here's a 3D one you can click and drag and view at from different angles: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/stellated-octahedron-star-tetrahedron-4f806ccbceea42b284021bba23231ccd>

---

**Cliff** says:

#150. June 15, 2021 at 11:48 pm

@Justin Patrick Moore:

Boy, that book looks like a doozy. I share your reaction in wanting to puke.

I'm not sure if it's escapism, precisely. I get a sense of imprisonment from stuff like this. The core assumption seems to be that Americans are incapable of imagining anything outside of what is delivered to them on their streaming devices, and the authors are here to cash in on the trend, like 21st century carpet baggers, or investors in private prisons.



**Kevin** says:

#151. June 16, 2021 at 3:51 am

In case anyone is interested in the geometry of the Merkabah, I've built models of it and made the following discoveries. If you connect each of the vertices to its neighbors by a cord, the aggregate shape described by the cords will form the edges of a cube. If you assemble a space-filling latticework of such cubes, each with its internal merkabah of mutually intersecting tetrahedrons, you get an octet truss, à la Bucky Fuller.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#152. June 16, 2021 at 7:20 am

@JMG,

On my MM question, you told me to keep meditating. If I only considered the first part of your response (that our Malkuth is Gaia's Kether), my metaphor is okay, just expanded. Since Gaia is attached to the Solar Logos' Merkabah, it would make sense that the other planetary spirits are as well. It would also make sense that they are attached at other spheres, since they are at different stages of evolution. And it ties in with the idea that the spheres all have bits of the other spheres in them (a super-over-simplification of something in your book). So now my Merkabah has an extra layer on it, from adding the Merkabahs of the planetary spheres and their beings onto

the other spheres. There are ten spheres and nine planetary spirits, so that leaves one 'open' sphere (which would be Kether, by which the Solar Logos would attach to the Merkabah of its Spirit Above's Malkuth).

So I'm good with that.

But then you said our Kether is the Malkuth of the Solar Logos. That means that we are not on the Malkuth of the Solar Logos, which is how my metaphor originally had things arranged. We have our own Merkabah, attached to the Solar Logos Merkabah. This, though, messes with my Cherubim filling in the four 'extra' spheres.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QvC7iWmiwRbr8vYPsMCSTQlj1h2UUeYk/view?usp=sharing> (from hiclipart.com, but it wouldn't let me copy the link) is a "flat" merkaba. If our Kether is the top middle vertex and our malkuth is the bottom middle vertex, our "Cherubim" on the four bottom corners would be the top four corners of Gaia's merkaba. Your book had divided up the spheres into 'worlds'... I'm thinking that fits in here somehow, but I didn't read close enough to hazard a guess yet. I'll just let this sit and percolate for a while. Going to finish my quick read-through of Paths of Wisdom and then go stare at The Magician for a while. □

---

**Robert Mathiesen** says:

#153. June 16, 2021 at 11:35 am

If anyone else wants to make merkaba models to play with, take a look at pp. 90-91 in Cundy & Rolletts *Mathematical Models* (2nd ed., 1961), which is available at

<https://archive.org/details/MathematicalModels->

Mathematicians call it the small stellated dodecahedron, and it was first noticed by Johannes Kepler—yes, **that** Kepler, the famous astronomer and astrologer who flourished around 1600.

---

**Patricia Mathews** says:

#154. June 16, 2021 at 11:35 am

At the same time we're doing this, I was plowing my way through Jung's Archetypes & the Collective Unconscious, and came to the mandalas. As with all you're saying here, every tiny detail had layers upon layers of symbolism, enough to make one's head reel. No, High Magic is not for me, not being Jenny Chaudronnier, but I can stand in awe of anyone who can see all that in everything and still navigate Middle Earth!

---

**Martin Back** says:

#155. June 16, 2021 at 1:17 pm

An early representation of the small stellated dodecahedron is a mosaic by Paolo Uccello in St Mark's Basilica, Venice,

around 1425.



For a good illustration of the mosaic, and in the following pages many interesting explorations of geometrical figures bearing on ley lines, the Tree of Life, tarot, ancient mysteries etc, see <https://www.tescera.com/shamballa/>

---

**Eric Cole** says:

#156. June 16, 2021 at 6:05 pm

@Helen So many correspondences! Thanks for mentioning Oswald Wirth's book Tarot of the Magicians. Ordered and arriving tomorrow. Looks like a book to keep one busy meditating for a long while.

Thanks everyone. The comments on this post are giving me many launching points for contemplation.

Some of what I see, The Magician with the tools of his trade out, placed on the table with three legs (as mentioned by others). With his gaze to his right he looks aware of what is happening though not emotionally invested.

The wand is suspended mid-air behind his hand with it's Fire and Water polar ends held apart in energetic tension, the single remaining die yet to be cast, and at the horizon sparks of creative energy are just beginning to erupt at the interface between Sky and Earth.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#157. June 16, 2021 at 6:10 pm



@Kevin re: geometry of the Merkabah, do you have images you would be willing to share?

@Patricia Mathews, I only know the tiniest smidgen of Jung, so I don't know if this is relevant, but there is a connection between mandalas and sacred geometry (<https://www.sacred-geometry.es/?q=en/content/egg-life>).

@ Robert Mathiesen re: merkaba models, Ooooooooo!  
Thank you!

@ Martin Back re: shamballa stuff, Ooooooooo! Thank you!

I very much appreciate the geometry resources. I like the Merkabah metaphor I built (and it has helped me understand some things), but today I decided I needed to just erase the Merkabah I have in my head and start over, because I didn't want to try to force things to fit a model that didn't fit. (Maybe I don't need to use the vertices of the internal octohedron?)

And in my quick read today, I learned about the Angelic Hosts assigned to Kether, Yesod, and Malkuth. Kether has the Chaioth ha-Qodesh (Holy Living Creatures); they have six wings and four heads (one human, one eagle, one lion, and one bull. Yesod have the Kerubim (the Cherubim). And Malkuth has the Sphere of Elements. I don't think the Kerubim would warrant their own vertices if the other angelic hosts don't. And I've seen images (while looking for a black-

line image of a merkaba) that shows the two pyramids of the merkaba spinning around the same axis (one clockwise, one counterclockwise). So I am no longer concerned with figuring out where each sphere would be placed on a 'level' (but I do think which level they are on matters) (and there are clues in Paths to Wisdom) (but I haven't finished my Magician homework yet) (and there is another Ecosophia post to read) (so much I want to do) (ARGH!!!).

The resources to explore the geometry are very timely for me and I thank you all very much.

(And a slight LOL... I had heard of merkabas before this book study, but only because of necklace pendants. And would you believe I had heard of shamballas before? But to me, they were fun beads covered in rhinestones...)

---

**goldenhawk9** says:

#158. June 16, 2021 at 6:27 pm

@Robert F:

Thank you for posting your thoughts on the clouds in this card. It drew my attention to something I had briefly glanced at but not really paid attention to. I realized there's a lot going on there. The clouds have a "diaphanous" character, which connects to the "diaphane," which Levi says the Cabalists equated with the Imagination.

In alchemy, one of the nearly innumerable qualities of the elusive philosopher's stone is *diaphanitas*.

Reading Magic Monday on the other blog, I saw a mention of Hermann Hesse's *Demian*. I had read it as a college student, but it hadn't left a lasting impression on me. I am re-reading it now and getting a lot more out of it! This jumped off the page at me today:

"Even as a young boy I had been in the habit of gazing at bizarre natural phenomena, not so much observing them as surrendering to their magic, their confused deep language. Long narrow tree roots, colored veins in rocks, patches of oil floating on water, light-refracting flaws in glass—all these things had held great magic for me at one time: water and fire particularly, smoke, clouds and dust, but most of all, swirling specks of color that swam before my eyes the minute I closed them. It was remarkably comforting and rewarding.

"To the few experiences which helped me along the way toward my life struggle I added this new one: the observation of such configurations. The surrender to nature's irrational, strangely confused formations produces in us a feeling of inner harmony with the force responsible for these phenomena. We soon fall prey to the temptation of thinking of them as being our own moods, our own creations, and see the boundary separating us from nature begin to quiver and dissolve. We become acquainted with that state of mind in which we are unable to decide whether

the images on our retina are the result of impressions coming from without or from within.

“Nowhere as in this exercise can we discover so easily and simply to what extent we are creative, to what extent our soul partakes of the constant creation of the world. For it is the same indivisible divinity that is active through us and in nature, and if the outside world were to be destroyed a single one of us would be capable of rebuilding it: mountain and stream, tree and leaf, root and flower, yes every natural form is latent within us, originates in the soul whose essence is eternity, whose essence we cannot know but which most often intimates itself to us as the power to love and create.”

— Hermann Hesse, *Demian*

---

**Phutatorius** says:

#159. June 16, 2021 at 6:59 pm

I'm not expert in philosophy, but the first three pages of this chapter continue to bother me. The problem first arises where he seems to equivocate on the word “principle.” Then a series of seeming nonsequiturs follows, masquerading as a logical argument. This is accompanied by the unexplained drawing of a hand shadow trick. This all appears to me as an intellectual sleight of hand, making me wonder what he's really up to here. Of course this is a chapter on “le Bateleur” so maybe it's all a demonstration of the principio tarot trump.



Frankly, I must conclude that we the readers are being tricked! .



---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#160. June 17, 2021 at 5:50 pm

Gadzooks! I think I have figured something out! (Well, partially, anyway.)

Fellow merkaba builders: first go here

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Analysis-of-Mesostructure-Unit-Cells-Comprised-of-Johnston-Rosen/7715bcdef3837658628d9c28f1ceef236e529bf4>

Look at Figure 1 (part b and c) and Figure 2 (part b).

Figure 2b, the black outline section, is a tetrahedron/triangle pyramid. There are four of them on top layer and four of them on the bottom layer, for a total of eight.

Figure 2b, the red outline sections, are two pentahedron/square pyramid (with bases against each other).

My merkaba metaphor (version 7? 8? I've lost count 😊):

Rather than the sephiroth being the vertices, they are the pyramids (tip of the hat to @JBucks, for commenting on Levi's phrase "the simple and powerful architecture of the pyramids") (and for commenting on the SOP's pentahedron

in the first place!). Spheres 2-9 are the tetrahedron (outer pyramids). Sphere 1 (Kether) is the top pentahedron (inner pyramid). Sphere 10 (Malkuth) is the bottom pentahedron (inner pyramid).

The two inner pyramids each have four corners (so Kether's four-headed angelic hosts, Chaioth ha-Qodesh (Holy Living Creatures) have a place to be). (I really haven't figured out what Malkuth's Sphere of Elements is, but maybe it fits, too...)

The inner pyramids being Kether and Malkuth also work well, because if the merkabas stack on top of each other (as @Kevin's octet strusses do), Metatron can easily travel between our Kether and Malkuth as well as the Solar Logo's Kether and Malkuth (since Metatron is an archangel for both Spheres).

Now the Solar Logos' Merkabah is supposed to be sapphire. In between us (on Malkuth) and the Solar Logos Merkabah is our Kether, which is colorless (so, hopefully, transparent). So looking up from Malkuth toward the Solar Logos would look blue, like the sky. (Okay, that isn't really based on Cabala, but I really liked that imagery and I'm glad it still fits.)

Now look at Figure 1b and 1c... each of the eight other spheres have a way to connect to another merkaba (by aligning the faces). I have found references (and @Young Elephant posted one) with planetary sphere correspondences for each of the Cabala/Merkabah spheres

(though apparently there is some disagreement among Cabalists where to assign Uranus and Neptune and Pluto, but I'm not going to worry about that now.) It would make sense that each planetary sphere (not just Earth) has a way to connect to the Solar Logos Merkabah (and also that they would not connect via Malkuth, since they are in a different place evolutionarily).

My idea of the Spheres functioning like lenses can still work (and Paths of Wisdom talk about the Lightning Flash of creation), maybe even better now that the Spheres are pyramids (though that would actually make them more like prisms and, since the Spheres have different colors depending on which world they are seen in/from (haven't quite figured out the Worlds yet...) them being prisms makes more sense than lenses).

Thank you so much to everyone who posted their thoughts or resources about merkabas. @Degringolade posted earlier about never knowing where the seed crystal of an idea is going to come from. I know this seed crystal originally started with @JBucks, but I would have never built the merkaba I did without all the other ideas that people shared.

(And now @Robert Mathiesen brought up Kepler. Gee, doesn't the arrangement of the planetary spheres on the merkaba make you wonder about the astrological trines and squares and such based on merkaba positioning? I know they are based on the geometry of the planets, but gee, what if there is a relationship between that and the

merkaba? I am a complete newbie with astrology, so I am just going to have to park that idea for a while.)

Did anyone else come up with a different merkaba?

---

**HELEN** says:

#161. June 18, 2021 at 11:31 pm

The “A-ness” of Le Bateleur

My initial thought was to go with the letter Aleph, but I soon realised that a greater understanding of the Hebrew alphabet was probably required. At least for me anyway.

So what I did was start compiling a list of all the things beginning with the letter A that I saw, or that came to mind, whilst contemplating Trump 1.

Of course, what we are talking about, are associations.

Here are a few examples:

Agile, adept, assuredness, assertive, actualise, ambition, application, adroit, adjust, and so on and so forth.

Then yesterday, in the middle of the night when my best thoughts always seem to come to me (usually forgotten by morning!), I started constructing some sentences and paragraphs.

Yes, they are now just faint glimmers, so I’m hoping that by

sitting here at the computer with some “piano for studying” playing, I can dredge up some memories...

For the 1889 Wirth version:

The Acrobat stands, with quiet assurance at his table. He appears to be quite young, agile and athletic.

Is that arrogance or assertiveness showing on his face?

Maybe it's just an acute awareness of his surroundings. Lets wait and see his act, perhaps then we can ascertain whether he really does possess a degree of astuteness and acumen.

On the table rests a strange assortment of items; a sword, a chalice and some large disks or coins. In his hand he holds with some adroitness, a baton, or perhaps it's a wand? He is after all an Adept isn't he?

What do these items mean? How do they align with his act? And what about his clothes and all those garish colours? Do they also have some type of affinity with the items on the table?

On the ground between his legs, arising from the earth, there appears a flower, not quite actualising it's full, blooming, acclaim.

His hat at first glance seems somewhat abstract and arbitrary. But just maybe, it also contains some arcane aim. Aaahh, we really are only at the beginning. Perhaps with time and application, more associations will become apparent.

[Link here for images from the Bibliotheque nationale France BNF website, which has lots of other old tarots too](#)

(yes I've downloaded most of them! I've been so scattered these past few weeks (years) with the illnesses of loved ones, sorry I didn't provide the link earlier)

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105110785.r=oswald%20wirth?rk=21459;2>

The State Library of London (I can't remember it's actual name) also has a website where you can view plenty of old tarots, but to obtain hi res images you need to contact them. When I tried a number of years ago via the website I was unsuccessful

I also had a few paragraphs to do with the more trickster Marseilles version, more along the line of the practical aspect of learning his craft/showmanship and his interactions with his audience, but maybe someone else can give it a go. I'd love to read it!

So much more I could say, but I'm getting hungry!

Regards,  
Helen in Oz

---

**Kimberly Steele** says:

#162. June 19, 2021 at 11:15 am

I know I haven't been much of a commenter lately, but I must express how deeply I appreciate this book club. This is profoundly helpful to me and others.

It was Jbucks's comment about sacred geometry in this month's discussion that helped me to form what I call the Unified Theory of Sacred Homemaking. As some of you are aware, I am currently in the thick of writing a book called Sacred Homemaking that is about how the generally underrated activity of keeping a home can create beneficial magic for both its inhabitants and the greater world. There's too much to go into detail about it here, so I won't try. Suffice to say that my Unified Theory states that sacred shapes in one's living space, created on multiple planes, attract prosperity and happiness. Orderliness and gratitude maintain the vortices that keep prosperity and happiness in place.

Sacred shapes can be material, for instance the hexafoils our fellow Ecosophian Violet Cabra is fond of drawing and putting up in her home. My gardens are English/French style, meaning they are symmetrical, and the Celtic cross one in my backyard has become especially prolific in the last five years since it was created. Of course I could be wrong, however, I believe the reason it is so fertile and the reason the feral cats like it so much is because of its shape. It is an etheric vortex for happy energy.

Gardening, cooking, and even the mundane act of cleaning are all acts of alchemy that transform the home — in essence it becomes a temple because of the symmetries created on the material, etheric, and astral planes. The layered shapes created act as demon traps, and yeah, that's going to take several chapters to explain so once again I won't try.

Again, thank you for this discussion.

---



**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#163. June 19, 2021 at 9:11 pm

@Helen, thank you so much for sharing your reflections on Le Bateleur. I enjoy reading what other people see in the card. (And thank you for the link to old tarots! I skimmed the first page... looks like lots of fun things to look at.)

Doing some meditations this weekend in preparation for the solstice and then I'll spend some quality time with The Magician and Aleph next week. I'll share what I come up with. ☐

---

**Helen** says:

#164. June 20, 2021 at 1:28 am

Hi Eric,

Glad to hear you got the book.

The cards included are those I've linked to in my comment above, but Wirth did a few more versions, with small detail changes.

For example, with la papesse, his description of her headware matches his later card version, which I think is printed on the actual page?



Both Look Scatabeo and US Games have versions of that particular edition.

Another poster, sorry I can't remember who, pointed to some confusion regarding Levi's descriptions. Robert M Place points out quite a few Levi makes, in his brick of a book, *The Tarot, Magic, Alchemy, Hermeticism, & Neoplatonism*, 2nd Ed.

I think you just have to roll with it. Apparently AE Waite did the same, when describing the deck he and Pamela Coleman Smith created!

I've included another link, which discusses the relationship between the Tarot and the Hebrew Alphabet, by Mark Filipas.

<https://www.bunkahle.com/Tarot/alpha.html>

Kimberly, I loved your post above. Real words of wisdom. I hope things are going well for you, I know the last year or two of self inflicted damage by the powers that be made life tough and I wish you Peace and Prosperity.

I'm generally pretty neat and tidy, but a lot of things, including regular housework kind of went out the window, these last few crap years.

I definitely want to slowly get things back in order, I'm just allowing myself a little bit of grace and heart healing ATM.

Karma, I'm amazed by your propensity to picture all that geometry stuff!

I'm such an intellectual Pipsqueak haha. So many

intelligent, thoughtful and committed people read and post on JMG's blogs!

On reading the introduction, I thought I was pretty smart by imagining squaring the circle by the rotation of the LBRP, with the 4 Archangels making the corners. From there I pictured 4 triangular sides of the great Pyramid, with the person at the centre being the apex. After that things got a bit fuzzy but I kind of thought about the dual nature of as above coming down to so below, being the person at the centre of the pyramid.

I admit my thoughts got bogged down a bit then. Too much going in with Dear Molly at that point.

Denis G, I think about you and your furkids a lot. Grief sucks and can take a long time to dissipate. I'm very much on that rollercoaster, with many tears still to shed. I miss my girl, so, so much.

Go well everybody

Kind Regards

Helen in Oz

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#165. June 20, 2021 at 8:08 am

@Kimberly Steele, I am eagerly awaiting your Sacred Homemaking book. I incorporate a lot of folk wisdom/ folk lore in warding and protecting my home, but I am in the

process of restoring a house that will (hopefully) be my rest-of-my-life home. I would love to be more intentional about making it sacred, rather than just keeping it protected.

@ everyone, Hope you have a wonderful solstice!

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#166. June 22, 2021 at 6:33 pm

Thoughts on Aleph, Disciplina, Ain Soph, and Kether...

Our Kether is the Solar Logos' Malkuth. Aleph, according to Levi, is the creation of the heavens. Paths of Wisdom (POW) explains how creation is described as a Lightning Flash, traveling from our Kether through the paths, eventually to our Malkuth. Since Aleph is the path from our Kether (the Solar Logos' Malkuth), the creative energy is from the Solar Logos and has not been 'stepped down' (limited) yet by the Spheres. It is unlimited, as represented by the lemniscate hat the Magician wears. It is Unity, not yet split into duality.

Levi also states that Aleph explains the masonic double triangle and the five-pointed star. The double triangle represents the Magician's individuality and personality, a duality. The Magician strives to resolve this duality with the revelation of the pentagram. Elsewhere, Levi states "the Pentagram expresses the mind's domination over the elements", meaning control over our animal passions.

Disciplina, the Roman deity of discipline, can refer to the control that Magicians need to develop, but can also refer to the knowledge that Magicians need to learn.

The creative energy passing from Kether through Aleph is unlimited, so it relates to Ain Soph, the second Veil of the Unmanifest. (from POW) Other sources have referred to Ain Soph as “God prior to manifestation”. Harkening back to the Cosmic Doctrine, prior to God’s manifestation was the Unmanifest and then the Rings. JMG provides a clue on page 62 (POW): the “swirling chaos rushing outward to the limits of space”. That description and Ain Soph being the \*second\* Veil feel like Ain Soph is related to the Ring Chaos.

The Veils of the Unmanifest are not intended to represent physical phenomenon, though. They are “reminders of the distinction between the symbolic and the real” (from POW)... training the mind, not informing it. Ain Soph’s Veil is we want to think “the Ultimate is like the things we know, only bigger”.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#167. June 22, 2021 at 7:23 pm

Since Ain Soph’s Veil is to think that “the Ultimate is like things we know, only bigger”, I decided I needed to revisit my merkaba again.

Using the octet struss for my merkaba made it easy to visualize how other planetary spheres could connect to the Solar Logos' Malkuth, but since the planetary spheres are on different planes, it really isn't as accurate an image as it could be.

Our etheric and astral bodies don't stack on top of us, so my merkabas shouldn't stack on top of themselves. I should envision them nested like troika dolls.

My next thought was rather than thinking my merkaba as bigger, I should try thinking of it as smaller. Now in all my past merkabas, I really haven't been thinking in terms of pure geometry. I really was thinking in terms of molecules and crystals (which is probably why I was so focused on vertices rather than the pyramids). What if I thought about the merkaba as an atom? (As above, as extra-below...)

Without getting bogged down in minutia, Malkuth and Kether are the two electrons in the inner sphere, Yesod and Tiphareth would be the two electrons in the next sphere, and the rest of the Spheres would be the electrons in the P-orbitals. (And those electrons can hybridize to form a tetrahedron :-), see <https://www.globalsino.com/EM/image1/2118.jpg>).

The seven periods (rows) of the periodic table each have an additional sphere of electrons (so period 1 has one sphere, period 2 has two spheres, etc), so the seven electron spheres could relate to the seven planes.

So my atom-merkaba could have all the planetary entities sharing Malkuth/Kether in the center.

Then I thought of the four-faced Kerubim (from Yesod) and the four-headed Chaioth ha-Qodesh (from Kether) and the Sphere of Elements (from Malkuth). Malkuth and Kether are the inner sphere, Yesod is the next sphere. What if the Kerubim and the Chaioth and the Sphere of Elements are not really totally separate entities... maybe they are the same thing, just on different planes?

At one point, I would have thought this was a crazy idea. But since the Solar Logos' Malkuth is our Kether, maybe it is possible. Anybody else think it is possible?

---

**Phutatorius** says:

#168. June 24, 2021 at 8:34 am

A "late hit" here. As an amateur violinist, I couldn't help but notice that le bateleur is standing with his arms in the correct position to be holding a violin and bow. In my Wirth deck it's nearly perfect, and in the version in "Meditations on the Tarot" it's only slightly less so.

---

**Trystan32000** says:

#169. June 25, 2021 at 12:56 am

There are 26 letters in the Latin alphabet and 22 Trumps so will 4 letters go unused or will 4 of the Trump cards have 2 letters each?

You wrote that in deciding which alphabet we use we are choosing labels for a mental filing cabinet. Will this involve the method of loci?

---

**tomriverwriter** says:

#170. June 29, 2021 at 3:50 pm

JMG: I'm thinking still of Karen Armstrong. As you say, the Catholic convent had kept the forms but lost the guides who gave it meaning. She left the convent because she realized that the guides were no longer there. It's also why she wrote the book. A true guide would have required discretion, what Levi calls silence. The austerities are important, not to be displayed to non-initiates. But if the guides are gone, and the austerities are meaningless, then there is no reason to maintain silence.

For the same reason, the highest-order Scientologists reveals the secrets of Xenu, because by the time they learned them, they understood that Scientology had no important secrets. They no longer felt bound by their promise of silence, because the building was empty and the guides were gone.

---

**Dennis G** says:

#171. July 1, 2021 at 10:07 pm

The Place deck (combining alchemy and hermetic) has a crescent resting on a circle containing a centered dot resting on a cross with the horizontal line centered on the vertical line like a grid. The crescent is lying horizontal like an eye awakening in the morning from sleep. The dot centered circle reminds me off a fully awake and alert eye. To much coffee maybe:) The grid associates are above and below. Before and after. Space. Time. The caduceus has opposites coming together, breaking apart. Loving, fighting, creating, destroying. Place colors the shaft they climb green. Place's tablecloth biologic images are green. Placed under the 4 elements of creation. The dice mean not everything is predetermined, but, some numbers are more likely than others. The dagger is placed first on the table at the far left. Discernment (dismembering), breaking the whole into pieces with names and numbers. The knife cuts, the dice tumble, the water flows, the snakes entwine. Everything in motion. The word is not a static noun, it is an active verb.

---

**Dennis G** says:

#172. July 1, 2021 at 10:11 pm

Hi Helen. Just seeing your well wishes. Thank you. You are to nice. Take care of your self:)

---



**Dennis G** says:

#173. July 1, 2021 at 10:50 pm

I really felt like everything in the card was a movement, kind of in motion tonight. I was a little stuck on the coins. Truth is I keep hearing Pink Floyd's 'Money' song from 'Dark Side of the Moon. I'm imagining the white numbers on the old fashioned registers popping up and down in the window on top. More motion. The album title occurring to me just as I type this, so, I guess some valid symbolism there also.

Lord I was born a ramblin' man.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#174. July 2, 2021 at 8:46 am

@Dennis G, I am very intrigued by the description of the Magician in your Place deck. I am not familiar with the Place deck (and DuckDuckGo provides me with all sorts of places to get Tarot decks, but no Magicians that looked remotely like you described). Does your deck have another name that might help me find the image online?

Also, your description of white numbers on a cash register made me look at my card again, seeing if there was anything white... the shield (with the crown), the cuffs of the shirts, and the wand on the table. Made me think Kether, which is colorless. On the shield, the Crown represents Kether, so that fits. The end of the wand, the shape is

crown-ish (which I hadn't noticed before), so that fits. The cuffs on the sleeve? Maybe Kether/unity is 'inside' the Magician, covered up by the elements/the material of his clothing?

And on your cash register, white numbers popping up and down could be bits of Kether traveling back and forth to Malkuth.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and helping me find more in my card. ☐

---

**Goldenhawk** says:

#175. July 2, 2021 at 1:10 pm

Hi RandomActsOfKarma:

I believe this is the Place deck mentioned by Dennis G:

<https://robertmplacetarot.com/the-chemical-tarot-of-marseilles/>

---

**Dennis G** says:

#176. July 2, 2021 at 3:06 pm

Yes, that's the deck. The 3rd image down, Le Bateleur from The Alchemical Tarot of Marseille, is the card I describe. I feel very lucky that my first exposure to this is the JMG and

this deck. Kismet?!:) Haven't purchased any of Place's books yet. Trying not to read to much of this. I want to let JMG, the deck, intuition, and imagination take me to ...? Have plenty of other reading going. Not looking for right answers. Going to follow JMG's advice and see were this leads. No rush. Got 4 years. You are very welcome RAofK. Lets see were this leads instead of googling the right answers. Were ever you go, there you are!:(:)))

---

**Dennis G** says:

#177. July 2, 2021 at 3:38 pm

Hey Goldenhawk. Reading through the page under the card I get a kick out the the history that that differentiates areas such as northern Italy or France. My 93 year old Father-in-Law is 'off the boat' Italian with a big garden, fig trees we have to bury in the Fall to survive Boston MA area Winters, and a wine press in his cellar. He will tell you how the French stole this area and that from Italy. I am French descent who loves Italian but Westphalian boundries could have easily gone so many other ways. Some of those areas change hands faster than Fauci changes positions on mask wearing. French, Italian, Swiss, German...

I think it's an awesome card set.

---

**RandomActsOfKarma** says:

#178. July 2, 2021 at 7:27 pm



@Goldenhawk, thank you very much for the link!

@Dennis G, you are right that it is an awesome card set.

The way he drew the symbol for Mercury made me see something I hadn't seen before. I must admit, I am concerned it is one of those things that is obvious to everyone else, because now that I see it, I don't know how I didn't see it before.

I always thought Mercury's symbol was Venus with little horns (because he was a trickster). And usually the cross at the bottom was drawn so it looked like two arms and legs (the legs being close together, so just one line, but usually a little longer than the arms). And the circle part was the head.

The way Place drew the symbol, the little horns are the Moon, the Horns of Isis, representing duality.

The circle with the dot in the middle is the Sun, representing unity.

And the cross at the bottom, the elements? Earth? I'm not sure yet, but definitely a quaternary.

And the three symbols make a ternary.

But what does it all mean? Inquiring sphinxes want to know...

**Dennis G** says:

#179. July 13, 2021 at 2:04 pm



Probably restating others observations but in the interest of maximizing my opportunity here before we close the curtain...

I didn't come up with anything for the belt but read it could represent the Ouroboros. Read the yellow is Earth. Thinking anywhere I see a ring now, the belt, neckline, hat, staff, I'm looking at/for a division of area/meaning. That the creative imagery of the table cloth hides his legs makes him part of it as he stands above it. I have seen a card were he has 3 legs?

His cloak is green around his shoulders. His card colors are green, white, red, yellow, light blue. I read he may represent Adam.

Looking ahead to card 2 ...

Thank You JMG:)

---

*Courteous, concise comments relevant to the topic of the current post are welcome, whether or not they agree with the views expressed here, and I try to respond to each comment as time permits. Long screeds proclaiming the infallibility of some ideology or other, however, will be deleted; so will repeated attempts to hammer on a point already addressed; so will comments containing profanity,*

*abusive language, flamebaiting and the like -- I filled up my supply of Troll Bingo cards years ago and have no interest in adding any more to my collection; and so will sales spam and offers of "guest posts" pitching products. I'm quite aware that the concept of polite discourse is hopelessly dowdy and out of date, but then some people would say the same thing about the traditions this blog is meant to discuss. Thank you for reading Ecosophia! -- JMG*

## Leave a Reply

Search ...	Search
------------	--------

This site is hosted by GeoffStratton.com

## Tip Jar and Subscriptions

[Donate](#)



[My Patreon Account](#)

[My SubscribeStar Account](#)

If you enjoy reading this blog, please consider putting a tip in the tip jar. Alternatively, please consider becoming a patron or subscriber via my Patreon or SubscribeStar accounts, and getting access to regular political and economic astrology forecasts. Many thanks!

[About JMG](#)

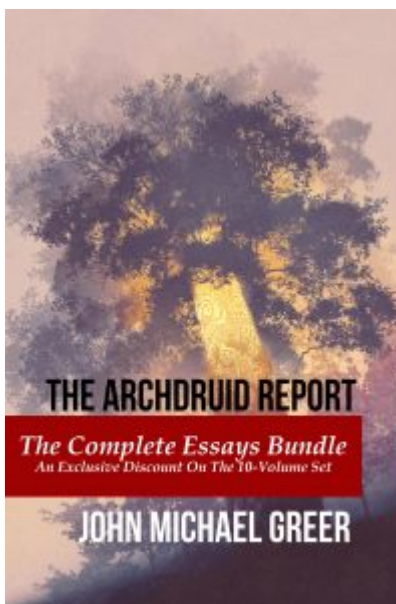
John Michael Greer is a widely read author, blogger, and astrologer whose work focuses on the overlaps between ecology, spirituality, and the future of industrial society. He served twelve years as Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America, and remains active in that order as well as several other branches of Druid nature spirituality. He currently lives in East Providence, Rhode Island, with his wife Sara.

## JMG Bookshop



My shop on Bookshop.org carries nearly all my books, most at discounted prices. Click on the Bookshop logo to go there.

## The Collected Archdruid Report



During its eleven-year run, John Michael Greer's earlier blog *The Archdruid Report* was one of the most controversial and widely cited blogs on the future of industrial society. All the essays from *The Archdruid Report* are now available from Founders House Publishing in a ten-volume set (individual volumes are also available). Click on the image to go to the publisher's website to purchase.

## New Maps



*New Maps* is a new quarterly magazine of deindustrial fiction, publishing stories that imagine futures during and after the long decline of the fossil fuel age. Each issue features writing by some of the genre's best new and established authors. Click the image to read more and get a subscription.

RSS - Posts

---

RSS - Comments



## Subscribe to Blog via Email



Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Join 1,731 other subscribers

## JMG on Dreamwidth

For shorter pieces, book reviews, announcements of new JMG publications, and occasional catcalls aimed at the clueless, follow JMG's posts at [ecosophia.dreamwidth.org](https://ecosophia.dreamwidth.org).

## Archives

▶ July 2021

---

▶ June 2021

---

▶ May 2021

---

▶ April 2021

---

▶ March 2021

---

▶ February 2021

---

▶ December 2020

---

▶ November 2020



---

▶ October 2020

---

▶ September 2020

---

▶ August 2020

---

▶ July 2020

---

▶ June 2020

---

▶ May 2020

---

▶ April 2020

---

▶ March 2020

---

▶ February 2020

---

▶ December 2019

---

▶ November 2019

---

▶ October 2019

---

▶ September 2019

---

▶ August 2019

---

▶ July 2019

---

▶ June 2019

---

▶ May 2019

---



▶ April 2019

---

▶ March 2019

---

▶ February 2019

---

▶ December 2018

---

▶ November 2018

---

▶ October 2018

---

▶ September 2018

---

▶ August 2018

---

▶ July 2018

---

▶ June 2018

---

▶ May 2018

---

▶ April 2018

---

▶ March 2018

---

▶ February 2018

---

▶ January 2018

---

▶ December 2017

---

▶ November 2017

---

▶ [October 2017](#)

---

▶ [September 2017](#)

---

▶ [August 2017](#)

---

▶ [July 2017](#)

---

▶ [June 2017](#)

---

▶ [May 2017](#)

---

▶ [April 2017](#)

[Meta](#)

[Log in](#)

---

[Entries feed](#)

---

[Comments feed](#)

---

[WordPress.org](#)

© 2021 Ecosophia | WordPress Theme: Lontano Free by  
CrestaProject.

