

The Small Cards of the Tarot

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An essay analysing the small cards of the Tarot in terms of a specific
Qabalistic framework, and in terms of their astrological and
elemental attributions.

by

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Sun in 20° Sagittarius, Anno IVxv

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Introduction

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ESSAY IS twofold. Firstly, it aims to provide insight into the forty small cards of the Tarot — specifically Aleister Crowley’s Thoth Tarot — in terms of their relationships to a particular Qabalistic framework and in terms of their astrological and elemental attributions. Secondly, it aims to provide insight into that framework and into those astrological and elemental attributions by examining how they contribute towards the meanings of the small cards.

A note of caution will be necessary. Symbols in general are by their very nature flexible in meaning, and nowhere is this more true than in the realm of “occult” symbolism. For this reason, the reader should be on his guard against any ideas of evaluating the “correctness” of the usage of those symbols in this essay, for no such correctness exists. The usage of symbols in the current work may and does differ from other usages in some respects, sometimes insignificantly, and sometimes markedly. The meaning of any given symbol resides in the consciousness of the individual reader, and not in the symbol itself, so any criticism against the essay or against the author on this basis is misplaced.

The description of symbols in this essay is a deliberate attempt to interpret them in the light of a particular context, that context being a model — described in Chapter 1 — of the development of the individual consistent with Thelemic metaphysics. This narrow interpretation is deliberate, and whilst attempts have been made to not completely reverse the “traditional” understanding of a symbol, the author has exercised no restraint in highlighting those partial elements of a particular interpretation which are most suitable to his needs. In particular, the symbolism of the astrological signs — representing, as they are often held to do, 8.33% of the world’s population each — are very complex and broad, so much so that there is usually little difficulty in finding an acceptable and plausible interpretation to fit

a given need. The reader should therefore be wary about attributing too much importance to the remarkable fitness that traditional interpretations appear to exhibit in the current work, and as an illustrative exercise may wish to attempt to derive equally satisfactory interpretations from different or even opposing astrological signs.

The main symbols used are the elements of the Tree of Life themselves (with the exception of the 22 paths) which are explained fully, along with elemental, planetary and zodiacal symbols; any astrological text can be consulted for the meanings of the latter group. One element of astrological symbolism which may benefit from further explanation relates to the *decans*. Each zodiacal sign represents thirty degrees of sky ($12 \times 30^\circ = 360^\circ$) and each sign can be further subdivided into three equal decans of ten degrees each, making 36 decans in all. Each of the small cards of the Tarot, from two through ten, are attributed to one of the decans, 36 cards in total across the four suits; the Aces are not attributed to a decan. The first decan of each sign is called the *ascendant*, the second the *succedent*, and the third the *cadent*. The ascendant decan represents the initial appearance of the sign, the succedent decan its full force, and the cadent decan its decline, in much the same way that the cardinal, fixed and mutable signs represent the equivalent stages of their respective elements. The succedent and cadent decans are “influenced” by the other signs of the same element in the cardinal–fixed–mutable order, as so:

Sign	Influences on		
	Ascendant	Succedent	Cadent
Cardinal	(None)	Fixed	Mutable
Fixed	(None)	Mutable	Cardinal
Mutable	(None)	Cardinal	Fixed

Table 1: Zodiacal Influences on the Decans

For instance, the succedent decan of Aries (the cardinal sign of fire) is influenced by Leo (the fixed sign of fire) and the cadent decan of Pisces (the mutable sign of water) is influenced by Scorpio (the fixed sign of water).

Each decan is also ruled by one of the planets. There are different ways of calculating the planetary ruler. In one system, the decan is ruled by the ruler of the sign that influences it, i.e. the ascendant decan of Aries is ruled by Mars (the natural ruler of Aries), the succedent decan is ruled by the Sun (the natural ruler of Leo, the fixed sign of fire) and the cadent decan is ruled by Jupiter (the natural ruler of

Sagittarius, the mutable sign of fire). This system is not used in the Thoth Tarot, and is not used in this essay. The system that is used here ascribes planetary rulers to each successive decan in the order Mars, The Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon, Saturn and Jupiter.¹ That is, the ascendant decan of Aries is ruled by Mars, the succedent by the Sun, and the cadent by Venus, then the ascendant decan of Taurus is ruled by Mercury, and so on. Note that because there are 36 decans, but only seven planets, each planet rules five decans with the exception of Mars, which rules six.

¹Note that if we begin this order at Saturn, then it gives the natural order of the planets in decreasing order of distance from the earth if — like the Ancients did — we put earth at the centre of the Solar System and put the Sun in its place.

Chapter 1

A Qabalistic Framework

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER IS to present a Qabalistic framework against which the small cards of the Tarot can be examined, and to which an examination of those cards can bring further insight.

The framework presented is for the most part consistent with occult tradition, but does differ in some aspects, most notably in the names of the lower two triads and in the fact that Tiphareth is not attributed to self-awareness. The Tree of Life is a framework against which almost any idea can be placed, and it is not the purpose of this chapter to attempt to provide a “correct” or “complete” understanding of it. Indeed, the presentation of such an understanding would be an impossible task, precisely because of the infinite variety of attributable symbols and ideas. Instead, the framework given presents one of many possible interpretations, specifically that of the development of the individual — from mere potential to actual physical existence — in a manner consistent with Thelemic doctrine.¹ Nevertheless, the fact that this framework does coincide remarkably with a “traditional interpretation,” in addition to illustrating a very regular and satisfying explanation of the *structure* of the Tree of Life, should put the value of a careful study of it beyond any reasonable question.

For those not familiar with the Tree of Life, a brief description will be in order. The Qabalah — as it has come to be used in Western occultism, at least — is a classification system comprising ten “sephiroth” (“sephirah” being the singular noun) or “emanations.” The Tree of Life model (and there are other models) arranges these ten sephiroth in a column of three triads — the topmost triad pointing upwards, and the lower two triads pointing downwards — with the tenth and

¹See *The Khabs is in The Khu* for a fuller exposition of this doctrine.

final sephirah appearing on its own beneath them. The upper triad is separated from the middle triad by an imaginary chasm called “the Abyss,” and the middle triad is separated from the lower triad by an imaginary veil called “the Veil of Paroketh.” The sephiroth are connected by 22 “paths” which are attributable to the 22 trumps of the Tarot, and hence are outside the scope of this essay. The Tree as a whole is surrounded by three “negative veils.”²

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the negative veils and the sephiroth, and provide some instructive commentary on their most pertinent correspondences.

The Negative Veils

The Tree exists within the *negative veils*, so called because they necessarily hide whatever is behind them, being not in existence. The outer veil is Ain, “nothing,” and represents nothing in its most “positive” form; Ain is the absence even of space. The middle veil, Ain Soph, is “limitless,” and represents infinite space, pure emptiness. The innermost veil is Ain Soph Aur, “limitless light,” and represents infinite space with the potential for creation. In order for something to come out of nothing — which we explain in the next section — there must somehow be the *potential* for it, even though there is quite literally nothing there.

The fact these are termed “veils” suggests that — in our current state of knowledge at least — we cannot penetrate them, that we cannot explain the mystery of something arising from nothing. Yet it should be clear that it is nothing, and not one, that is the source of creation. This error has been made by all the monotheistic religions. One cannot be subdivided into creation, because it must by definition already contain everything. It cannot be expanded into creation, because if it was so capable then it could not be all encompassing, and therefore would not be one. It cannot be changed into existence, because being one, it has no qualities, no characteristics. One is not a suitable basis for creation therefore, and zero is the only sensible substitution. The fact that the ancient tribes (including the Jews, who created the Qabalah) had no number for zero may go some way towards explaining their lack of insight into this matter.

The “Big Bang” theory also supports this position, the “singularity” referring to Kether and the negative veils being the mystery as

²<http://www.erwinhessle.com/images/qabalah/bigtol.png> shows a diagram of the Tree of Life.

to where this singularity came from. The idea of a singularity therefore, when carried back far enough, suggests an “infinitely small” point which, being so infinitely small, cannot be said to exist, and the theory accordingly implies that the singularity originated from nothing. If the singularity contained the seeds of creation in itself, then because one has no qualities this is equally as inexplicable as the idea that it came from nothing. In addition, the idea that space curves around a mass suggests the possibility of a universe with no space at all. Indeed, this is required in the case of a single singularity; as well as all the matter and energy, all the space in the universe is also contained within the singularity, its infinitely strong gravitational field containing it in an infinitely small point, and space only comes into being once the singularity begins to *expand*. We also have the idea of “multiple universes” which must always be separate; if each of these universes contains its own space, then there is necessarily no space “between” them (“between” naturally ceases to have much meaning in such a case) and hence no way to get from one to the other as there is no medium through which we could travel. We would have to escape the space in our own universe, as well as figure out how to traverse the “nothingness” shielding the other one, before such travel could be possible. Thus the idea of Kether can represent the crystallization of multiple universes from one principle of Ain, the lack even of space. Ain Soph, limitless, applies to our own universe, but will be different for any other universes; Ain, however, will be common to all. This suggests ancient understanding that even empty space had to be created, which is remarkable given that only now are we ourselves coming to this same conclusion. It also suggests that either we may have been a little harsh in our criticism at the end of the previous paragraph or, as is rather more likely, that the idea of the negative veils may be a relatively modern invention.

Ain Soph Aur, the “limitless light,” is the “seed” of the singularity once the empty space has been created. This does not contradict our previous statement that empty space only comes into being with the expansion of the singularity; it is the “principle” of empty space that is created here, for once the singularity begins to grow the expansion of empty space must always precede it, or else there will be nothing in which to contain the expanding matter. Empty space must be there before the singularity becomes anything other than infinitely small, i.e. its first appearance must be preceded by the creation of empty space, its first appearance is indeed the beginning of its expansion. This is further confirmation that the singularity does indeed come out of nothing. We cannot conceive of a existing singularity, infinitely small,

beginning to expand; we must instead conceive of expansion occurring from zero. The best way to think of this is a cone; a cone does indeed taper to a point, but it does not stop there. It continues to taper until even the point does not exist, i.e. it tapers all the way to nothingness. In the same way, a “cone of existence” does not expand from a point, it ultimately expands outwards from nothing.

The above discussion works with the Big Bang theory as an illustration, but we need not assume this theory to be correct. The theory of time as being linear, having a beginning and an end, is a common one, however, and appears to be that upon which the Qabalah was created. All such theories have to deal with the paradox that if there was a point of creation, what happened before that, and if this question has an answer, how can the term “creation” be appropriate? The argument that time is a property of the universe created with it does not help us; if time can be said to a beginning, something must have existed outside of it, something to do the creating, and even if we are barred from using the word “before” there is still something outside of the universe which we are seeking.

These problems do go away if we abandon the whole idea of creation, however. If we consider the possibility that (and here use of terminology inevitably becomes confusing) the universe has “always” existed, and that time is merely a property of it, then we no longer have to consider the idea that something came before it (because we abandon our idea of linear time) and we no longer have to consider the idea that there is something outside of it (because we abandon our idea of creation). This idea simply renders invalid the concerns on which those questions are based, although it may well raise new questions of its own. Answering questions of this kind may ultimately allow us to rend the negative veils, and expose the mysteries of creation which were apparent to the inventors of the Qabalah.

Such speculation is beyond the scope of this essay, however. Let us be content to say that these are the ideas behind the negative veils and the origins of creation in the Qabalah, and continue.

The Archetypal Triad

Kether

Kether is the concentration of the negative veils into a *point*, the first spark of actual creation. Zero extends equally in either direction, positively and negatively, to quite literally create something out of nothing: $0 = (+1) + (-1)$, or, equivalently, $0 = 1 - 1$. In the more

general case, $0 = n - n$, $0 = (+n) + (-n)$. Since n can take any value we choose, we have an explanation as to how an infinite variety of existence can come out of nothing — “Every number is infinite; there is no difference.”³ — and we need not waste any time with the idea that one is more special, more unique, more pure than any other number. It is, as Kether here illustrates, the first emanation from nothing. As each number is unique, each number has this exact same quality of “oneness”; there is only one 349, for instance. The quality of Kether we are illustrating therefore is this quality of oneness, and not the number one itself. That being said, we attribute the number one to it for this purpose.

As we saw from our discussions of the negative veils, Kether can be attributed to the singularity. This attribution can only ever be momentary however.

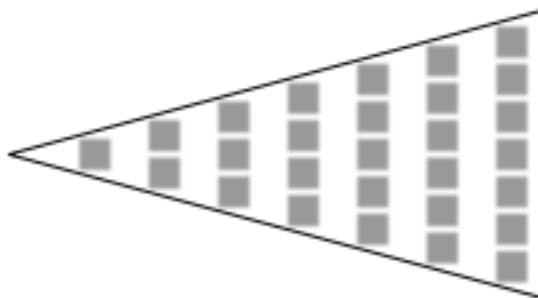


Figure 1.1: Cone of existence

The blocks in figure 1.1 represent “units of existence,” and we have shown them to be discrete for the purposes of ease of illustration only, there is no deeper theory behind this presentation or indeed of the idea of units of existence in the first place. To the left of the point of the cone is nothing, Ain. As the point is reached, empty space is created, Ain Soph, which must precede the creation of actuality. The appearance of the first block of actual existence is Kether. As soon as this first block develops in the two blocks, the idea of Kether is no longer present. Kether is thus the first appearance of creation, and is actually present for a microscopically small period of time. As soon as the singularity begins to develop, it becomes no longer single, and cannot be anymore attributed to Kether.

³AL I, 4

In the same way, however, the first appearance of the other elements can also be attributed to Kether. The first appearance of the two out of the one can be attributed to Kether, just as the first appearance of the seven out of the six can be. This is what is meant when it is said that each sephirah contains a Tree within itself. The “Kether of Chokmah” relates to the first appearance of the two from the one, and the “Malkuth of Chokmah” represents the final development of the two, just prior to the appearance of the idea of three. Thus, although in the Tree of Life relating to the whole of creation, Kether is only attributed to that first initial spark, that momentary period, the idea of Kether — the principle of Kether — flows downwards right through the Tree. Kether is associated with the principle of the creation of anything new, not necessarily just the creation of the universe as a whole. This is also what is meant when it is said that the sephirah are “emanations” of the preceding ones; the spark of Kether is inherent in everything, since the existence of any given unit depends on that first spark of its arrival into manifestation. Whenever something new is created, when no idea of its existence was in place previously, the principle of Kether is involved. From Chokmah down to Malkuth, the remaining sephirah are concerned with the process of development (and as we have explained, each stage of development will follow the path of its own tree) but Kether is concerned with the initial creation of the thing developed. The distinction between all these “lower Kethers,” and the “Kether of Kether,” however, is that in the first Kether the creation comes from nothing. In all the following Kethers, the creation is a necessary outflow from the previous development, although the principle of creating something wholly new is inherent in each case.

This subdivision of Trees could, of course, continue indefinitely, giving us the idea of the “Chesed of Binah of Netzach of Tiphareth of Kether of Binah of Hod,” for instance, but we will confine our discussion to the ten principles themselves, since in those principles everything else is contained.

Chokmah

Chokmah is the active, male principle, formed by the extension of the point into the *line*. It is active because it brings with it the concept of *motion*, or *force*, or more generally, *change*; with a second point, the idea of moving between them comes into being. With only two points, however, we have no concept of distance, or form. All we can say is there has been motion between the two points. Without

another point of reference to which comparisons may be made, we cannot say anything about how far apart the two points are, how long it takes to travel between them, or indeed any difference between the two. Knowledge begins with classification — “this is not like that,” or “this is like that” — and we need at least three points for this: “this quality is seen in two points, but not in the third point, therefore the two points are alike.” Alternatively, we can imagine that we need a third point in order to make the distinction in the first place, i.e. that there has to be something separate to observe the two original points. Chokmah then, is pure force, change, or more properly, the *ideal* of change.

Strictly, then, we cannot really apply the idea of actual motion to this concept, since without a measure of distance we do not have the concept of distance *changing*, and without the concept of distance changing we cannot really say that there is motion. However, the simple fact that there are two points demonstrates that motion has, in fact, occurred. This idea is implicit in Kether, implicit in the act of creation, since the moment two points are brought into existence this idea follows necessarily as we have described. In figure 1.1 we examined the process of creation pictorially in the form of a cone, viewing Kether as the momentary principle of the transformation of nothing into something. For this transformation to have any meaning, it must be accompanied by the thing being transformed (nothing) and the thing it is transformed into (Chokmah). Thus, Kether can never exist in isolation, which is further confirmation of the erroneousness of the “one god” theory. In other words, Kether is the *act* of creation, not the thing created itself, and the thing created is both *inherent* in it and flows *necessarily* from it. In this sense, Kether is the first spark of creation, and Chokmah is really the beginning of the *process* of creation. It is this extension from the unity of Kether, this first necessary progression from the act of creation, that characterizes Chokmah, and imbues it with its active male qualities.

All this discussion shows the necessity of considering these sephiroth in conjunction with all the others, rather than in isolation, since they not only require their counterparts to be understood, but they require their counterparts to give them any meaning — or indeed, any *existence* — at all.

Binah

Binah is the passive, female principle, formed by the addition of a third point to create the *plane*, or *shape*. With a third point, the

concepts of *form* and *structure* come into being; the idea of a plane and a shape brings with it a concept of *enclosure*, of *restriction*, of the delineation of a *space*. This is feminine because it is linked with the idea of nurturing, of providing a home, of upbringing, of support. The three legged stool is the only type that can never wobble; in engineering, the triangle is the ideal load-bearing structure, since even with pivots on the vertices it is the only shape that cannot be distorted without being broken. With the addition of the third point the concept of *discrimination* comes into being, and the ideas of *knowledge* which is merely structured and stabilised experience. This idea is also implicit in Kether and in the act of creation, since it flows necessarily from the creation of three points.

Figure 1.2 illustrates these ideas pictorially:

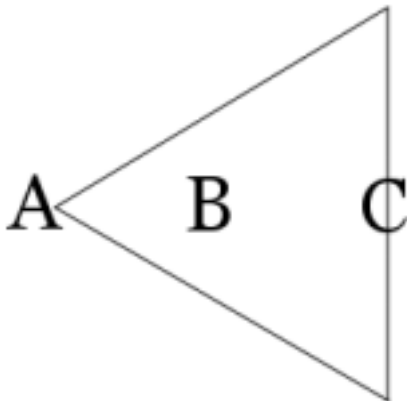


Figure 1.2: Triangle of creation

Kether is here “A,” the point, not the infinitely small point, but that momentary state between infinitely small and being in existence. Chokmah is “B,” the first extension of the point, and Binah is “C,” the completion of the cone. We must consider this triangle to be almost impossibly small, of course. In figure 1.2, we could place the line completing the triangle much closer to the point; in fact, according to the laws of mathematics, as close as we like. We have to conceive of this triangle as being the smallest triangle that can possibly be created, which is of course itself not possible. It must be remembered that we are dealing with *principles* here, however, so practical impossibilities need not concern us yet. What must be understood is that Kether

represents a point from which extension can be made, Chokmah represents that extension itself, and Binah represents the first *result* of that extension, the actual creation of an idea; in this case, the triangle. Because Binah is the result of the extension, it is considered to have a female, passive quality; it was created purely as a result of Chokmah's extension.

Kether, Chokmah and Binah considered together form the *supernal triad*, or *archetypal triad*. In the three dimensional universe, the two dimensional plane can never actually exist except in concept, so the supernals deal with ideas, with concepts, with archetypes upon which manifested existence will be based. The fact that the ideas of Chokmah and Binah are implicit in the act of creation, and flow necessarily from it, is seen in the expression: "change is stability, and stability is change." The two ideas are inextricably linked. The notion of force can be seen as both the stern father, the imposition of force, and as the liberating father, the father who releases his son into his own life, the force to break free. Equally, the notion of stability can be seen as both the nurturing mother, giving structure to her son's life so that he may grow as a unit, and as the smothering mother, restricting her son's life, refusing to let him "leave the nest," and hampering his development. The image of the supernal triad, with Chokmah and Binah springing out of Kether, illustrates that these two principles are *complementary*. It is error to think of them as opposites, opposed to each other, working against each other. It is not true to say that force can destroy structure; it can destroy *a* structure, but *some* structure still remains. The role of force is to *change* structure, to modify it and, in some circumstances, to improve it and to grow it. Equally, structure cannot stop force entirely, it can only channel and direct it, harness it.

We can also see this idea in our above diagram. We stated that Binah was passive and female, because it was created from Chokmah's extension, yet it is equally true (the triangle being the simplest plane) that this is the only thing that *could* have been initially created, the only form Chokmah's extension *could* have formed itself into. Here we instantly see the constraint of the force of Chokmah into form. This restriction is not *imposed* upon Chokmah, it arises inevitably from its nature. Thus, the idea of form is inherent in the force of Chokmah, since its extension must produce form. Equally the idea of force is inherent in the form of Binah, since only by extension can form be produced.

This may be true in a purely physical sense also. Atoms, as are commonly understood, are viewed as a mass of electrons orbiting the

nucleus at a frantic pace. Similarly, it is the motion of the planets in orbit around the sun that keeps the orbit constant, that stops them spiraling inwards towards a fiery destruction. We may go so far as to say that structure *requires* motion, or change, to maintain itself. This is echoed in the law of *entropy*, that a closed system will decay; motion is required for freshness. Recent developments in string theory suggest that particulate matter may ultimately come down simply to vibrations; i.e. not that matter vibrates, but that matter is actually nothing other than vibration itself. Viewed from this aspect, it could be said that matter *is* motion, that it is change that brings matter into existence in the first place. Equally, we can see that without form and structure motion has no meaning. As we illustrated in the discussion on Chokmah above, without points of comparison, without form, then motion, distance, time, all have no meaning. This is another illustration of why Chokmah represents the ideal of motion, and not motion itself, since with merely two parts motion has no meaning. Therefore matter — form — requires motion to exist, and motion has no meaning outside of a structure for comparison; motion is nothing other than a change in structure. The two concepts are therefore interdependent and complementary, not opposite, and neither can exist by itself.

In this sense, Binah can be thought of as *physical law*, law and restriction from the sense of inevitability, rather than imposition. The attribution to Saturn with its idea of limitation, rigid systems restricting growth, and the hardest challenges in life, being the challenge of recognising one's ultimate limitations. Saturn is associated with coping with adversity, since the immutable physical laws of nature are the ultimate adversary, yet, at the same time, the ultimate source of power, and it is the lesson of this mystery which is ultimately associated with Saturn, and it is why it is said that the victories over the limitations in Saturn are the sweetest ones; they are the ultimate challenges, and their overcoming represents both a transcendence of the universe and an alliance with it. This complete coming to terms with reality is *understanding*, which is the meaning of Binah.

These ideas of change and stability therefore flow necessarily from creation, and are the *only* two ideas to flow necessarily from it. We invite the reader to try to conceive of any other ideas which do not ultimately come back to these two. The glyph of the Tree of Life illustrates this, for the supernal triad is the only one with an upward pointing apex, the principles of change and stability being inherent in, and flowing necessarily downwards out of, Kether. The stability inherent in the triangle, in the number three, is additional confirmation of the correctness and self containment of these three principles in the

act of creation; there is the beginning, the act of creation, and the thing created, which are all inherent in each other, the beginning–middle–end idea of a process which is the fundamental idea associated with the number three. Together, the supernal triad symbolises the *ideal* of the process of creation, and the formulation of this ideal is necessary before any actual manifestation can occur.

As the supernal triad deals with ideals, principles, archetypes, and encompasses the only two ideas to flow necessarily from the principle of creation, to move any further is to move into manifestation itself, i.e. from potential to actual, from ideal to manifestation. There is a vast gulf between Binah and the subsequent sephirah termed the *Abyss*, to make this distinction between potential and actual clear. To further cement this distinction, Binah and Chesed are the only two consecutive sephiroth on the Tree not to be connected by a path.

The Actual Triad

Chesed

Chesed is the addition of the fourth point, and with this addition the idea of a *solid* is made possible, the pyramid with a basal triangle. This is the simplest solid that can be constructed, and four vertices are at least required. Like the triangle, this also brings with it the sense of *structure*, of form, except now we are enclosing a *three dimensional space*. This is the idea of stability in *manifestation*, rather than in *principle*. From a physical creational sense, this stability can be thought of as the *result* of the laws of physics; for creation to be made manifest, there must be some sense of how the elements are to interact, and this further illustrates the necessity of change in the concept of stability, for the laws of physics work purely on change, on the motions of the particles — law is, after all, nothing but a constraint on motion. The manifestation of these laws are also suggestive of a *plan*, although there need be no considerations of intelligent design, or motive here; the plan simply flows necessarily from the laws, and need not be consciously determined. This is appropriate for the first manifestation across the Abyss, the first notion of actuality; that is, the “grand plan” of creation from which everything else must follow.

The association with Jupiter, represented by the drive for expansion, fortune and abundance, should be clear from this outflowing into manifestation. From the formulation of the process of creation in the Supernals, it is through Chesed that all possibilities are made manifest, through this acting out of physical laws. The fortune (which also

means destiny, or fate) of Jupiter arises as a result of the physical laws formulated in the Supernals, and in particular from the idea of Binah. The idea of abundance refers to the fact that everything in creation has entered manifestation through this process, through the transformation from the potential to the actual, and that this process contains within it the ability to create everything. The drive for expansion in Jupiter is clearly a direct result of this outflowing into manifestation, and this drive continues throughout the full process of creation, from Chesed all the way down to Malkuth.

Four is also associated with the square, the fortress, the symbol of *created* rather than *inherent* restriction. For that reason Jupiter has been associated with idea of *temporal law*, *authority* and *morals*, the idea of structure *imposed* rather than structure *inherent* in the idea of existence. This type of structure is necessarily less stable than that of the three, and less perfect since it is separated from the ideal stability by the Abyss. It can also be viewed as the *inference* of physical laws through the observation of manifested nature, which is clearly a very different thing from the physical laws themselves, which are always potential and implicit. In the same way this can be extended to the idea of the creation of more arbitrary laws and morals, through an inference rather than as arising from first principles, from the ideal. This type of law is clearly more imperfect and can never be absolute. Compared to Saturn, Jupiter represents *power* and *authority*, which can fade because it is not based on the same kind of physical necessity that the laws of Saturn are. The “capacity for learning” associated with Jupiter depends to a large extent on the ability of the individual to make inferences which approximate most closely to the “real” or ideal laws of the supernals. To the extent that this ability is not present, the capability of learning, of approaching an apprehension of truth, will be much reduced. The need for expansion, for a willingness to accept the role of fortune, is required to break free from the self-imposed restrictions which hamper this ability. Thus, the ideas of benevolence and the search for wisdom in Jupiter shows that, when functioning in its best aspects, Jupiter has the ability to *modify* the rules and laws that it sets when necessity arises, which is why Jupiter is not nearly as stern a teacher as Saturn is. Jupiter contains the ideas of justice and mercy (“mercy” is the meaning of Chokmah) because of this ability and willingness to expand on its own restrictions, which are ultimately there for “good” purposes (i.e. for direction, creation and growth) bringing an increase in insight and understanding. Jupiter is, in its best aspects, concerned with the search for truth (since Chesed is below the Abyss, this search cannot be completed here) and not

restriction for its own sake. The laws of Saturn cannot be so modified, however, and the only relief from them is to learn how to work *with* them, rather than *against* them.

Geburah

Geburah is the addition of a fifth point. With five points, we have the possibility of two separate solids, and the possibility of *motion* within the two. It also suggests a point *outside* of the structure of the solid, an escape from or a modification to the structural stability. This then is the idea of change in manifestation, rather than in principle, for we can now have *actual motion*. This is the impulse that fulfils the physical plan in Chesed, that carries it out. The structure of Chesed exists to give form to the motion of Geburah, and the motion of Geburah serves only to modify the structure of Chesed according to the laws laid down for it.

Thus, Chesed is the bringing into manifestation of creation, but Geburah is the movement of the manifested thing. Geburah is the expression of existence in accordance with the physical laws; it is the *unfolding* of the “plan” of creation. The attribution to Mars should be clear, expression of energy and work, dynamic and strong, for energy arising from physical law and working in harmony with it is pure and irresistible, hence the idea of *strength* which is the meaning of Geburah. If there was no movement, physical laws would be redundant, since their purpose is to constrain and direct motion; without interaction of the elements, there is no need for law, since they cannot affect one another. If the elements existed in a perfectly static state, they could not influence each other, and each could be said to be a universe in itself. Geburah is the *interaction* of the things made manifest, their drive to express their own nature, their *will*.

Five being the triumph of spirit over the elements (or, when the pentagram is inverted, their *source*), Geburah represents the drive to overcome restriction, to grow, to develop. In the physical sense, of course, this drive can only ever be expressed in one direction, out of the necessity of physical law. This is the reason why the structure in Chesed gives rise to the thought of a “divine plan”. There are elements of predestination and fate in the idea of Jupiter.

Tiphareth

Tiphareth is the *conjunction* between change and stability, and in esoteric terms has historically been linked with *self-awareness*, or, more

accurately, *individuality*. The interplay between change and stability brings with it the idea of a *progression* through the “plan”. Chesed is form, and Geburah is motion, but their combination in Tiphareth is the idea of *some thing* moving through the structure of the universe, and this brings with it the idea of an *individual*, distinct, and interacting with the remainder of the universe on its journey. The addition of the sixth point brings with it a *choice* of motion; there is no longer just one point outside of the solid that one could move to, there exists another possibility. These choices of motion are what suggest the individual, and in combination those choices represent a journey, a path, a course of action. This is naturally suggestive of *will*, and it is the choice-making quality of will, whether automatic or not, that gives rise to the idea of an individual. The important thing to consider about this will is that it has arisen necessarily out of the first manifestations of form and force, and that it is therefore perfectly in alignment with them. This is the “true” will, the necessary and eternal motion of the star through the universe.

As we saw with the Supernals, these three ideas are quite impossible to separate, and they must be considered together. Chesed is the bringing into manifestation, and contains in itself all the qualities and necessities which must follow thereby. Geburah is the motion of manifested elements, which is a necessary component of manifestation and law. Tiphareth represents their resolution, the actual existing thing as distinct from the rest of the universe, and it is ultimately this thing which moves, and which is constrained into form.

Thus, where the three sephiroth of the Supernals contained between themselves a complete picture of the *ideal* of creation (a beginning, an extension from that beginning, and the creation of form) so the three sephiroth of the actual triad contain between themselves a complete picture of the *act* of creation (the bringing into manifestation, the action of the manifested elements in accordance with law, and the subsequent development of the thing, the individual, the manifested unit). As the Supernals relate to the universe in totality, so the actual triad relates to individual manifestations of the universe. *The Book of the Law* describes this in terms of stars — “Every man and every woman is a star. Every number is infinite; there is no difference.”⁴ This suggests individual stars crystallising into manifestation from the potential of the universe (in the same way that the potential for existence crystallized from the negative veils, concentrating a centre), each individual and unique with its own path to follow, but

⁴AL I, 3–4

a necessary part of the whole, partaking in the nature of infinity and its path being completely subject to the necessity of the laws of the whole. It is this creation of a manifested, existing unit, being part of the whole but at the same time a discrete part of it, that gives rise to the idea of “beauty,” which is the meaning of Tiphareth. Beauty contains within itself the ideas of both force and form, since although it is form which appears beautiful, for the idea of beauty to have meaning there must be something to apprehend it, and it is this apprehension that is attributed to the idea of force, movement, change, and experience. Moreover, it is the progression of the universe, the necessity of it all, the seamless combinations, that is the ultimate beauty.

Dealing as they do with manifestation below the Abyss, we will term this second group of three sephiroth the *actual triad*. The first thing one notices about this triad compared to the Supernals is that the apex is pointing *downwards*. Above the Abyss, in the potential plane, ideals sprang necessarily from the source, from the principle of existence. Below the Abyss, in the actual plane, pairs of complementary points are resolved downwards. This is an illustration of the creation according to *The Book of the Law* — “For I am divided for love’s sake, for the chance of union.”⁵ The creation of Kether, the division into positive and negative and the resulting ideas of change and stability, are seen as giving rise to a *reintegration* once become actual; a *union*. It shows that the division of creation is undertaken in order that individuals may be created, for the generation of experience through union.

As we stand, however, we have an individual with the *potential* for self-awareness, but we need a *mechanism* for that. Therefore the Tree continues downwards. For reasons which should be clear from above, we will term this continuation the *individual triad*. Whereas the potential was separated from the actual by the Abyss, the actual is separated from the individual by the *Veil of Paroketh*. The use of the word “veil” is illuminating. For the generation of experience to have any meaning, the individual must feel himself to be separate from the rest of the universe; the value of experience will be greatly diminished if he perceives only parts of his greater self.⁶

Crowley attributes self-awareness to the number six in his “Naples Arrangement,” but we cannot agree with this attribution. The individual created by the actual triad in our system has individuality, has its own path, has what can be called a “self,” but it is not yet aware

⁵AL I, 29

⁶This idea is developed further in *The Khabs is in the Khu*, the Veil of Paroketh here being equivalent to the veil surrounding the Khabs.

of this, its consciousness at this stage being merely the direction imposed on it by the will of the universe. The Naples Arrangement did a poor job of explaining seven, eight and nine, resorting as it did to Vedantic symbolism without really delineating *why* this should be necessary. Our system is much more intuitive in this regard, and also explains how and why the Veil of Paroketh serves to veil the individual's perception of itself as being part of the whole. We cannot have self-awareness without a sense of separation, and if this awareness occurs in Tiphareth then the ideas in the Tree start to become inconsistent. Given the threefold nature inherent in the structure of the Tree, it is far more sensible to attribute the ideal to the first three, the actual to the second three, and the individual (with its sense of self-awareness) to the third. This will become apparent as we continue our discussion, and is also why Tiphareth is associated with the Sun, the centre of the Solar System, its core. In exactly the same way, Tiphareth is the core of the individual, his true nature, and through the Veil of Paroketh it informs and guides the lower sephiroth; Tiphareth is connected with the *Holy Guardian Angel*.

The Individual Triad

Netzach

Netzach is the active individual quality, which has been termed *desire*. It is a debased form of the will. The true will in Tiphareth, deriving from the universal will, is veiled to the individual, but is imperfectly reflected to him through the Veil of Paroketh in the form of *desire* and *instincts*. It is the idea of motion in the individual, the force that drives him through his individual existence.

The idea of individuality, of consciousness, requires the idea of *self direction*, of a *choice* as to what path is to be taken. If it were otherwise, individuality and awareness would be little more than a prison. It is necessary because individuality, the awareness of the self, confers with it the illusion of separation, the illusion that the individual is responsible for his own direction, is in control of his being. Without this illusion, there can be no real self-awareness, no individuality; without it, the consciousness would be reduced to a mere observer, rather than as a participant, and thus would be unable to truly *experience*. Without this ability to self-direct, there could be no experience of the overcoming of fear, for instance, or of the development of a new skill, any more than one can achieve these experiences through watching a movie.

In order to fully experience the wonders of the universe, then, the individual must fully believe himself to be in control of his being. If he is to be in such control, he must have some direction, some goal he is working towards, some objective which serves to guide his conscious choices throughout his life. The provision of this direction, these objectives, is the function of Netzach. Netzach means “victory,” and its meaning indicates the achievement the individual’s objectives. It is this desire for achievement which drives the individual through his life, and it is to the desires that Netzach is most often attributed.

Although we have said that it is the achievement of the individual’s desires which drives him, it is the nature of the being that this achievement can never take place. The function of Netzach is to *drive* the individual, to provide him with a *purpose* for existence, to direct his actions, and if he ever achieves his objectives this direction would cease to be effective. Thus it is the nature of the individual to never be satisfied with what he has, where he is; when he does satisfy his desires they are simply replaced with new ones, in order that he may continue to be spurred on to action through the whole of his life. This notion of desire is therefore an illusory concept, as are all the concepts in the sephiroth below the Veil of Paroketh, since they all arise from the illusion of the sense of self, the illusion of separation from the rest of the universe. This also explains why the chasing of desire is ultimately futile, since it is the drive towards our objectives which motivates us, not their achievement, and we will find there is nothing either motivating or fulfilling about merely *having* something; the nature of desire is to make the individual *dynamic*, which is completely opposite to allowing him to remain constant and content, which is the idea most people have when they seek to fulfill their desires.

Netzach is, then, clearly the *change* sephirah of the individual triad, the active individual quality, in that it is what drives the individual to motion, towards growth, towards new experience. It is attributed to Venus, which relates to *needs*, which by definition implies motion towards something we do not already have. We experience hunger when we have a need to eat, a need to put fuel and nourishment into our bodies which is currently lacking. It reflects aesthetic preferences and the attraction we feel to things, which is precisely how we have defined Netzach; the attraction to something is the tendency to move towards it, and it is the creation of these tendencies which drives the individual. Venus also represents harmony and balance, equilibrium, and it is indeed the disturbance from equilibrium which makes us want to return to it. Thus, although Venus contains the idea of balance and equilibrium, it is itself neither of these things, since its

existence depends on the lack of equilibrium. The motion arising from Netzach is, however, a stabilizing motion, like the swinging of a pendulum. Stability in motion is a tendency for motion to stop, to return to balance, just as a pendulum will gradually reduce the extent of its swinging over time until it finally ceases, always presuming that it is not disturbed in the meantime. An unstable motion will tend to move away from equilibrium over time, the swings becoming wider. It is this desire for equilibrium inherent in Venus, this tendency to return to a position of balance and harmony, which makes the motion in Netzach stabilizing, by imbuing it with a direction towards the objective which influences the swing closer to the victory of obtaining this balance. It is the influence of the other lower sephiroth which disturb this balance, and provide the desire with new objectives.

Hod

Hod is the passive individual quality, which is linked with *knowledge* and *thought*. It is the *classification* and *structuring* of the individual's perceptions and experiences. We have already seen that for true discrimination to take place — which is necessary for individual experience — we must have a reference point. The accumulation of experiences solidifies into knowledge, whereby the individual knows — or thinks he knows — something of the nature of the world, so that he may make comparisons and discover new things.

Hod is the *stabilising* sephirah of the individual triad. We have seen that it is Netzach which provides the individual with his drive, with his motivation for action, but without a clear notion of how such fulfillment is to be achieved, that action will be futile. For this reason, in order to pursue his desires, the individual has a *conscious mind* which is capable of consolidating and classifying the experiences he has, of making associations between them, so that thereby he might learn something about his environment and about himself. By so doing, the accumulated knowledge he has will enable him to make inferences that such-and-such an action is likely, in the current observed circumstances, to lead to such-and-such a result, and it is thereby that he is able to make choices which, he hopes, will lead him closer to the fulfillment of his desires.

Hod does not then refer to a simple accumulation of facts, or memory, or knowledge, but to the *patterns* in the mind which enable these associations and inferences to be made, by forming *pathways* along which sensations can be sorted, classified and discriminated. It is the mental faculty, the thoughts, the ability to reason, the ability to

analyse and solve, to draw conclusions based on similarities to past experiences.

The attribution is to Mercury, to the ability to *communicate*, and to mental activity and dexterity. Communication is the conveyance of *information*, and information is the presentation of data into an order which allows some sort of *meaning* to be gleaned from them. For instance, we may have a mass of data arising from a point-of-sale system in a supermarket, but it is not until we group and sort that data by product that we can deduce that decaffeinated coffee is selling strongly, whilst chocolate lampshades are not. Similarly, it is not until we combine this data with those from other locations that we can see whether these facts are common or unique to this location. Without this sort of information, without this grouping and sorting of individual pieces of data, we cannot draw conclusions and hence do not have the ability to effectively *manage*. It is the same within the individual; until we are able to learn that, for instance, friction induces heat, and heat induces flame, we will be unable to harness the power of fire to our advantage, and our progress through life, our progress towards new experience, will be severely restricted. The purpose of the classification of Hod is then to give the individual the ability to successfully *navigate* his being towards the fulfillment of his desires. The meaning of “splendour” is the wonder and miracle of this enormously complex and labyrinthine web of pathways and patterns which make all this possible, and the wonder that is felt from being able to perceive something of the working of things.

Herein, in the individual triad, is also illusion and imperfection of form, however. The purpose of these pathways and patterns which allow classification is to provide an ability to classify one’s experiences in order that useful inferences be made, and appropriate inferences drawn which will allow the individual to successfully navigate his being. It is entirely possible, however, even normal, for such patterns to develop in a manner which leads to *inappropriate* conclusions being drawn. For instance, the development of a belief in god can lead to all sorts of fatuous and imbecilic notions which can permanently restrict growth. This aspect connects with Mercury’s attribution to the trickster, to the magician in his aspect as an illusionist and a master of misdirection.

These patterns are formed on the basis of *experience*, not from some absolute and perfect source of knowledge, and such experiences are always incomplete. The patterns and pathways which are drawn therefrom must always therefore be tentative, no more than convenient assumptions. It is when the structure becomes excessively fixed (e.g.

in the example above where a belief in a god can become fixed and ingrained) that problems arise, when the structure is cut-off from the rest of the sephiroth and denied of rejuvenating influence. The structure of Hod must be constantly updated, challenged, and refreshed if it is to remain vital and relevant.

Yesod

Yesod is the combination of knowledge and desire. With his knowledge crystallized in Hod, and his desires originating in Netzach, he is able to make decisions based on his knowledge as to how he can further his desires. This has been linked with the *subconscious mind*, wherein a man knows that he wishes to refrain from painful experiences, seek comfort and warmth, pursue wonder, and so on. This is a debased form of self-awareness, and can be seen to be the “conscious” self, as opposed to the “true” self in Tiphareth. Since his true will is veiled to him, and he only has the impulses of Netzach for guidance, and because his knowledge in Hod arises from his experiences on the earth (rather than coming down as a knowledge of the universe), this conscious self, this individual will, has the potential to move further and further away from his “true” will.⁷ Here is the origination of sorrow and suffering. From the universal perspective, of course, there is no suffering, and what the man experiences is all good new experience. The man thinks he is suffering because he mistakes this debased version of self in Yesod for his true self, and he thus perceives that the suffering is happening to him, whereas really it is only perceived by his experiential vehicle.

The attribution is to the Moon, instincts, habits, and the unconscious mind. It is also the personality, the reflection of the “soul”. Being in the middle pillar, one path away from Tiphareth, the individual, it is here in Yesod that the individual qualities inherent to Tiphareth are reflected to form the *personality*, which is then reinforced and altered by the influences of Netzach and Hod. The reflection is also the *internal universe*, or “astral universe,” that the individual creates for himself. When one daydreams, “rehearses” mentally, or reviews memories, it is from this internal universe that the inner pictures and other senses arise. The desires from Netzach and the associations in Hod work together to form this universe in Yesod, so that the individual has an internal representation of the universe he lives in, which reflects both his understanding of it and his attitudes towards it. It is the information from this internal universe that form the most part of the inputs towards the processing faculty of Hod. Hence we can see that

⁷See *The Method of Love*.

even with perfectly functioning processing, inappropriate conclusions can still be drawn if the inputs are faulty, if the internal universe is markedly different from the “real” one in important aspects.

Some of the internal universe is formed inherently, or naturally. The simple act of living in a human body with the human senses is responsible for the way a good deal of it is formed. When very young, physical sensations are the most important formative part, as the classifying faculty is not well developed, and the physical sensations and images which are presented to the infant form an important part of the development of his internal universe, the effects lasting long into adulthood. Much of what drives an individual is affected by these early sensations, and most of us will be familiar with vague images or sensations which have been with us all our lives, and whilst somewhat intangible seem to influence us in many ways.

Other parts of the internal universe are shaped through the mental faculties of Hod. One of the functions of Hod is to draw conclusions about the nature of things, about the nature of the universe, and those conclusions are fed back into Yesod to form part of the individual’s overall conception of the environment in which he lives, which of course includes himself. In this way we can see both how “faults” in the mental faculty can result in an inaccurate internal universe, and how inaccuracies existing in the internal universe can be fed up into Hod and then channelled back, reinforcing the error and miring the individual even deeper in the pool of illusion.

The desires arising in Netzach also have an influence here. In confusing what is with what is desired, the man “creates the universe in his own image,” which is the reverse of what should occur. A good example would be the individual who believes in a personal hell because he simply refuses to accept that individuals who have “harmed” him should escape punishment, and in his spiteful sophistry he creates a universe for himself where his transgressors are punished horribly for all eternity. The phenomenon of denial arises as a result of Netzach’s influence on the internal universe in Yesod.

Naturally, the input from the senses have an important influence on the internal universe. The pictures inside the individual’s head arise in the form they do primarily because he has seen them, or their like, before, with his own eyes. We can expect the images that arise in the mind of one who has been blind from birth to deviate quite substantially from images that the rest of us would recognise.

Finally, there is an influence on the internal universe from outside the realm of the individual triad and from the environment, and that influence comes from Tiphareth. This influence reflects what he ac-

tually is, rather than what he thinks himself to be, what he would like to be, or what his environment tells him that he is. If we were to here examine the question of attainment, we would see that a good portion of the task of “purifying” the internal universe comes down to attenuating this influence.

Yesod is, then, the centre of the lower self, the “boiling pot” of the personality.

Again, since we are below the Abyss, the individual triad has a downward pointing apex, showing that desire and intellect are combined to form awareness. This is the “chance of union” on the individual level.

Thus, we saw that the supernal sephiroth represent the *idea* of creation, the three sephiroth of the actual triad represent the *act* of creation, and the three sephiroth of the individual triad represent the *functioning* of the individual in his capacity as a being aware of both himself and his environment, in terms of his motivation, his decision-making, and his ideas of both himself and of the universe. All three of these things are necessary for a functioning individual. Each of these three concepts is internal to the individual, and with this in mind we can clearly see the source of the problems faced by people in their lives. The vast bulk of the day to day functioning of the individual is concerned with these three concepts, and the result can be a perpetual flow of information along the three paths joining them, leading to the individual living the vast bulk of his life within himself, cut off both from the external reality and from his own source. The “Great Work” essentially consists of restoring these links, which will allow him to balance his conscious self and apprehend his true function in the scheme of the universe.

Chesed is structure, Geburah is will, and Tiphareth is the true self, but in the individual triad, below the Veil of Paroketh, everything is mere reflection, so Netzach is desire, the reflection of will. Hod is thought, the reflection of structure. Yesod is the subconscious, the reflection of the self. Herein all is illusion.

The Physical World

Malkuth

There is one more step to be taken. The individual triad provides man with desires to experience, with intellect and knowledge to classify those experiences, and a consciousness with which to consolidate

his journey through experience, but it has not actually given him anything *to* experience. This is Malkuth. Malkuth is often considered to be the material world itself, or the body, but in this sense Malkuth is the *experience* of the world; it is the experience of the taste of strawberries, rather than strawberries themselves or even the taste itself (although we can easily enough argue that without experience, taste is a meaningless concept). The physical existence of the universe need not concern us; if in fact we were the stereotypical “brain in a vat” and the entire universe was merely a series of created fictitious sensations for us, we would be in the same situation, and would take the same action. As Bishop Berkeley has shown us, we are not able to distinguish between a “real” reality and a convincing illusion along these lines, and for our purposes we don’t care to try and do so. We are not concerned with the *nature* of reality in Malkuth, therefore; we are concerned only with our *experience* of what we call reality.

There is a further connection here with Malkuth., as the creation of the individual triad fails to have any sensible meaning without the addition of actual experience. We may therefore take a fourfold perspective and consider the individual triad and Malkuth as a unit. We have already seen the influence Malkuth has on the formation of the internal universe.

Further Considerations

The Structure of the Tree

Our initial analysis complete, we may continue to perceive the patterns in the Tree. The formula of Tetragrammaton, IHVH, is of applicability here. In tradition, “I,” yod, is the male impulse, the father. The first “H,” hé, is the female impulse, the mother. The “V,” vau, is the son, the conjunction of the mother and father. The final hé is the daughter, essentially the energy released by the union of the mother and the father, the “side-effect” of that union. In terms of the lower four sephiroth, Netzach is clearly the active, male principle, and Hod the passive, female principle. We have seen how these combine into Yesod to form the son, and how the necessity of Malkuth is implied by this. We can continue this further. We have already said that the actual triad itself gives rise to the necessity of the individual triad, and we may therefore consider the hé final of the “actual Tetragrammaton” to be the individual triad plus Malkuth. Also, clearly, the ideal existence in the supernals must necessarily give rise to actual existence, and thus we may consider the lower seven sephiroth to be the hé final of

the “archetypal tetragrammaton”. Finally, the threefold negative veils represent potential, and potential has no meaning without actual, so the Tree in its entirety can be considered the hé final of the union of the “negative father” and the “negative mother,” which combine to produce the “negative son”.

We can thus see how the Tree seamlessly combines the threefold formula of the triad with the fourfold formula of Tetragrammaton. Reinforcing this, we have four threefold arrangements on the Tree, being the negative veils and the three triads. The aphorism “change is stability and stability is change” illustrates the twofold formula of complements, and the creation of existence illustrates the single formula of creation. Thus, the Tree embodies both the single, twofold, threefold and fourfold formulæ, and we may consider it interesting to note that the number of sephiroth is ten, or $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$. These considerations, whilst being both satisfying and pretty, are not crucial to our ideas however.

The basic structure of the Tree proper (excluding the veils) are the three triads, each with the rest of the Tree as a “pendant”. Each triad contains a *change* or *motion* sephirah, a *stability* or *form* sephirah, and a third sephirah, which in the archetypal triad represents their *source*, and in the remaining two triads represent their *resolution*. The archetypal triad shows how the ideas of motion and force arise from, and are inherent in, the idea of creation, whilst the actual triad shows how actual motion and actual form combine to form the actual individual. The individual triad shows how individual motion and individual form combine to form self-awareness, and the internal universe.

Number

The numbers attributed to the sephiroth provide further support for this framework. As we have already described, two represents the line, direction, movement, whilst three represents the triangle, shape, form. Four represents the square, enclosure, constructed form, artificial form, and that fact that $2 = 2 + 2 = 2 \times 2 = 2^2$ illustrates the structural qualities of this number. Five is $3 + 2$, form in motion, and also $2^2 + 1$, movement away from the restriction and enclosure of the four. It is also prime, suggesting motion and a lack of form. Six is 2×3 and also $1 + 2 + 3$, the combination of motion and form. Seven is also prime, again opposed to form and structure, whereas $8 = 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 2^3 = 4 + 4 = 4 \times 2$, a very heavily structural number. Nine is $3 + 3 + 3 = 3 \times 3 = 3^2$, the stabilization of the triad, the combination of

motion and form in an individual, more degraded level. Finally ten is $1+2+3+4$, the summation of the four elements of the tetragrammaton, the end result of manifestation.

The Qliphoth

The Qliphoth, or “shells” associated with the sephiroth also support this framework. According to Crowley’s 777, the Qliphoth of Kether are the “dual contending forces,” clearly opposed to the unity of the one. For Chokmah, the motion sephirah of the archetypal triad, we have the “hinderers,” hindrance being an opposition to force. For Binah there are the “Concealers” which hide and distort form. The Qlipoth of Chesed are the “Breakers in Pieces,” destroyers of form. Geburah has the “Burners,” who destroy through unrestrained force. The shells of Tiphareth are the “Disputers,” the opponents of harmony. The Qlipoth of Netzach are the “Dispersing Ravens,” dispersion being force with no unifying direction, desire cut off from the will in Tiphareth. For Hod we have the “Deceivers,” the illusionists, the creators of misleading form. Yesod has the “Obscene Ones” who distort and corrupt the internal universe, obscenity implying (in the old æon, at least) the animal being cut off from its divine source. Finally, the Qliphoth of Malkuth is the “Evil Woman,” woman naturally representing the corruption of the flesh, physical baseness devoid of spirit, to the Abrahamic religions.

Vices and Virtues

The “vices” and “virtues” associated with the sephiroth are also instructive. The virtue of Kether, at the pinnacle of the Tree, is naturally attainment, completion of the Great Work, and there is no vice due to the “perfection” of unity. The virtue of Chokmah is devotion to the Great Work, the dedicated and single-minded movement towards its completion. Chokmah is often not ascribed a vice, but when it is that vice is evil, referring to the appearance of duality, the movement into the actual world which was considered by the monotheists to be imperfect when placed against the perfection of the one god. For Binah we have silence as a virtue, non-movement, quiet form, with avarice or greed — the over-structuring, the excessive acquisition and collection of things — as the vice. Chesed’s virtue is obedience, to the temporal law inherent in the idea, whilst its vice is bigotry and hypocrisy, the perversion and fixation of form. The virtue of Geburah is naturally energy and courage, its vice of cruelty and restriction representing the

“negative” aspect of force. Tiphareth, like Chokmah, has devotion as its virtue, appearing as it does in the middle pillar directly under, and connected to, Kether, representing the individual in balance, rising straight upwards. Its vice is pride and selfishness, indulgence in individuality, a wilful cutting-off of the self from the source. The vice of Netzach is naturally lust, its virtue of “unselfishness” representing the idea of individual direction being influenced from the true self in Tiphareth, rather than from the shell “self” in the individual triad. The virtue of Hod is truthfulness and honesty, whereas its virtue is falsehood and dishonesty, representing respectively the accurate and inaccurate structuring of impressions and experiences. Yesod has independence as its virtue, being the ideal lower self removed from slavish servitude to the thoughts and desires, whereas the vice is idleness and stagnation, a wallowing in the internal universe. Finally, the virtue of Malkuth is discrimination, accurate perception of the physical world, and the vice is inertia and avarice, and indulgence in physical comfort and pleasure.

Summary

We have seen that it is both possible and instructive to derive the Tree of Life through a regular and systematic application and combination of the ideas of:

- One, creation;
- Two, the interplay of change and stability, motion and form, the two sides of the bases of each of the three triads;
- Three, the process, beginning–middle–end, and combination of two elements to produce a third, the three triads of the tree (and the three negative veils); and
- Four, the complete act of creation, the progression from the production of the son and its side-effects.

We can summarize this in table 1.1. These four ideas echo themselves all the way down the Tree, the pairs of change and stability either arising from or resulting in the third, and the act of creation or resolution resulting in a fourth idea. The fact that this simple, logical and satisfying pattern agrees so nicely with the traditional symbolism is an indicator of the fitness of this framework, which is also entirely consistent — and illustrative — of the account of creation presented in *The Book of the Law*.

No.	Sephirah	Plane	Function
1	Kether	Archetypal	Source
2	Chokmah	Archetypal	Motion / change
3	Binah	Archetypal	Form / stability
4	Chesed	Actual	Form / stability
5	Geburah	Actual	Motion / change
6	Tiphareth	Actual	Resolution
7	Netzach	Individual	Motion / change
8	Hod	Individual	Form / stability
9	Yesod	Individual	Resolution
10	Malkuth	Physical	Pendant

Table 1.1: Structure of the sephiroth

It is against this framework that we will analyse the small cards of the Tarot. The Tree of Life is traditionally associated with four “worlds,” each one corresponding to one of the four elements. *Atziluth*, or “archetypal world,” is attributed to the element of fire, *Briah*, or “creative world” to water, *Yetzirah*, or “formative world” to air, and *Assiah*, or “material world” to earth. There are two primary⁸ ways of representing these worlds. The first is to represent them on a single Tree, Atziluth encompassing Kether and Chokmah, Briah encompassing Binah, Yetzirah encompassing Chesed through Yesod, and Assiah encompassing Malkuth. The second is to give each world its own complete Tree. This would result in four sets of ten sephiroth, corresponding to the four sets of ten cards of the minor arcana, and is the method most applicable to studying the Tarot, which we will now proceed to do.

⁸“Primary” according to the Golden Dawn, at least. Many, many other ways have been proposed.

Chapter 2

Wands

Ace of Wands

Name	The Root of the Powers of Fire
Sephirah	Kether
Position on tree	Source sephirah of archetypal triad

Table 2.1: Correspondences of the Ace of Wands

THE ACES, ATTRIBUTABLE TO KETHER, HAVE few discernible characteristics. They provide the root or source for the four elements, but the singularity of the root means that nothing of the nature of the elements themselves will be visible until the Twos.

The element of fire is primarily associated with motion, energy and will. Motion only has meaning when compared to a particular reference point or points, and is therefore a modification to — or destruction of — form. As physical fire is obviously more than capable of destroying form, the nomenclature is appropriate.

Fire also represents the Sun, in particular the warmth and light that the Sun radiates, the energy that makes all life on this planet possible. It represents the transformation of latent energy into work (such as in the process of combustion), the releasing and freeing of fuel — it is the “prime mover” that makes physical change possible. It has the power of penetration, and the ability to refine.

For this reason, it is one of the two *active* elements, the other being air. Water and earth comprise the two *passive* elements, for reasons

which will become clear as we progress.

Another method of classifying the elements — and one adopted by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn — is by temperature and dryness. The active elements are described as “hot,” for the reasons described above, whilst the passive elements are described as “cold.” For dryness:

Aristotle explains that Moistness is the quality of fluidity or flexibility, which allows a thing to adapt to its external conditions, whereas Dryness is the quality of rigidity, which allows a thing to define its own shape and bounds. As a consequence Moist things tend to be volatile and expansive, since they can fill spaces in their surroundings, whereas Dry things are fixed and structured, since they define their own form.¹

The element of fire is given the quality of dryness, since it resists the imposition of form. Interestingly, far from what the above quotation suggests, it is not the rigidity of fire which enables it to resist the imposition of form, but its insubstantiality, and its unstable and destructive power. This can be taken in comparison to the element of earth, the other dry element, to which the above rationale applies very nicely.

For the purpose of the small cards of the Tarot, the suit of Wands² is attributed to fire, and as we progress down the Tree of Life this suit will show the progression of the concepts of motion, power and will from conception through to physical manifestation in the individual.

¹ *The Ancient Greek Doctrine of the Elements*

²Or, in a regular playing deck, the suit of clubs, the similarities in appearance being obvious. Generally, the black cards correspond to the active elements, the other black suit — spades — corresponding to the element of air and the suit of Swords, both of them being bladed implements. The red cards are attributed to the passive elements, the suit of hearts naturally corresponding with water and the suit of Cups, and diamonds being attributed to Disks and the element of earth, since diamonds are precious stones found underground, and also represent material wealth. The third “Knowledge Lecture” of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn inexplicably attributed diamonds to fire, and clubs to earth. This spurious assignment may be safely disregarded, and replaced with the natural one given here.

Two of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Dominion
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Dominion
Sephirah	Chokmah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Ascendant of Aries
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 2.2: Correspondences of the Two of Wands

AS THE FIRST EXTENSION FROM THE Root of the Powers of Fire, representing the ideal nature of the element, the Two of Wands signifies the accomplishment of objectives through force: *dominion*. Since Chokmah is the change sephirah of the archetypal triad, it signifies the ideal *motion* of the element of fire, which is to forcibly cause change through extension of the Will. Being an ideal above the Abyss, there are no negative connotations of the element of fire (such as erraticism and foolhardiness) here.

In its ascendant decan, Aries is newly formed, free of influence from the other fire signs, and combined with the rulership of Mars which is the natural ruler of Aries, this leads to an extremely energetic and forceful card, representing “pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result,”³ will that has not been contaminated by any other considerations and exists solely to fulfill its own nature.

Accordingly, the will of the Two of Wands cannot be said to have any purpose beyond acting unconsciously according to its nature, and there is a suggestion of the inevitability of motion and the lack of “free will.” Therefore although the Two is free from the contamination of other sources, it is also cut off from other considerations, and exists alone; as the first emanation from the Root, it has not yet come into contact with others. There is, in fact, no way for it to fulfill any purpose, since it is aware of nothing else which it can affect, but such contradictions present no problems above the Abyss.

³AL I, 44

Three of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Virtue
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Established Strength
Sephirah	Binah
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Succedent of Aries
Planetary ruler	The Sun

Table 2.3: Correspondences of the Three of Wands

BINAH BEING THE STABILITY SEPHIRAH OF the archetypal triad, the Three of Wands represents the ideal manifestation of the element of fire. The purposeless motion of the Two has been harnessed into form, and given a direction. The motion has been formed into *character*, and a distinction can now be made between “right motion” and “wrong motion,” which is the foundation of *virtue*. “Right” and “wrong” in this sense can, of course, only be judged according to the nature of that character; there is no suggestion of *morality* with reference to an external code, here. The Three of Wands represents the “true will” insofar as it signifies the idea of a “proper” and “natural” course.

In its succedent decan — representing the establishment and harmony of the sign — Aries is influenced by Leo, and the ruler of this decan — the Sun — is also the natural ruler of that sign, reinforcing this influence. This significant solar influence gives weight to the idea of character, individuality, and balance, the Sun representing the “centre of gravity” around which the other elements of the personality revolve. The function of Leo on the pure energy of Aries is here equivalent to the stabilising function of Binah on the will of Chokmah.

The form of Binah gives rise to the possibility of *discrimination* and *choice*, relieving the inevitability of the Two. It is still above the Abyss, however, so the virtue of the Three remains an unmanifest ideal, and nothing can yet be actually accomplished. However, the ideas of energy and of the harnessing of energy into direction are both present, so a movement into the actual can now proceed.

Four of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Completion
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Perfected Work
Sephirah	Chesed
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Cadent of Aries
Planetary ruler	Venus

Table 2.4: Correspondences of the Four of Wands

WITH THE CROSSING OF THE ABYSS, the element of fire can now fulfill its function: the accomplishment of objectives, the *completion* of tasks. This completion suggests the ordering of the environment according to will, and Chesed is the stability sephirah of the actual triad. The Four of Wands represents the imposition of order through force.

In its cadent decan, the energy of Aries is dissipating, as it is being “used up” in the accomplishment of objectives. Further, as the first progression over the Abyss, the perfection of the ideals is lost as the element descends into manifestation. Sagittarius — which, amongst other things, signifies a need for growth and expansion — influences this decan, and the idea of completion suggests the expansion of empire, the bringing of more and more elements under the control of the will. This idea of expansion — which, ideally, should be symmetrical — is also suggested by the planetary ruler, Venus, representing balance and harmony, as well as the necessity for “tact and gentleness”⁴ in building and maintaining a stable and ordered empire.

Being below the Abyss, all the Fours contain within themselves the seeds of their ultimate demise. In the case of the Four of Wands, the establishment of order in conformity with will contains within itself the idea of the breakdown of that order. Unlike the form of the Three, which is “natural,” the order of the Four must be *enforced*, and constant energy is required for its maintenance.

⁴*The Book of Thoth*

Five of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Strife
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Strife
Sephirah	Geburah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Leo
Planetary ruler	Saturn

Table 2.5: Correspondences of the Five of Wands

AS WE CONTINUE DOWN THE TREE of Life, the order — the equilibrium — established in the Four can only progress in one way; that order must be *disturbed* if it is to change. This is *strife*, attributed to Geburah, the change sephirah of the actual triad. Actual motion from an ordered state can only lessen that order. This card is an illustration of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the idea that the entropy of an isolated system which is not in equilibrium will tend to increase over time. As the constant energy which is required for the maintenance of order in the Four weakens, disorder will inevitably increase, and the rule of the Four will be broken.

This strife should not be viewed as necessarily “negative”; it is the nature of will to move, after all. Moreover, all is imperfection below the Abyss, and the order of the Four can become stifling. Indeed, as the Second Law of Thermodynamics states, the entropy of an *isolated* system will tend to increase over time. It is the strife of the Five that adds energy to the system to combat entropy, that keeps it from remaining isolated. It is true that the nature of the order will change from the plan of the Four, but “This is the creation of the world, that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all.”⁵ Yet, “for all that, a disturbance is a disturbance.”⁶

In its ascendant decan, the individuality of Leo is new, and demands expression. There is a suggestion of rebelliousness against the accepted order, here, for this sole purpose, which could be the source of the strife. Conversely, the “uncontaminated” energy of Leo in its first decan could suggest an overly idealistic nature and a disconnect with reality, leading directly to the strife which prevents the establishment of the ideal order. In either case, the influence of Saturn refers to

⁵AL I, 30

⁶*The Book of Thoth*

the heavy inevitability of physics, and the impossibility of maintaining imposed order indefinitely. Saturn is a hard teacher, especially in the area of decoupling youth from its idealistic aspirations.

Six of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Victory
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Victory
Sephirah	Tiphareth
Position on tree	Resolution sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Succedent of Leo
Planetary ruler	Jupiter

Table 2.6: Correspondences of the Six of Wands

IN THE SIX, THE IMPOSED ORDER of the Four and the strife of the Five achieve resolution; idealistic aspirations are replaced with practical ones. A *dynamic* equilibrium is achieved, where there is order, but no attachment to any particular form of order. A task is accomplished, and completion is achieved, but then the will moves on, recognising that its nature is always to act, always to change; there has been a *victory*, but that victory forms a base for further action, not a permanent resting place. The Six of Wands signifies a full acquiescence in the idea that “Stability is change. Change is stability.”⁷ Indeed, by forming a downward pointing triangle — much as water inevitably flows downwards through a channel — it is the stability and change sephiroth of the actual triad — Chesed and Geburah — that are resolved in Tiphareth. Will succeeds in maintaining order, but does not seek to maintain the *same* order all the time.

The individuality of Leo is at its full strength in its succedent decan, understanding itself and its place in the universe and acquiescing fully in that nature. The tendency towards expansion inherent in Sagittarius — which influences this decan — tempers Leo’s stubborn pride, and this drive for expansion (reinforced by the rulership of Jupiter, the natural ruler of Sagittarius and itself indicative of ordered benevolent rule and expansion) overcomes the attachment of Leo to any fixed ideas of its own self, successfully inducing it to accept the transitory nature of order which vastly improves its chances of mastering it: “Bind nothing! Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt.”⁸ The strife of the Five can be “overcome” by simply accepting it, and working with it, rather than against it.

⁷Ibid.

⁸AL I, 22

In successfully maintaining this dynamic equilibrium, will is able to achieve its transitory ends and win its victories, and the Six of Wands represents the best manifestation of the element of fire, and its ultimate nature on the actual plane.

Seven of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Valour
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Valour
Sephirah	Netzach
Position on tree	Change sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Cadent of Leo
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 2.7: Correspondences of the Seven of Wands

WITH THE CROSSING OF THE VEIL of Paroketh, and the descent into the individual triad, the element of fire degrades further. The *valour* of the Seven suggests an attempt in the face of significant difficulties to achieve the victory of the Six, and success is not assured. If the individual will is aligned with the “universal will” then victory will be attained, but being cut off from Tiphareth by the Veil of Paroketh the “universal will” is concealed from the individual. On the individual plane, the purpose of the element of fire in the change sephirah is to motivate and drive the individual, to spur him to courage in the face of adversity. Cut off from his true nature, the individual is faced with uncertainty, and to proceed into the unknown requires bravery.

In the cadent decan, the individuality and confidence of Leo is dissipating, and the energy from the influence of Aries is suggestive of a “final big push” towards his goal. The influence of Mars — the natural ruler of Aries — does not contain the expansional and balancing qualities of Sagittarius and Jupiter, and there is a real risk of the individual’s efforts, however valiant, being misdirected, and the defects inherent in the element of fire are here painfully visible. The effect of the Mars–Aries combination in Leo is to ferment ambition, but untempered ambition is usually blind; the individual may well be fighting a losing battle if this ambition represents the greater part of his resources.

Yet, for all that, the individual requires courage and drive to proceed with any plan, and it is in the Seven that this courage lies.

Eight of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Swiftness
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Swiftness
Sephirah	Hod
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Sagittarius
Planetary ruler	Mercury

Table 2.8: Correspondences of the Eight of Wands

THE EIGHT OF WANDS IS REFERRED to Hod, the stability sephirah of the individual triad. Whereas the valour of the Seven was somewhat “blind,” the structuring capabilities of Hod enable something to be done about that. Crowley says of the Eights that they “come as (in a sense) a remedy for the error of the Sevens. The mischief has been done; and there is now a reaction against it. One may, therefore, expect to find that, while there is no possibility of perfection in the cards of this number, they are free from such essential and original errors as in the Lower case.”⁹

An analogy can be made between the Eight of Wands and an electrical circuit. The individual triad is setting up the manifestation of the element of fire, which will appear in the Ten. Blind energy is not sufficient; it must be directed. As great a power source as is desired may be attached to a copper wire, but in the absence of a well-formed circuit current will not flow, and no work will be done. Furthermore, the power is likely to be diverted to a catastrophic and unintended end if the wire is not insulated and the charge contained. This is not a “restriction” in the sense of AL I, 41, but a *definition*. The Eight is the partner of the Three on the individual plane; the Three contained the promise of virtue, but the Eight provides the structuring mechanism itself. By optimising that structure to the circumstances and the desired ends, energy can be made to flow in an efficient and single-minded manner: there will be *swiftness*, the irony of removing restrictions by creating constraints.

The ascendant decan of Sagittarius is “uncontaminated” by the other signs. As the mutable sign of the element of fire, the energy is beginning to decline, the error of the uncontrolled force in the Seven being learned. The tendency towards expansion inherent in Sagittarius

⁹ *The Book of Thoth*

tempers this energy and channels and structures it, so that the will may be harnessed towards *progress*. That being said, this far down the Tree, cut off from the actual triad by the Veil of Paroketh, let alone from the archetypal triad by the Abyss, there will always be an element of inefficiency, and the structuring of the will, unchecked, can stifle it, and paradoxically lead to a lack of the very direction it was created to provide. The rulership of Mercury brings an element of trickery and falsehood, and this far down the tree the structuring of Hod can be misdirected as often as properly directed. It also signifies the fickle nature of the mind, which will be the primary structuring instrument. Plans can be made, but if the will — consciously or unconsciously — is misdirected due to the “helpfulness” of the mind, then those plans will be a positive impediment: “If Will stops and cries Why, invoking Because, then Will stops & does nought. If Power asks why, then is Power weakness.”¹⁰ The structuring tendency must be kept firmly in its place if misfortune is to be avoided.

¹⁰AL II, 30–31

Nine of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Strength
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Great Strength
Sephirah	Yesod
Position on tree	Resolution seph. of individual triad
Decan	Succedent of Sagittarius
Planetary ruler	The Moon

Table 2.9: Correspondences of the Nine of Wands

RETURNING TO THE MIDDLE PILLAR, THE Nine of Wands harmonises the force of the Seven with the structure of the Eight, resulting in *strength*. Crowley said of the Nines that they give “the full impact of the elemental force, but in its most material sense; that is, of the idea of the force.”¹¹ Of the Nine of Wands in particular he says “of all the important doctrines concerning equilibrium, this is the easiest to understand, that change is stability; that stability is guaranteed by change; that if anything should stop changing for the fraction of a split second, it would go to pieces.”¹² The purpose of will on the individual plane is to drive the individual, to provide him with the *strength* and the energy to accomplish his objectives, whatever they may be, and he obtains this strength by properly structuring force, by harnessing motion into form. Properly applied, this strength will result in victory, attributed to the Six of Wands, the next highest sephirah on the middle pillar.

Sagittarius is at the height of its strength in its succedent decan, and the Nine represents its successful expansion into the environment, the extension of force outwards from its centre which it will use to bring its environment under control. The influence of Aries on this decan adds force to that expansion. The rulership of the Moon, which is naturally attributed to Yesod, signifies the purely reflective nature of the influence of Hod on the force of Netzach, the mind accurately interpreting and channeling the will rather than thwarting it by imposing its own favourite structures. It is this reflective nature, this clearing the mind of restrictive structure, that enables the individual to discover and harness the will. The rulership of the Moon in its natural sephirah frees it from the illusory connotations that it often

¹¹ *The Book of Thoth*

¹² *Ibid.*

carries, and renders it a perfect mirror, allowing for the uncontaminated transmission of the will.

The ideal strength of the Nine arises when the structure imposed by Hod is perfectly suited to the energy of the Seven, channelling the right kind of energy in the right way; a lack of strength more usually results from a misapplication of force due to a misunderstanding of will, rather than from a deficit of force: “a Man who is doing his True Will has the inertia of the Universe to assist him.”¹³ The Nine represents the perfect operation of the element of fire in the individual plane.

¹³ *Magick in Theory and Practice*

Ten of Wands

Name (Thoth)	Oppression
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Oppression
Sephirah	Malkuth
Position on tree	Physical plane
Decan	Cadent of Sagittarius
Planetary ruler	Saturn

Table 2.10: Correspondences of the Ten of Wands

THE TENS REPRESENT THE COMPLETE PHYSICAL manifestation of the element, to the exclusion of the others. The Twos were also isolated, but above the Abyss the ideal can contain no imperfection; here, at the bottom of the Tree, the elements are exhausted, and devoid of further progression. The Ten of Wands illustrates the results of applying “force, force, and nothing else but force all the time”;¹⁴ the result is *oppression*. This is not the power of will, but the power of the individual to resist it, to steadfastly refuse to listen to his own nature and engage in a continual fight against it which he has no hope of winning, an oppressive standoff which, without the aid of the other elements, will be eternal.

The rulership of Saturn emphasises this dull, pounding weight of oppression, for Saturn represents physical inevitability. In its cadent decan, Sagittarius — whose expansional tendencies always carry the risk of idealism, fickleness, superficiality and lack of direction — begins to fade, and the insubstantiality which has always been bubbling below the surface can no longer be kept in check. The influence of the individuality of Leo on this decan illustrates the stubbornness (also a quality of Saturn) of the ego in refusing to heed the will, a absolute fixation on self-image to the exclusion and detriment of the actual self, the individual essence, the Khabs. Force, no longer given the breath of life from the will, becomes re-entrant, a vicious circle of distraction; the ultimate manifestation of denial.

¹⁴ *The Book of Thoth*

Chapter 3

Cups

Ace of Cups

Name	The Root of the Powers of Water
Sephirah	Kether
Position on tree	Source sephirah of archetypal triad

Table 3.1: Correspondences of the Ace of Cups

CUPS REPRESENT THE ELEMENT OF WATER, which is primarily associated with love, which in Thelemic terms signifies *union*. As such, it involves notions of *attraction*, and naturally relates to human relationships and affections. More importantly, from the perspective of our Qabalistic framework, the ideas of union and attraction render the element of water inextricably connected with the concept of *form*. Thus, on a high level, fire represents change, or motion, and water represents stability, or form.

Water is a passive element; it changes its shape to fit any container in which it is placed, and still water functions as a mirror, further emphasising its connection with the notion of form, relationships and structure in general. It is also connected — through the amniotic fluid — with the womb, which nurtures and protects the foetus, allowing it to grow and giving it form.

Naturally, as we have already discussed,¹ motion and form cannot exist in isolation, but are complementary, and must exist together.

¹See page 9.

The concept of attraction may correspond best with notions of form, but without motion, the two things can never actually come together. Without the ability to come together, the idea of attraction is meaningless. Nevertheless, whilst the two are inseparable, it is instructive to consider fire in relation to motion, and water to form. These are the two *primary* elements, air and earth being the *secondary* elements which derive from fire and water; fire and water are traditionally associated with the father and the mother, respectively, whilst air and earth are associated with the son and the daughter, further cementing the distinction between the primary and secondary elements. Furthermore, on page 10 we suggested that all of existence can be ultimately reduced to ideas of change and stability.

As fire was associated with the Sun, so is water in its reflective capacity associated with the Moon, which reflects the Sun's light (which is itself a further illustration of the difference between the active and passive natures of fire and water) and causes the tides through the force of its gravity, its power of attraction.

In Aristotle's scheme, water is — naturally — a “moist” element, due to the ease with which its form can be changed.² The fact that water in nature comes in many forms (stagnant pools, babbling brooks, rushing rivers, calm seas, raging oceans, waterfalls, rain showers, thunderstorms, clouds, ice, snow, hail etc.) shows the distinction between itself and the inertness of earth, the other passive element, but which is a “dry” element due to its fixity.

In the small cards, as the suit of Wands showed the progression of will and power from conception to manifestation, so does the suit of Cups show the progression of love, attraction and desire. In its associations with will, fire represents the repulsive or “departing” force in the individual, that which makes him seek a change in the current order, which makes him assert his own individuality on the environment. Conversely, in its associations with love, water represents the attractive force in the individual, that which makes him seek order, balance and harmony. Fire represents the tendency to go, whereas water represents those things in whose direction he is going, or more accurately, the conditions within himself which makes him seek such things.

²See page 30.

Two of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Love
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Love
Sephirah	Chokmah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Ascendant of Cancer
Planetary ruler	Venus

Table 3.2: Correspondences of the Two of Cups

AS THE TWO OF WANDS SIGNIFIED the ideal manifestation of the element of fire, which is *dominion*, the imposition of will on the environment, so the Two of Cups signifies the ideal manifestation of the element of water, *love*, the attractive force which motivates that will. It is love which gives will a *direction*, a purpose and an end, and as we have already stated the two are fundamentally inseparable; will is guided and motivated by love, and love is satisfied by will. As the Two of Wands was the “blueprint” for the individual’s faculty of movement and expression of individuality, so is the Two of Cups the blueprint for the individual’s faculty of attraction and dissolution of that individuality in the objects of his love.

The sign of Cancer³ is associated with strong emotions and attachments, especially to the home and family. There can be a tendency towards possessiveness, vulnerability and emotional smothering, but in the ascendant decan (and above the Abyss) these negative qualities are not yet in evidence. The love of the first decan is selfless and pure, representing a genuine attraction towards the true objects of will. The rulership of Venus is natural, representing as it does attraction, inner values, and the need for both inner and outer harmony. In the horoscope, Venus is said to determine the comparisons and judgments we make, and to colour our values and æsthetic preferences, and in our framework it is the fundamental tendencies of attraction, unique to each individual, which will fulfill this purpose.

³Which is ruled by the Moon; see the comments under the Ace.

Three of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Abundance
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Abundance
Sephirah	Binah
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Succedent of Cancer
Planetary ruler	Mercury

Table 3.3: Correspondences of the Three of Cups

THE TWO OF CUPS, ATTRIBUTED TO the change sephirah of the archetypal triad, represents love, which is a dynamic process. The three, attributed to the stability sephirah, is *abundance*, the structuring of love, and the infinite variety of opportunities for love. If we define “will” as “the tendency to act in accordance with the preferences of the individual, as defined by his nature,”⁴ then in any given situation there is a tendency to act in a particular way. Since that tendency must be a function of love (“love,” as we have defined it above, representing the direction of the will, or its target) then it follows that at each moment there is some object of love to which he can move. This being the case, the individual always has the opportunity to unite, and hence need not be concerned about separation from the objects of his love.

Naturally, this realisation only occurs upon complete identification with the will and the annihilation of the ego, and is properly attributed here to Binah, the first sephirah above the Abyss and associated with the attainment of the Master of the Temple. This is the ideal manifestation of the element of water, the provision of a direction for will at every moment. The “longings” of love which plague the Man of Earth arise essentially from the imposition of a standard contrary to his will, and only the destruction of the personality can finally banish this nefarious standard.

The succedent decan of Cancer represents the sign in its full strength, and the influence of Scorpio (the “fixed” sign of water) gives the embracing nature of Cancer substance and power, enabling the realisation of that love. The rulership of Mercury brings with it a dynamic element and fluid element, preventing the fixation of Binah from becoming an attachment, and enabling the joyous taking of love

⁴ *True Will*

in the moment, followed by a genuine acceptance of change and a fresh progression to the next moment. This is the ideal of love, and the proper combination of change and stability.

Four of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Luxury
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Blended Pleasure
Sephirah	Chesed
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Cadent of Cancer
Planetary ruler	The Moon

Table 3.4: Correspondences of the Four of Cups

WITH THE CROSSING OF THE ABYSS, the abundance of the Three of Wands becomes the *luxury* of the Four. At first glance, these concepts appear similar, but the difference is significant. “Luxury” implies a surplus, more than is necessary, and as with all the Fours, this concept contains the seed of trouble, for the addition of more than is necessary allows for the development of *attachment* to those unnecessary things. The motivation for this should be clear. In the case of the Three, love could be found in any moment, but it still had to be found; with the Four, there is a surplus of opportunity for love laying around, serving no purpose, and it is far *easier* to turn to this surplus, instead of to look for new opportunities. This is true *even when the things in surplus are not what is desired*.

This is the root of all attachment; loss is feared because the objects lost no longer provide an easy means for satisfaction, and if such an opportunity were to be desired then the individual would have to look outwards to replace this means. As physical wealth is accumulated so that the individual can impact his environment, so is “emotional wealth” collected to provide for future satisfaction. The flaw in this plan is that if the “proper” object of love is always present in the moment, then any object other than this (which is overwhelmingly likely to include the vast majority of the individual’s emotional wealth) is unsuitable. At best, then, the accumulation of emotional wealth is unnecessary, and at worst, it confuses the individual into thinking that he wants things that he actually doesn’t, by appealing to his fear of uncertainty and corresponding tendency to collect and stockpile.

The abundance of the Three already provides the individual with all the opportunities he needs; the luxury of the Four is only equivalent to this to the extent that the individual is not attached to his surplus (which, if so, cannot really be sensibly classed as “his”), but the downward progression over the Abyss indicates that this attach-

ment has already begun to form. Chesed is the stability sephirah of the actual triad, and here represents the attempt to impose structure on love, to force it into order, and the element of water is just not suited to this treatment.

This is further signified by the cadent decan of Cancer. In this third and final decan the sign is beginning to fade, and the negative qualities that we mentioned in the context of the Two now come to light. What Cancer fears more than anything else is *loss*, and in its own fading its tendency to embrace becomes a tendency towards possessiveness, an attachment to the safe and to the familiar, even if it fails to satisfy. The rulership of the Moon brings its worst qualities, those of illusion and the distortion of pure reflection, the true instincts of love being misdirected into attachment to what is already possessed, and this can only be reinforced by the dreamy and idle influence of Pisces on this decan.

Water, being passive but fluid, is a very tenuous element, and is easily corrupted below the Abyss when not kept pure on the middle pillar. The contamination of attachment is a pernicious poison as will be seen when we continue down the Tree; change and stability must be perfectly balanced to avoid this pollution.

Five of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Disappointment
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Loss in Pleasure
Sephirah	Geburah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Scorpio
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 3.5: Correspondences of the Five of Cups

THE DOWNWARD PROGRESSION TO GEBURAH, FROM the stability sephirah of the actual triad to the change sephirah, always signifies the disturbance of the order in the Four, and with the Five of Cups we see the result of the attempt to impose structure on love: *disappointment*. The luxury of the Four, the “emotional wealth” which has been accumulated, will inevitably fail to satisfy if it is substituted for the natural objects of attraction signified by the will. This is much more negative than the strife of the Five of Wands was precisely because water is such a delicate element.

Scorpio, the fixed sign of water, primarily denotes desire, jealousy, passion and possessiveness in this context, and in its ascendant decan it is not tempered by the other water signs; it is coming to full force. The sign usually indicates a very strong controlling tendency, which we have already seen is usually a flawed approach to the delicacies of love. It is this suggestion of “need” which really results in the disappointment, since the need is illusory and can never be satisfied. The rulership of Mars — Scorpio’s natural ruler — compounds this tendency; Scorpio’s unchallenged attempts to force love under its control will ultimately fail of their own accord.

Six of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Pleasure
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Pleasure
Sephirah	Tiphareth
Position on tree	Resolution sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Succedent of Scorpio
Planetary ruler	The Sun

Table 3.6: Correspondences of the Six of Cups

THE MOVEMENT DOWN TO TIPHARETH RESOLVES the errors of the previous two cards and brings us back to the middle pillar, to the equilibrium which is necessary to successfully master the element of water. Disappointment has given way to *pleasure*, and the adept is able to take this pleasure from objects, and then put them down again. The contamination which arises from attachment is not present, here; there is balance in the attractions of love which prevents the individual from falling into attachment, as he “loses himself” in the objects of his love, leaving no room for it. As with all the sixes, this represents a full acquiescence in the equivalence of stability and change, and this is the best manifestation of the element on the actual plane; pleasure is the natural result of the satisfaction of will.

The freneticism of Scorpio is tamed somewhat in its succedent decan, and the calmness, sensitivity and receptivity of the influence of Pisces provides a grounding and a sense of perspective. More than anything else, the rulership of the Sun provides a suitable centre of gravity upon which balance can be maintained, and this brings out the best elements of both Scorpio and Pisces.

Seven of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Debauch
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Illusionary Success
Sephirah	Netzach
Position on tree	Change sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Cadent of Scorpio
Planetary ruler	Venus

Table 3.7: Correspondences of the Seven of Cups

MOVING DOWN ACROSS THE VEIL OF Paroketh and into the change sephirah of the individual triad, the equilibrium of the Six is inevitably disturbed. Whereas the disturbance of the luxury of the Four ultimately led to the equilibrium of this six, the disturbance of this equilibrium compounds the error. Instead of learning the futility of attachment, it is pursued with even more desperate vigour; the Seven of Cups is *debauch*. This card is suggestive of *addiction*, which is characterised by a failure to satisfy resulting in an even more ravenous and voluminous consumption of the substance.

In its cadent decan, Scorpio is influenced by Cancer, the opposite combination of the Three. With the Three, however, Cancer was in its succedent decan, and already stable, so the energy of Scorpio gave it substance and power. In this case, Scorpio is in its cadent decan and beginning to fade, and the possessiveness and suffocating tendency of Cancer combines with Scorpio's passion to result in some approaching desperation. Venus also brings its negative qualities to bear here, its attractive qualities pulling the individual away from equilibrium and rendering him completely confused as to what his preferences really are. In the Seven, the combination of these three elements leads to an individual who is controlled by his desires, instead of informed by them.

Eight of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Indolence
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Abandoned Success
Sephirah	Hod
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Pisces
Planetary ruler	Saturn

Table 3.8: Correspondences of the Eight of Cups

WHEN WE DISCUSSED THE SEVEN OF Wands, we referred to Crowley’s idea that the Eights acted as something of a remedy to the Sevens. Since water is such a tenuous and delicate element, and deviation from the centre tends to lead to mischief, the Eight of Cups, rather than resolving the error of the Seven, swings around to make the opposite error: *indolence*. Whereas the error of the Seven was an overactive chasing of desire, the error of the Eight arises from *inactivity*. There are suggestions of resignation in this card, the following of old and dusty routines which have long since ceased to give any pleasure, almost as a result of a simple lack of imagination. It is as if the error of the Seven has led to exhaustion. It is very suggestive — as indeed is the card itself in the Thoth deck — of stagnant water.

Pisces on its positive side is sensitive, calm, easygoing and unpretentious, but on its negative side can be idle, indecisive, melancholic and indulgent. In its primary decan it is unaffected by the other signs, but as it represents the “fading away” of the element of water which is a fragile element to begin with, it really needs this influence. The dull, heavy plodding of the rulership of Saturn merely adds to the feeling of resignation, and it is as if the individual simply cannot be bothered with love any more; since love is a dynamic process, this is fatal to success, but equally non-movement cannot lead to disappointment, either. The individual who disagrees with Tennyson’s sentiment⁵ in *In Memoriam* would be quite at home in the Eight of Cups.

⁵“’Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”

Nine of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Happiness
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Material Happiness
Sephirah	Yesod
Position on tree	Resolution seph. of individual triad
Decan	Succedent of Pisces
Planetary ruler	Jupiter

Table 3.9: Correspondences of the Nine of Cups

THE DESCENT TO THE NINE ONCE again resolves the preceding errors, and harmony is once again attained as change is balanced with stability. The “full impact of the elemental force, but in its most material sense,” is *happiness* in the case of water. It represents satisfaction, a degradation of the pleasure of the Six, being more quiet, moderated, and subdued, but this side of the Veil of Paroketh the individual is perfectly happy to accept it, being as it is wholly free of the defects in the Seven and the Eight.

Pisces gains some substance in its succedent decan, and primarily exhibits calmness, sensitivity to the will and an easygoing nature. The influence of Cancer brings both a dynamic quality and a degree of consistency to the picture, and the influence of Jupiter — the natural ruler of Pisces — causes the individual to look outwards rather than inwards, a key element in the proper attitude to the nature of water, since it both enlivens the fluid to avoid stagnation and avoids deliberately stirring it up into a storm. Both of these two influences lift the individual out of the indolence of the Eight, but aid Pisces in steering him away from the frenzy of the Seven.

Ten of Cups

Name (Thoth)	Satiety
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Perfected Success
Sephirah	Malkuth
Position on tree	Physical plane
Decan	Cadent of Pisces
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 3.10: Correspondences of the Ten of Cups

FINALLY, THE TEN REPRESENTS THE COMPLETE physical manifestation of the element of water, which is *satiety*. This is not the satisfaction of the Nine, but instead suggests *saturation*. As Crowley puts it, “the pursuit of pleasure has been crowned with perfect success; and constantly it is discovered that, having got everything that one wanted, one did not want it after all.”⁶ This card serves as the final confirmation that love without will is no love at all; love is, at the end of all analysis, a dynamic concept. By itself, desire promises satisfaction in a fixed state, but this is merely illusion; love is an act, and once satisfaction has been obtained then the individual must move on. The “grass is always greener on the other side” because love works through motivation, rather than satisfaction in fixed states.

The cadent decan of the mutable sign of each element is the “fading away of the fading away” of that element, and here suggests the element of water coming to a stable but complete rest. The influence of Scorpio — an energetic sign — and the rulership of Mars — an energetic planet and Scorpio’s natural ruler — would appear to contradict this, but it signifies that the possessiveness of Scorpio has finally won out, and it has succeeded in excluding all the other elements, aided in this task by its ruler. No more pleasure is gained, but Scorpio has held onto its possessions, and Pisces — especially in its cadent decan — is too weak to do anything about it. In this case, rather than the stolid indolence of the Eight, there is something approaching a mild sense of confusion at the absence of satisfaction, but a lack of energy to do anything about it.

The story of the Cups has shown that — below the Abyss, at least — any deviation from the middle pillar leads quickly to mischief, but even at the bottom of the pillar we can see that love, even when

⁶ *The Book of Thoth*

allowed to “win,” is ultimately powerless by itself, since it is a passive element. Will at least can oppress when exercised to the exclusion of all else, but love merely fizzles away quietly: “the nature of that Will is Love. But this Love is as it were a by-product of that Will; it does not contradict or supersede that Will; and if apparent contradiction should arise in any crisis, it is the Will that will guide us aright.”⁷ Love and will are complements, but as the passive element, love must always come “under will.”⁸

⁷*Liber II*

⁸AL I, 57

Chapter 4

Swords

Ace of Swords

Name	The Root of the Powers of Air
Sephirah	Kether
Position on tree	Source sephirah of archetypal triad

Table 4.1: Correspondences of the Ace of Swords

THE ELEMENT OF AIR, THE FIRST of the two *secondary* elements we come to, is both a *combination* of the two primary elements — fire and water — and a *reconciler* between them. In the first place, boiling water over fire (or throwing water onto fire) produces steam — a gas — which is attributable to air. In the second place, fire cannot burn in the absence of oxygen, and air vivifies water, enabling it to support life. Further, it is air which supports the vapour produced when heat (fire) causes water to evaporate, and which carries it from its source to produce life-giving rain in other places. It is also connected with the *breath*, and necessary for life; man can go for weeks without food (earth), days without water, but only a matter of minutes without air.

The element of air forms the apex of a triangle of which fire and water comprise the base. It is an *active* element, and corresponds to the son in the Tetragrammaton, fire corresponding to the father and water to the mother. As such, it is associated with new life, and fresh

beginnings,¹ just as the son comprises something new created by the combination of the father and the mother. As the son grows up and “leaves the family nest,” so is air an active element.

As an active and “wet” element, air has little real substance but can nevertheless fill any container, and give form to it (e.g. a balloon). Contrasted to the passivity of water, however, a container must be completely sealed to contain air, rather than just sealed at the bottom.

In occult symbolism, air is most usually associated with reason, the intellect, and communication, comprising both *synthesis* (combination, attributable to the form-giving powers of water) and *analysis* (separation, attributable to the destructive powers of fire). Through synthesis, the reason perceives patterns and relationships between phenomena, codifying them into *knowledge*, and through analysis the reason breaks those relationships into their component parts, allowing it to form *inferences* and to project into *conclusions*; the attribution of air to reason and intellect refers to its role as a reconciler between fire and water.

As depicted in the small cards, the progression of the element of air down the Tree of Life shows the development of the *combinations* between fire and water, between force and form, between will and love. It illustrates the tension and the harmony between will and love, and the study of the suit of Swords is instructive as to the ways in which the intellect — the “executive faculty” of the individual — can act as a reconciler between those two concepts as the individual attempts to put “love under will”² into practice, and also as to the ways in which the intellect can serve to frustrate that reconciliation.

¹ As illustrated by the common expression “the winds of change.”

² AL I, 57

Two of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Peace
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Peace Restored
Sephirah	Chokmah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Ascendant of Libra
Planetary ruler	The Moon

Table 4.2: Correspondences of the Two of Swords

THE IDEAL MANIFESTATION OF THE ELEMENT of air is *peace*. This is a *dynamic* rather than static peace; for true peace it is not sufficient for the two parties to merely refrain from opposition, but they must also be able to fully express their own natures, for only when this is restricted is there any incentive for conflict. Here the element of air is acting as a true diplomat, perfecting balancing the differing — but, here, not conflicting — interests of the primary elements.

The attribution to the ascendant decan of Libra is natural, that sign being primarily concerned with *balance* and *harmony*. The rulership of the Moon brings a quality of *reflection* to the Two, signifying that the differing interests of fire and water are reflected perfectly by the element of air with no “contamination” by its own interests. Air is the ideal ruler in this card, governing the affairs of its domain with complete indifference and no thought for itself. It is an aphorism of AL I, 22: “Bind nothing! Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt.”

Three of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Sorrow
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Sorrow
Sephirah	Binah
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Succedent of Libra
Planetary ruler	Saturn

Table 4.3: Correspondences of the Three of Swords

THE THREE OF SWORDS IS *sorrow*, the only card attributable to the supernal sephiroth which has a “negative” connotation. By forming the triad, an element of form has been introduced, and the self-interest absent from the Two here begins to materialise. Yet, above the Abyss, the ideal is still perfection, and the element of air does not allow that self-interest to interfere with its task. The sorrow of the Three is akin to the “universal sorrow,” a general rather than specific feeling of pathos arising from the intellect — now possessing sufficient form to perceive itself — understanding that it does, itself, possess no individuality or any real interest of its own, and quietly resigning itself to the fact. Unlike the two primary elements, as a reconciler the element of air has to take a back seat when its job is done, and must moderate its own activities as well as the different interests of fire and water; as the saying goes, “three’s a crowd.” The nature of the “hurt” prophesied in AL I, 22 has now become clear, although until we cross the Abyss it will not become manifest.

The succedent decan of Libra shows the sign in its full strength, the full implications of the nature of balance becoming clear; the scales must be perfectly still and steady. The influence of Aquarius reflects the “awareness” of the element of air of the nature of its own being, Aquarius being associated with independence, freedom and expression. The heavy rulership of Saturn keeps these feelings under check, however, and forces the Three to accept the hard but inevitable lesson of its own nature. It also signifies the fact that enlightenment cannot be attained through reason alone, that reason can only serve as a facilitator to “love under will,” and that any actions taken on its own account will inevitably disturb that balance.

Four of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Truce
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Rest from Strife
Sephirah	Chesed
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Cadent of Libra
Planetary ruler	Jupiter

Table 4.4: Correspondences of the Four of Swords

THE *truce* OF THE FOUR OF Swords echoes the peace of the Two, but below the Abyss and into the realm of the actual its nature is much degraded. Truce is temporary, a cessation of hostilities between two conflicting rather than complementing interests, and the element of air here has its work cut out for it. The significance of Chesed — the form sephirah of the actual triad — is the attempt of air to create a *structure* through which those conflicting interests can be reconciled, but all the Fours contain the seeds of their own downfall, and below the Abyss that structure can only ever be temporary, foreshadowing its own failure and the ensuing recommencement of battle.

The attribution to the cadent decan of Libra is apt, as in the final decan the powers of the signs begin to fade, and the balance and harmony inherent in Libra here begins to weaken. The influence of Gemini — the mutable sign of air itself — reinforces this fading, and brings with it its negative qualities of petty manipulation fuelled by self-interest, a diplomatic strategy that cannot be long successful. The rulership of Jupiter — the father of the Gods — is suggestive of *temporal* rather than *natural* law, and unlike the inevitable and necessary physical laws of Saturn, the temporal laws of Jupiter can, and inevitably will, be broken.

Five of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Defeat
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Defeat
Sephirah	Geburah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Aquarius
Planetary ruler	Venus

Table 4.5: Correspondences of the Five of Swords

ALL THE FIVES SHOW THE APPEARANCE of the “flaws” inherent in the Fours, and in the Five of Swords the uneasy truce of the Four has finally failed, resulting in *defeat*. Geburah is the change sephirah of the actual triad, and its destructive forces have broken the structure which was tenuously holding the truce together.

The astrological attribution is to the ascendant decan of Aquarius, where its tendencies towards independence, freedom and expression are untempered by the other air signs, and it contemptuously dismisses and breaks through the structure holding it back in the Four. The self-interest of the element — which was shakily held in by the Four — has emerged triumphant, the process of “love under will” being frustrated, and defeated. Naturally, it is the individual himself who is defeated, since although his intellect tends to identify itself with his individuality, it really is not, and has no interests of its own; the interests it perceives are illusory, and their pursuit can only lead to futility. The rulership of Venus here brings its negative qualities of illusion, its attractive power pulling the intellect away from its proper role as reconciler by presenting it with dreams of its own self-interest by conspiring with the natural idealism of Aquarius; it is the opposite of the clearly reflecting property of the Moon in the Two. The king has here turned away from the interests of his country, and it suffers accordingly, as will he.

Six of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Science
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Earned Success
Sephirah	Tiphareth
Position on tree	Resolution sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Succedent of Aquarius
Planetary ruler	Mercury

Table 4.6: Correspondences of the Six of Swords

RETURNING TO THE MIDDLE PILLAR, THE element of air is once more able to achieve balance, to rectify the previous error. The Six of Swords is *science*, the impartial application to the pursuit and use of knowledge; in this case, of *self-knowledge*. By combining the Four and the Five, by making the structure of the truce *flexible*, the intellect is able to successfully reconcile will with love, to fulfill its true purpose on the actual plane.

In its succedent decan, Aquarius is more stable, and avoids the error of the Five. The communicative and interactive influence of Gemini reacts well with the outgoing and creative nature of Aquarius, and the rulership of Mercury completes the picture, its emphasis on communication and inter-personal dynamics blending to make the Six the ideal communicator, the perfect diplomat on the actual plane. The perceived self-interest of air is not absent here, but it is identified with its true purpose; the true scientist investigates nature because of a genuine love of knowledge, not for personal aggrandisement, and likewise in the Six of Swords the element of air identifies itself with what it is, the reconciler between fire and water, and subsumes itself joyfully in its task without the distraction of competing personal interest.

Seven of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Futility
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Unstable Effort
Sephirah	Netzach
Position on tree	Change sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Cadent of Aquarius
Planetary ruler	The Moon

Table 4.7: Correspondences of the Seven of Swords

BELOW THE VEIL OF PAROKETH, THE element of air degrades rapidly and remains in degradation, for this is the individual plane, and the most fatal error the element can make is to confuse itself for a real individual, to turn away from its true task and to chase its own illusory ambitions. Netzach is the change sephirah of the individual triad, and the Seven of Wands represents intense mental *activity*. The element goes out of its way to be “helpful” in its task as reconciler, but below the Veil of Paroketh the true nature of the self is veiled, and the intellect works according to its own distorted reflections. Unable to perceive the true nature of will and love, the intellect cannot succeed in its task; its actions are all *futility*. Will and love cannot be forced to conform to an ideal; if they cannot express their true natures, conflict will be inevitable.³

The cadent decan of Aquarius is influenced by Libra, but this balance is centred on the fading idealism of Aquarius, and not on the true centre of gravity of the self, and can therefore only be unstable. In its rulership, the Moon here reflects the tempestuous promptings of the unconscious self, instead of the true will which is veiled, condemning the intellect to seek balance upon an unstable point, a desperate task that can never succeed. A diplomat can never be successful in bringing reconciliation unless he has a clear understanding of the interests of both parties to the dispute; if he bluffs, they will soon see through him, and abandon the negotiating table no matter what he does, since he has become wholly irrelevant to them.

³See the discussion of the Two of Swords on page 61.

Eight of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Interference
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Shortened Force
Sephirah	Hod
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Gemini
Planetary ruler	Jupiter

Table 4.8: Correspondences of the Eight of Swords

HOD BEING THE STABILITY SEPHIRAH OF the individual triad, the error in the Eight of Swords is, in a sense, of the opposite kind to the error in the Seven, but has a common source in the misidentification of the self. Instead of going forth and attempting to reconcile love and will, even if that is done on the basis of a misconception of them, the Eight retreats into itself, and instead attempts to fix itself in its own interests. It abandons its task, the fixity of its illusions of importance distracting it. But, since it in fact has no individuality of its own, the only result of this turning away can be an *interference* with both love and will.

The Eight is attributed to the first decan of Gemini, a very insubstantial sign, and with no external influences to mediate its tendencies towards shallowness, superficiality and gullibility go unchecked, leaving the intellect oblivious to the fact that it is being distracted, the structure of its own phantasms going just far enough to cover the lack of depth to which it is prepared to look. The rulership of Jupiter enhances this tendency to fix itself in illusion, the expansionary influence of Jupiter indeed being evident, but serving merely to compound the house of cards the mind is building for itself.

Nine of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Cruelty
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Despair and Cruelty
Sephirah	Yesod
Position on tree	Resolution seph. of individual triad
Decan	Succedent of Gemini
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 4.9: Correspondences of the Nine of Swords

UNIQUELY AMONGST THE FOUR SUITS, NOT even returning to the middle pillar can abate the errors of the element of air when settled into the individual plane. Indeed, rather than compensating for the errors of the Seven and the Eight, the balance attained in the Nine of Swords serves only to fix the error of the intellect even further, for now the equilibrium reached provides a way for the intellect to remain permanently in its illusion. The Nine of Swords is *cruelty*, and it is the mental cruelty arising from the fact that the intellect, no matter how hard it tries, cannot by itself provide a way out from its own labyrinth. Without being informed by the will — which is concealed by the Veil of Paroketh — the intellect is condemned to chase phantasms of its own making which cannot satisfy, even if caught. This card is an aphorism for the phenomenon of the mind trying desperately to complete a task for which it is not suited.

The astrological attribution is to the succedent decan of Gemini, the analytical, intellectual and discriminating tendencies firmly established, but under the rulership of Mars these are allowed to control, instead of being controlled. The shallow and superficial nature of the Eight is not in evidence here, but it has been replaced by a zeal which blinds the intellect to its own shortcomings.

Ten of Swords

Name (Thoth)	Ruin
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Ruin
Sephirah	Malkuth
Position on tree	Physical plane
Decan	Cadent of Gemini
Planetary ruler	The Sun

Table 4.10: Correspondences of the Ten of Swords

THE COMPLETE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF THE element of air in Malkuth is *ruin*. Analysis is a destructive process, and in the Ten of Swords that destruction has reached completion. Division is necessary in the role of air as a reconciler of fire and water, for the differing interests of those two elements must be balanced, and in order to balance them there must be careful discrimination between them. This card shows the difficult nature of the task of the intellect, and on what a fine edge success in the matter must rest, since that same division and discrimination will — if not perfectly focused — tend to drive a wedge between the two parties whose reconciliation is being sought, and exacerbate the problem it is trying to solve. As Crowley says in *Magick in Theory and Practice*:

Knowledge is, moreover, an impossible conception. All propositions come ultimately back to “A is A.”

All logical propositions can only be understood in terms of other logical propositions, and in the absence of axiomatic truths whose truth can only be demonstrated outside of the realm of reason, any chain of logic must ultimately be circular; pushing reason to its limits will ultimately expose the impotence of reason itself, resulting in its own destruction.

Yet, oddly at first, there is hope in this card. Unlike the oppression of the Ten of Wands, and the satiety of the Ten of Cups, ruin is *final*; if all is destroyed, there can be no more destruction — “there is that which remains.”⁴ In the aftermath of total ruin, the only direction in which development can occur is upwards, and any restrictions which may have previously railroaded that growth are now absent. When reason has destroyed itself, we are still left with love and will, and nothing now to keep them apart. The pushing of reason to its own

⁴AL II, 9

destruction is a valid magical technique, and is an arcanum of the Masters of the Temple.

The attribution to the cadent decan of Gemini signifies the fading away of the intellect, and the rulership of the Sun highlights the real truth of this card, that this far down the tree, what has been destroyed was almost entirely deleterious in any case, and the result of its destruction is actually to allow the shining through of the self which it was previously veiling; the flower blooming on the blighted battlefield will grow unimpeded towards the Sun.

Chapter 5

Disks

Ace of Disks

Name	The Root of the Powers of Earth
Sephirah	Kether
Position on tree	Source sephirah of archetypal triad

Table 5.1: Correspondences of the Ace of Disks

THE FINAL ELEMENT IS EARTH, AND it is the second of the passive elements. Like air, it is a secondary element, and derives from fire and water. Earth is the element in which the other three operate, and from where they draw their substance.

The final hé of Tetragrammaton is a product of the mother and father, but in a different way than the son is; the daughter is held to be a “by-product” of the creation of the son, much as light and heat are the by-products of certain types of chemical reaction. The metaphysical theory mirrors that of our Qabalistic framework, where the creation of ideals precedes the creation of actuals. In this sense, the physical world is created as a place for the ideals to manifest, as opposed to ideals arising out of the physical world which is the actual order. As far as the four elements are concerned, the metaphysical theory holds that the element of earth is “derived from” the elements of fire and water in order to provide them with a medium in which to manifest.

As the element of air formed a triangle when combined with the two

primary elements of fire and water, so the element of earth forms the apex of a *pyramid* with that triangle as its base, this three-dimensional shape suggesting the solidity of matter and the actuality of physical manifestation, the third dimension arising upwards out of the triangle suggesting the creation of a physical world from the creation of the son through the union of the mother and the father.

As a “dry” element, earth resists the imposition of form; it is dull, heavy and inert. Being a “cold” element, it is passive, and is easily collected and hoarded.

The element of earth is most commonly associated with material *wealth*, but also with material *power*. Magick is defined as “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will,”¹ and this definition shows clearly that will by itself is impotent without a medium in which to cause change, with is the element of earth. Not only is this change manifested through earth, but it is through the manipulation of earth that this change is brought about; “magical power” is ultimately both power over the material world, and power derived from the material world. These two are essentially equivalent, since the essence of successful magick is a question of positioning the self optimally within the environment and being sufficiently sensitive to the physical world as to be able to *harness* the power already latent in that element, rather than to attempt to *create* it, as the water wheel harnesses the power of the river.

Thus, in the small cards of the tarot, the suit of disks shows the progression of the individual’s ability to manipulate his environment, and to harmonise his being with it; for indeed, he himself is a part of it. It represents the culmination of his efforts, and the results of his development.

¹ *Magick in Theory and Practice*.

Two of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Change
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Harmonious Change
Sephirah	Chokmah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Ascendant of Capricorn
Planetary ruler	Jupiter

Table 5.2: Correspondences of the Two of Disks

THE “PURPOSE” OF THE ELEMENT OF earth is, as we have said, to provide a medium in which the other elements can manifest, and accordingly its ideal manifestation is *change*. It would make no sense for such a medium to be static; it has to be *dynamic*, a flexible and malleable medium through which the other elements can move and express themselves. Simplistically, we can say that the nature of will is to move *from* one point to another, and the nature of love is to move *to* one point from another, and both of these things not only *require* a change in the environment, but *depend* on such a change in order to have any meaning. If the aim of magick is “to cause Change in conformity with Will,” then it follows that the ultimate “purpose” of the physical world is to allow for the manifestation of such Change.

The sign of Capricorn is associated with ambition, discipline and hard work, all of which are directed at causing some kind of change, and these associations are strongest in its ascendant decan, uninfluenced as it is by the other signs. The rulership of Jupiter provides a solid framework against which that change can be directed, providing a basis for expansion, and this framework links the change of the Two of Disks specifically to that which is in accordance with will. The attribution to the first decan of Capricorn also provides this card with the suggestion of Pan.

Three of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Works
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Material Works
Sephirah	Binah
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of archetypal triad
Decan	Succedent of Capricorn
Planetary ruler	Mars

Table 5.3: Correspondences of the Three of Disks

THE CHANGE IN THE TWO OF Disks was directed — by the will — but was isolated from other changes; it was pure impulse. Binah being the stability sephirah of the archetypal triad, the Three of Disks brings the idea of *structure* to a pattern of changes, and the idea of *coordination*. The internal combustion engine regulates the firing of multiple pistons through a rigid mechanism and through the cam shaft transforms the explosive chemical energy into the desired rotational kinetic energy; the harnessing of any physical force through structure enables energy in one system to be transferred to another system in the desired way, and this is the definition of *work*. The rate at which work is performed is *power*, so the idea of structure in the Three of Disks enables the change of the Two of Disks to be harnessed in order that the power which will appear in the Four of Disks can be generated.

Work and discipline are the main characteristics of Capricorn, and in its succedent decan these characteristics are at their strongest, given energy by the rulership of Mars. Unlike some of the other signs, Mars has no detrimental effect on the element of earth, since it is so inert, and beyond corruption. The succedent decan of Capricorn is also influenced by Taurus, which is associated primarily with stability and progress, the latter being something that can only be measured against a background of structure.

Four of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Power
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Earthly Power
Sephirah	Chesed
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Cadent of Capricorn
Planetary ruler	The Sun

Table 5.4: Correspondences of the Four of Disks

AS WE FORETOLD IN THE PREVIOUS card, the Four of Disks is *power*. This side of the Abyss, power is the manifest result of structuring the element of earth, the focused transmission of energy for the accomplishment of will. Power — the rate at which work is performed — is the actual structuring and direction of physical energy, and as the first sephirah across the Abyss this card illustrates the ideal *functioning* of the element of earth on the actual plane.

As with all the Fours, the transition from ideal to actual which occurs in Chesed coincides with the cadent (fading) decan of the cardinal sign of each respective element. In this case, that “fading away” has a direct physical connotation, since work consumes energy in the source system, and it is this consumption which is the fading away. The rulership of the Sun, its position squarely in the centre of the Solar System, represents the harmony in this physical action, and the directorship which allows for the work performed to be *efficient*, which leads to an increase in power. Virgo — which influences Capricorn’s cadent decan — is associated with this efficiency, as well as with the perfectionism and attention to detail which are conducive to such. The combination of this influence with that of the Sun tempers the ambition of Capricorn, and harnesses that energy into a stable and regular structure. There is a suggestion of the humming of a well-oiled machine, here.

Again, each of the Fours, being actual rather than ideal, contain the seeds of their own downfall, and here the source of that downfall is plain to see; energy is consumed in this process, and that energy has only a limited supply. Moreover, all machines and engines wear out with use, as — again, being actual rather than ideal — no process is 100% efficient. Echoing what we saw in the other three suits, the essential problem with the Fours is that their qualities arise from a structure which, being actual, can be broken.

Five of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Worry
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Material Trouble
Sephirah	Geburah
Position on tree	Change sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Taurus
Planetary ruler	Mercury

Table 5.5: Correspondences of the Five of Disks

GEBURAH IS THE CHANGE SEPHIRAH OF the actual triad, and the Five of Disks signifies a movement in, or change to, the power-generating structure of the Four. As the saying goes, “power corrupts,” and it is commonly said that what powerful people fear the most is losing their power, this prospect being manifested as *worry*. Yet again, the Five represents a *disturbance* in the stability of the Four.

Taurus, in its positive aspect, signifies determination, stability, and steadiness, but in its negative aspect signifies lethargy, indulgence, and — most importantly, here — resistance to change. The ruler of Taurus is Venus, suggesting attraction, union, and balance, but the ruler of the ascendant decan of Taurus is Mercury, which brings analysis and division. Again, the rulership of Mercury shows the effect of the intellect, creating worry at the prospect of its power structure being disturbed, but this is a futile emotion, since we are inevitably faced with a world which changes.

Six of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Success
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Material Success
Sephirah	Tiphareth
Position on tree	Resolution sephirah of actual triad
Decan	Succedent of Taurus
Planetary ruler	The Moon

Table 5.6: Correspondences of the Six of Disks

THE ERROR IN THE WORRY OF the Five, of course, is that the universe has an inexhaustible supply of energy, and there really is no need to be attached to any particular mechanism of generating power. The development of “magical power” conveys an ability to put to effective use any energy which happens to be at hand. The worry of the Five is misplaced, since when faced with a changing environment and changing objectives any fixed power structure will ultimately be found deficient, since its very stability signifies a lack of flexibility; even if the adept could generate power indefinitely with such a structure, it would not help him very much if it didn’t generate the particular kind of power that he needed in a given situation. An equilibrated dynamic structure is required to enable him to generate any kind of power that he may reasonably need in a given situation, so, as is always the case in the middle pillar, structure and force must be brought into balance and harmony. The ability to do this, to generate power *from* the circumstances at hand which is appropriate *to* the circumstances at hand, will lead to *success*. In the previous suits, we have associated the Sixes with the best *practical manifestation* of the element on the actual plane, and the best practical manifestation of the element of earth is one which is conducive to success, and one which can be manipulated in such a way.

The succedent decan of Taurus represents the sign in its strength, being mainly associated with *progress*, the positive development of a material position in a (dynamically) stable way. The influence of Virgo on this decan brings with it an attention to detail, craftsmanship and a delight in *working* with material things rather than simply *possessing* them that ameliorates the resistance to change in Taurus, and allows its positive elements to shine through further. The rulership of the Moon signifies that this process is being conducted in the reflected light of the Sun, enabling the element of earth to be kept in its proper

perspective, which prevents the kind of attachment inherent in the Five from distracting the individual and inhibiting his success.

Seven of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Failure
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Success Unfulfilled
Sephirah	Netzach
Position on tree	Change sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Cadent of Taurus
Planetary ruler	Saturn

Table 5.7: Correspondences of the Seven of Disks

DESCENDING ACROSS THE VEIL OF PAROKETH and into the individual triad, the success of the Six is disturbed by the change sephirah of Netzach; the disturbance of success is naturally *failure*. The light of Tiphareth being veiled, and the individual triad being in the plane of reflection, we can easily see the error inherent in this idea of “failure.” Failure is a purely interpretative or imaginary quality, arising as it does from a comparison of the *actual* state of affairs with some previously *desired* state of affairs.² There is nothing inherent in the state of affairs itself which constitutes it as a “failure”; one man’s failed project is another man’s inspiration and starting point. Past desires can be likened to the economic concept of “sunk costs,” a historic expenditure which cannot be recovered or “undone” and is therefore irrelevant to future decision making. The “proper” objective of the individual is to optimise his position starting from where he is *now*; where he wanted to be last week is wholly irrelevant to that objective. This is not to deny the reality of the fact that a previous objective was not achieved, but to demonstrate that the failure in question has no bearing on what the individual does *now*, except insofar as his experience has taught him something of the nature of the universe which may be of use to him.

The attribution to the cadent decan of Taurus — influenced by Capricorn, which here brings an element of attachment to power itself, rather than to the fruits of exercising that power, and to a need to exercise some kind of influence over the environment, regardless of whether or not that influence is “beneficial” — shows the result of trying to stubbornly maintain a “fixed” material position; it soon outlives its purpose, and becomes unsuited to current conditions. The engine may well still work perfectly, and generate precisely the kind

²Netzach is associated with the individual’s desires.

of power it was intended to, but if that power is not what is currently required then the individual's objectives will be frustrated, and he will encounter failure. The heavy and retardant influence of the rulership of Saturn prolongs this aversion to change.

This card is a useful illustration of the “true” purpose of the element of earth to the adept; if his aim is to “cause Change to occur in conformity with Will” then what he should be interested in is power *over* the element of earth, not simply power *from* the element of earth. Earth is from where his power must ultimately arise, of course, but the important point is that his objective should be to *use* that power rather than to aimlessly *accumulate* it. To become attached to a material position is one kind of error, but to become attached to a material position which isn't even helpful to your objectives is of another order entirely. Crowley said in *Magick in Theory and Practice* of the “postulate of magick” that:

Any required change may be effected by the application of the proper kind and degree of Force in the proper manner, through the proper medium to the proper object ... Every failure proves that one or more requirements of the postulate have not been fulfilled.

showing that every failure is the result of either the adept not fully grasping either the nature of the individual situation or the nature of his own being (i.e. his approach is not suited to his objective, as we have just described, or his objective is itself ill-conceived) or not being able to generate the “kind and degree of Force” required, which ultimately amounts to the same thing, since “a Man who is doing his True Will has the inertia of the Universe to assist him.”³

³*Magick in Theory and Practice.*

Eight of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Prudence
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Prudence
Sephirah	Hod
Position on tree	Stability sephirah of individual triad
Decan	Ascendant of Virgo
Planetary ruler	The Sun

Table 5.8: Correspondences of the Eight of Disks

THE EIGHT OF DISKS IS REFERRED to Hod, the stability sephirah of the individual triad, and like the Eight of Wands⁴ (fire being the other “dry” element)⁵ the imposition of structure inherent in Hod does not have such a negative effect as it does with the “moist” elements of water and air, and a comparison with this card will be instructive. The Eight of Disks is *prudence*, and refers to the accumulation of material advantage. The appears to contradict the admonition against an attachment to power that we gave in the previous section, but closer examination reveals that this is not so. Prudence is the acquisition of *useful* and *relevant* advantages, even if the ultimate purpose of those advantages may not be immediately clear.

We can draw an analogy with the concept of “positional play” in the game of chess, where a player accumulates a number of small but useful advantages in their own right, in the (often realised) hope that over time these advantages will combine to bring about the possibility of a decisive winning combination, even though the nature of that combination may not be currently known. On a mundane level, even though “a Man who is doing his True Will has the inertia of the Universe to assist him,” the practical fact is that this inertia will not help him unless he is actually able to bring about the desired change. The prudence of the Eight can refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and resources which may come in handy later. This far down the Tree, we cannot expect a full knowledge of the will, and in such a case an approach of “looking after the pennies so that the pounds will look after themselves” can be a good one. Moreover, it is overly late to start building a stockpile of weapons and food when siege and war are already upon you.

⁴See page 39.

⁵See page 30.

Virgo is associated with skill, practicality and enterprise, all good qualities for steadily constructing a base of power which can always be useful, and the influence of the rulership of the Sun keeps that construction centred in reality, ensuring that the acquired advantages are relevant, and avoiding the error of acquiring power for power's sake.

Nine of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Gain
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Material Gain
Sephirah	Yesod
Position on tree	Resolution seph. of individual triad
Decan	Succedent of Virgo
Planetary ruler	Venus

Table 5.9: Correspondences of the Nine of Disks

THE NINE OF DISKS IS *gain*, and represents the element of earth fully developed in the individual. This gain is of the nature of an extension of *influence* rather than a question of *possession*; the ultimate objective of the aspirant is to learn to turn the material world to his advantage, and if he can accomplish this without ownership then ownership becomes irrelevant. The gain of the Nine of Disks is an increase in the ability of the aspirant to influence his environment, and every such increase brings him closer to the success of the Six, directly above him on the middle pillar. Yesod in the world of Assiah is really where the *study* of magick belongs, when considered as a means of development rather than as a description of action.

The attribution to Virgo again brings with it concepts of enterprise and skill, and in full force in the succedent decan — reinforced and directed by the discipline and ambition from the influence of Capricorn — is well suited to the production of gain. The rulership of Venus again gives direction to this growth, as it represents balance and harmony.

Ten of Disks

Name (Thoth)	Wealth
Name (Golden Dawn)	The Lord of Wealth
Sephirah	Malkuth
Position on tree	Physical plane
Decan	Cadent of Virgo
Planetary ruler	Mercury

Table 5.10: Correspondences of the Ten of Disks

FINALLY WE COME TO THE LAST of the small cards, the Ten of Disks. This is *wealth*, the complete physical manifestation of the element of earth, to the exclusion of the others. As Crowley says in *The Book of Thoth*:

When wealth accumulates beyond a certain point, it must either become completely inert and cease to be wealth, or call in the aid of intelligence to use it rightly ... this may imply that the acquired wealth, being inert, will be dissipated unless put to further use by devoting its power to objects other than mere accumulation.

We may define “wealth” in an economic sense as “anything that has utility and is capable of being appropriated or exchanged,” the important point being that material possessions have no value in and of themselves, but that it is what can be *done* with them that give them value. As the old saying goes, “you cannot eat money.” If the accumulation of material objects or powers is undertaken for its own sake, the resulting stockpile may hardly be deserving of the title “wealth” if it is divorced from all practical application. This illustrates clearly the nature of the error we described in relation to the Seven of Disks.⁶

Conversely, this card can illustrate the position of the beginning aspirant; he has a surfeit of wealth at his disposal — the entire universe, in fact — but he is ignorant of the possibilities of pressing it into his service, so he is unable to perceive it as wealth. Moving up the Tree, it is not until he starts to *gain* material influence in the Nine of Disks that he will begin to convert some of this inert material into genuine wealth. This can only be done with the intervention of the other three elements, and down here in Malkuth, the element of earth is cut off

⁶See page 79.

from those. This is the last card in the sequence, the Malkuth of the world of Assiah, and represents complete physical manifestation. We described the metaphysical theory of the physical world being derived from the other three elements,⁷ and the lesson we learn in the Ten of Disks is that the physical world, cut off from these other elements, is perfectly useless, being dead and inert matter without the vivification of spirit.

The final and cadent decan of Virgo is suggestive of the craftsman who does not know when to stop working on his masterpiece, and resignedly continues chipping away at it, to its detriment; the stubborn influence of Taurus on this decan exacerbates that tendency, as does the influence of Mercury, the natural ruler of Virgo. Sooner or later, he must begin a new task, and begin to convert some new material into wealth, but down here in the Ten he does not have the imagination to see this.

⁷See page 71.

Chapter 6

Summaries

OUR ANALYSIS OF THE SMALL CARDS of the Tarot being complete, all that remains for us to do is to summarise our findings, and to examine their implications on both our understanding of the Tarot itself, and our understanding of our Qabalistic framework.

The Aces

The Aces represent the root of each element, but are otherwise almost wholly devoid of character, being referred to the unity of Kether. The suit of Wands (fire) shows the progression through the individual, from conception to complete physical manifestation, of his motion, energy and will. The suit of Cups (water) shows the development of structure in his being, his tendency to seek balance, harmony and order. The suit of Swords (air) shows the development of his ability to reconcile these two facets of his being, and the ways in which his intellect or executive faculty can help or hinder that reconciliation. Finally, the suit of Disks (earth) shows the development of the ways in which he ultimately manifests the combination of the other three elements, and how he ultimately creates and is subject to the motions and structures of the physical world.

The Twos

The Twos show the ideal nature of each element. In the case of fire, this is *dominion*, the ability to impose one's will. With water, it is *love*, the relationships formed with the environment that direct that

will. For air, it is *peace*, the perfect and dynamic reconciliation of will and love, their harmonious and living conjunction. Finally, for earth, it is *change*, by implication in accordance with both will and nature, the result of their harmonious reconciliation.

All the Twos are attributed to Chokmah, and representative of *ideal motion* in the first extension¹ from Kether. The ideas of dominion and change are clearly suggestive of motion, as is love when considered as a process rather than a state. The peace of the Two of Swords must also be dynamic to be effective.

The Threes

The Threes show the completion of the ideal, the harmonious conjunction of the structure of Binah with the motion of Chokmah. *Virtue*, in the case of Wands, is an evaluative concept of motion, “right action” as opposed to “wrong action,”² and this evaluation can only be made against the background of a structure. In the case of Cups, *abundance* refers to the infinite variety of opportunities for love that the structure of the universe provides. For Swords, *sorrow* arises inevitably from the structuring of the intellect, at which point it becomes able to perceive itself, this sense of separation³ being the root of suffering. Finally, *works* is the structuring of physical change to form a type of *engine* for the purposes of generating power.

Relating as they do to the completion of the ideal (Binah being the final sephirah in the archetypal triad), the Threes are attributed to the succedent decan of the cardinal sign of each element, as the Sixes (referring to Tiphareth, the final sephirah in the actual triad) are attributed to the succedent decan of the fixed sign of each element, and the Nines (referring to Yesod, the final sephirah in the individual triad) are attributed to the succedent decan of the mutable sign of each element. The succedent decan of each sign is the central one, sandwiched between the ascendant and cadent decans, and show the element in “full force,” balanced and whole. It should be natural to attribute these decans to Tiphareth and Yesod, forming as they do the apices and the resolutions of the actual and individual triads respectively, but it is also natural to attribute them to Binah, despite the fact that this sephirah does not appear on the middle pillar. Being above the Abyss, there is no question of Binah being “unbalanced,”

¹Extension itself being a dynamic process.

²The terms here should not be confused with the idea of morality; see page 32.

³i.e. of a structural distinction between “self” and “not-self.”

and being ideals there is no need for either Chokmah or Binah to “re-solve” into a lower sephirah; rather, the completion of the archetypal triad is the natural place for the succedent decan, notwithstanding the fact that Binah is “off-centre.”

The Fours

The Fours show the first appearance of each element on this side of the Abyss, the first steps into actual manifestation. As such, the perfection of the Supernals is lost, and each of the Fours — although uniformly “positive” — contain the seeds of their own downfall for this reason. For the same reason, they are naturally attributed to the cadent decan of the cardinal element of each sign; the ascendant and succedent decans of the cardinal signs are attributed to Chokmah and Binah, and it is fitting for Chesed to represent the “fading away” of the ideal perfection of the Supernals, which is precisely what the cadent decans represent. Being attributed to Chesed, the Fours are structural cards, signifying that in the physical world form must “precede” motion, whilst in the ideal world motion (being the initial extension from formlessness) must come first.⁴ Alternatively, we could take a “bottom-up” approach and state that Chesed, as the last sephirah *before* the Abyss, represents the fulfillment of physical objectives, this being naturally a structural concept.

The Four of Wands is *completion*, the full manifestation of will. The nature of will being dynamic, this completion can only be temporary, as the will cannot rest. The Four of Cups is *luxury*, a development of the structural abundance of the Three, but containing the first hint of the great danger of the element of water which is *pollution*, or attachment to inappropriate objects. *Truce* is the Four of Swords, again a structural reconciliation resembling the peace of the Two, but being actual is more tenuous, requiring active maintenance, and owing to the Second Law of Thermodynamics must necessarily be temporary. Finally, the Four of Disks is *power*, the results of the structural harnessing of physical change.

In all cases, the “downfall” shadowed in the Fours is the disturbance of the structure created in that number.

⁴In reality, as we described on page 9, form and motion are interdependent, and cannot exist apart from each other, so this idea of “form preceding motion” is suggestive only.

The Fives

The Fours contain the seeds of the downfall of their elements, as we have said, and the Fives show that downfall itself. Geburah is a motion sephirah, and it is this motion that disturbs the structure in the Fours. Above the Abyss, there is no need for force and motion to be “reconciled,” since they are ideal, and suffer none of the problems of manifestation. Below the Abyss, the physical realities of existence dictate that “change is stability and stability is change,” and any attempt to deny this will lead to trouble.

For fire, *strife* is the disturbance of completion, the inherent restlessness of the will, and its reaction to a status quo. In the case of water, *disappointment* is the direct result of the “attachment to inappropriate objects” that was foreshadowed in the luxury of the Four. *Defeat* represents the motion away from the temporary truce in the case of air, and *worry*, for earth, results from an attachment to power for its own sake.

Both Chokmah and Geburah, the motion sephiroth of the archetypal and actual triads, respectively, are attributed to the ascendant decans of the cardinal and fixed signs of the element, respectively. The ascendant decans represent the first appearance of each sign, its “initial onrush,” and the association with motion is natural. This pattern does not repeat in the individual triad, however, and only works for these two because we begin the sequence at Chokmah, two, rather than in Kether, one. The “form” and “force” sephirah of each triad switch between the left and right pillars with each triad, Binah being followed by Chesed — both “form” sephiroth — and Geburah being followed (after Tiphareth) by Netzach — both “force” sephiroth. We could argue that “all is reflection in the individual triad, so the pattern is reversed” but we must be careful not to try and push a pattern too far.

The Sixes

Returning to the middle pillar, the Sixes represent the reconciliation of structure and motion in the actual plane (indeed, the first reconciliation sephirah we come to on the journey down the Tree), and as such indicate the aspects of the *actual nature* of the individual object as shown in the four elements. In other words, the Sixes show the best practical functioning of each of the elements in the actual world.

The Six of Wands is *victory*, the accomplishment of objectives

through will, for such is its purpose. The Six of Cups is *pleasure*, broadly defined, representing both the fruits of that victory and its motivation. The Six of Swords is *science*, showing the impartial application of the intellect in harmoniously reconciling will and love in order that the “right victory” may be attained, and the Six of Disks is *success*, the ultimate end result of all this.

A Note on the Veil of Paroketh

There are two downward pointing triads on the Tree of Life, and the distinction between them is important to understand, especially so since the description of them in this essay as “actual triad” and “individual triad” breaks with convention.

The essential fact of individuality, according to Thelemic metaphysics, is the existence of a “true” or “actual” self which embodies the actual nature of the individual, veiled in a “conscious” self which is self-aware and serves as the experiential vehicle of the true self.⁵ Since the “conscious self” is distinct from the “true self” (and this distinction is necessary for self-awareness, perception requiring at least a perceiver, and a distinct thing being perceived) the former can only receive a reflection of the true nature from the latter, and it is the imperfection of this reflection that is posited as being the source of suffering and discomfort.

In our Qabalistic framework, the Veil of Paroketh represents the distinction between these two “selves,” and it is through this veil that the reflection is filtered and distorted (the distortion is necessary, the “conscious self” having its own nature which it can never fully shake off). The downward pointing actual triad represents motion, structure and their reconciliation in the “true self,” whereas the downward pointing individual triad represents motion, structure and their reconciliation in the “conscious self.” The latter three sephiroth are ultimately *reflections* of the former three, but being reflections they are necessarily a degraded form. The nature of this degradation will be discussed individually in each case.

The Sevens

The Sevens, like the Fives, are attributed to a motion sephirah, but this time on the individual rather than the actual plane. In the case of

⁵See *The Khabs is in The Khu* for a fuller exposition of this idea.

fire, *valour* is the motivating side of will in the individual, that which drives him to strive towards his objectives. The strife of the Five is more of a general protest against imposed structure, but the valour of the seven is specifically directed to a particular state, namely, the victory of the Six. Valour is suggestive of courage in the face of adversity, a concept which cannot be present above the Veil of Paroketh, since the true self existing there is not self-aware. Whereas strife is a simple reflection of the dynamic nature of the self, valour is a specifically conscious concept. For water, *debauch* is a degraded reaction to the disappointment of the Five, a mad, addictive pursuit of satisfaction. It shows the corruption of love through excessive motion in the individual. In the case of air, *futility*, like the Seven of Cups, is a continuing refusal to learn the lessons of the Five, in this case that of defeat. The Seven of Swords is suggestive of “beating a dead horse.” Finally, for earth, *failure* is the actual loss of power foreshadowed in the Five, or, more accurately, the individual’s conscious reaction to it.

The Eights

The Eights are attributed to Hod, the stability sephirah of the individual triad, and are degraded forms of the Fours. For Wands, *swiftness* refers to the structuring of will to allow for efficient application, which is a long way from the actual completion of the Four. The Eight of Cups is *indolence*, a stagnant and lifeless clinging to the luxury of the Four which has long since ceased to satisfy. For Swords, *cruelty* is the forced imposition of truce taken too far, diplomacy turned into tyranny. Finally, the Eight of Disks is *prudence*, the gradual accumulation of material advantage which will one day be capable of producing the power of the Four.

There is an interesting distinction in the Eights in that the Eights of Wands and Disks appear to be broadly “positive,” whereas the Eights of Cups and Swords appear to be broadly “negative.” Wands and Disks are “dry elements,” which as we described on page 30 resist the imposition of form, and are thus somewhat immune to any negative impact of the structure of Hod.

The Nines

The second and final reconciliation sephirah is Yesod, in the individual plane, and whereas the reconciliation in the actual triad represents the formulation of the actual nature of the individual, the reconciliation in

the individual triad represents the formulation of the reflected nature. In the case of fire, the victory of the Six is degraded into mere *strength*. For water, the pleasure of the Six degrades into mere *happiness*, which is suggestive of contentment, or the “happy-go-lucky” man, as opposed to the joyous ecstasy of pleasure. The Nine of Swords is *cruelty*, the impartial analysis in the Six having been taken too far, and made to serve its own purposes, cutting off the “conscious self” from its source in the “true self.” The Nine of Disks is *gain*, a mere element on the ladder to the success of the Six.

The nines show the “full impact of the elemental force” in the individual. It is natural to suppose that the purpose of fire in the individual is to give him the strength to attain to happiness and success. It is instructive to note that for the element of air, both the completion of the archetypal triad in Binah and the completion of the individual triad in Yesod result in apparently “negative” cards, and this element is unique in that respect. Air, being a secondary element, is essentially subservient,⁶ and the root of suffering can be simplistically reduced to the failure of the self-aware intellect to accept this, and to substitute its own values for those of the “true self.”⁷ As such, both the initial structuring of the element in Binah which allows for its awareness, and the full practical manifestation of it in Yesod (by which time its powers of analysis and division have developed so well as to separate it entirely from the “true self” in Tiphareth) cannot avoid these problems, although, being above the Abyss, the “problem” in Binah remains a potential one only.

The Tens

Finally, Malkuth represents the complete physical manifestations of the elements to the exclusion of the others. The Tens show the result of leaving each element to its own devices. The Ten of Wands is *oppression*, the senseless and purposeless application of force.⁸ The Ten of Cups is *satiety*, the notion that nothing can satisfy in the absence of a will which has objectives. The Ten of Swords is *ruin*, the ultimate effect of analysis taken to extremes. The Ten of Disks is *wealth*, representing an enormous stock of resources which, in the absence of an independent practical use, ceases to become wealth at all.

⁶As is the element of earth, but earth is too dull and inert to care.

⁷Much as a son will almost inevitably rebel in his youth against the values of his parents.

⁸Particularly when this is “self oppression.”

The Tens show the necessity of introducing the fifth element, spirit, into the equation, through which all four elements can be brought into coordination. Spirit is associated with *initiation*, which in the Golden Dawn tradition began in Malkuth, and represented the first perception in the aspirant of the light of spirit, a first glimpse of his “true self” reflected from Tiphareth above the elements,⁹ which would be his guide towards integrating them under a common banner.

⁹In the Golden Dawn tradition, Malkuth, Yesod, Hod and Netzach — the sephiroth below the Veil of Paroketh — were attributed to earth, air, water and fire, in that order, and the attainment to Tiphareth — representing contact with the “true self” — was attributed to the fifth element of spirit.

Appendix A

Reference Tables

Wands

No.	Title	Sign	Decan	Ruler
Ace	Root of Fire	—	—	—
Two	Dominion	Aries	Ascendant	Mars
Three	Virtue	Aries	Succedent	The Sun
Four	Completion	Aries	Cadent	Venus
Five	Strife	Leo	Ascendant	Saturn
Six	Victory	Leo	Succedent	Jupiter
Seven	Valour	Leo	Cadent	Mars
Eight	Swiftness	Sagittarius	Ascendant	Mercury
Nine	Strength	Sagittarius	Succedent	The Moon
Ten	Oppression	Sagittarius	Cadent	Saturn

Table A.1: Attributions of the Suit of Wands

Cups

No.	Title	Sign	Decan	Ruler
Ace	Root of Water	—	—	—
Two	Love	Cancer	Ascendant	Venus
Three	Abundance	Cancer	Succedent	Mercury
Four	Luxury	Cancer	Cadent	The Moon
Five	Disappointment	Scorpio	Ascendant	Mars
Six	Pleasure	Scorpio	Succedent	The Sun
Seven	Debauch	Scorpio	Cadent	Venus
Eight	Indolence	Pisces	Ascendant	Saturn
Nine	Happiness	Pisces	Succedent	Jupiter
Ten	Satiety	Pisces	Cadent	Mars

Table A.2: Attributions of the Suit of Cups

Swords

No.	Title	Sign	Decan	Ruler
Ace	Root of Air	—	—	—
Two	Peace	Libra	Ascendant	The Moon
Three	Sorrow	Libra	Succedent	Saturn
Four	Truce	Libra	Cadent	Jupiter
Five	Defeat	Aquarius	Ascendant	Venus
Six	Science	Aquarius	Succedent	Mercury
Seven	Futility	Aquarius	Cadent	The Moon
Eight	Interference	Gemini	Ascendant	Jupiter
Nine	Cruelty	Gemini	Succedent	Mars
Ten	Ruin	Gemini	Cadent	The Sun

Table A.3: Attributions of the Suit of Swords

Disks

No.	Title	Sign	Decan	Ruler
Ace	Root of Earth	—	—	—
Two	Change	Capricorn	Ascendant	Jupiter
Three	Works	Capricorn	Succedent	Mars
Four	Power	Capricorn	Cadent	The Sun
Five	Worry	Taurus	Ascendant	Mercury
Six	Success	Taurus	Succedent	The Moon
Seven	Failure	Taurus	Cadent	Saturn
Eight	Prudence	Virgo	Ascendant	The Sun
Nine	Gain	Virgo	Succedent	Venus
Ten	Wealth	Virgo	Cadent	Mercury

Table A.4: Attributions of the Suit of Disks

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