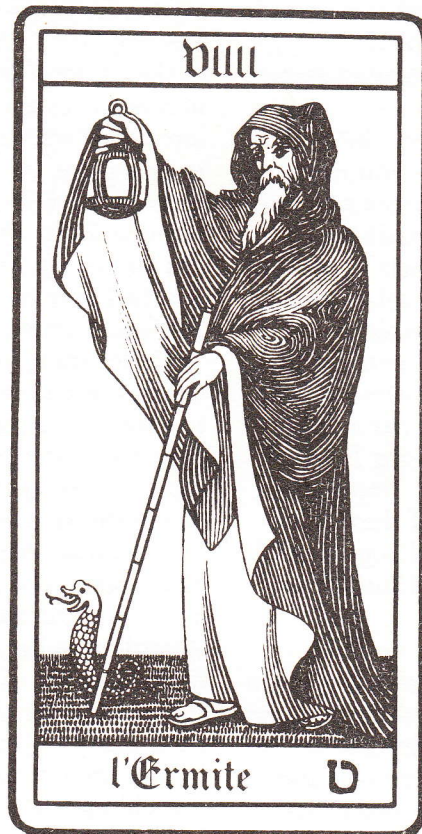


The Hermit



The Master of the Chariot (arcana 7) is a young man impatient to bring about progress who is curbed by Justice (arcana 8) who favours order and is hostile to revolutions.

The Hermit reconciles this antagonism by avoiding precipitation as much as he does immobility. He is an experienced old man who knows the past from which he gains his inspiration to prepare the future. His walk is careful, for armed with a bamboo cane with seven mystic knots, he sounds the earth on which he advances slowly, but continuously. If on his path he meets the serpent of selfish desires, he does not try to imitate the winged woman of the Apocalypse who puts her foot on the reptile's head — an allusion to the mysticism which is ambitious to conquer all

animality. The wise man prefers to cast a spell over the animal so that it twines itself round his stick as round the stick of Esculapius. It is in fact a question of vital currents which the miracle-maker picks up with a view to practising the medicine of the Initiated.

The Hermit does not tap upon the earth blindly, for a discreet glow throws light upon his firm and untiring path. Indeed his right hand holds up a lantern which is partially veiled by a piece of our philosopher's wide cloak. He is afraid of dazzling his eyes which are too weak to bear the brilliant light of his lantern.

In this way he only lets his own personal knowledge shine in as much as it is useful in guiding him. He is modest and has no

illusions about his own knowledge, which he knows to be infinitesimal in comparison with his ignorance. Therefore, giving up over-proud intellectual ambitions, he is content to receive humbly the ideas which are indispensable for him in the accomplishment of his earthly task.

His mission is not to fix beliefs by formulating dogma, for the Hermit is not the Hierophant (arcana 5); he does not address the crowds, nor let himself be approached, except by the seekers of truth who dare to penetrate into his solitude. Once assured that they are capable of understanding him, he trusts them, for the wise man does not cast pearls before swine.

The light which the Hermit has at his disposal is not limited to throwing light upon the surface: it penetrates, searches out and reveals the inner quality of things. In order to recognize a true man Diogenes had to use a lantern similar to the Hermit's in the Tarot.

This character's cloak is dark outside, almost brown (austerity), but its lining is blue as pertaining to clothing of ethereal nature and endowed with the insulating properties attributed to the famous mantle of Apollonius. The Freemasons know that one must be 'under cover' in order to work to some purpose and Alchemy requires that the carrying out of the Great Work should be pursued within the hermetically-sealed test tube. Without insulation nothing can be concentrated, and without initial concentration no magic action could be carried out. The energies which have been silently and patiently accumulated, sheltered from any disturbing infiltrations, will throw out an irresistible force when the time duly arrives. Everything that is bound to take bodily shape is worked out in secret in the dark womb where the secret work of mysterious conspirators is pursued.

The Hermit conspires in the shelter of an austere psychic atmosphere which cuts him off from all worldly frivolity. In his retreat he works out his concepts by intensifying his willpower; he holds this in check by

magnetizing his fine aspirations with all the disinterested love of which he is capable. In this way this dreamer can prepare formidable events, for being unknown to his contemporaries, he becomes the actual maker of the future. Detached as he is from immediate contingencies, with no self interest he weaves the subtle web of what is to take place. As Secret Master he works invisibly to condition what is soon to be brought forth. As a transforming agent he has no cares for immediate effects and is attached only to the productive energies of the future creations.

To flee from the society of men in order to live in the intimacy of his own thoughts, is to enter into a mystic union with the Ideal depicted in the Tarot by the woman of arcana 3 and 8 (Empress and Justice) to whom the Hermit becomes the husband. The old man of arcana 9 is related thus to Saint Joseph the carpenter, to whom the Vedas give the name of TWASHTRI. According to Emile Burnouf he is the personification of plastic strength spread throughout the Universe, manifested particularly in living people.⁴⁵ One may see in him the mysterious artisan of the invisible scaffolding without which no vital construction could be made. In Jesod the immaterial foundation of objective beings, the strong creative energies, are synthesized when they are applied to a definite realization. Before taking form everything pre-exists as an abstract concept, as an intention, as a drawn-up plan and as a living picture, animated by a dynamism which brings about its reality.

Arcana 9 is related to mystery of real but occult generation in which only the spirit and the soul participate. The Hermit is the master who works on the drawing board, where he draws up the exact plan of the intended construction.

The figure which commonly appears on this drawing board is a square with lengthened sides, containing nine divisions in which the first nine numbers, used by the adepts in the magic square, can be put.

When set out in this way the odd numbers form a very significant cross, while the even numbers are relegated to the angles as if

8	1	6
3	5	7
4	9	2

they had to relate to the quartet of the Elements. Without attempting any explanations which would take us too far afield, let us simply point out that the life-giving core of the strong being is represented by 5 (quintessence), the number flanked by 3 (formative ideality) and by 7 (the directive Spirit) whereas it is overlooked by number 1 (Pure Spirit) and is supported by 9 (the Synthesis of realizing powers).

When seen in the normal numerical order the Kabbalistic Ennead forms a Rhombus in which 9 occupies the lower point, thus depicting the trunk of the tree of the Sephiroth, the basis or support of the whole.



The character of the Celestial Sphere which best corresponds to the Hermit is *Boötes*, the Wagoner, the keeper of the Seven Oxen, *Septem triones*, the old name given to the septenary of the Ursa Major or the Chariot of David. In fact he is a harvester who raises his sickle over a sheath, in which the modern astronomers see the hair of

Berenice. When the Virgin of the zodiac descends, Boötes bends over and seems to follow her; so he has been made her husband, or better still the father of the Virginal Erigone who presides over harvests. Hence the affinity already stated between arcanas 3 and 9 is confirmed.

The Tarot of Bologna replaces the Hermit by a winged Patriarch who walks with difficulty, bent over two crutches. From his belt hangs a purse which contains the heritage of the past. He is moving away from a column which marks one of the poles of universal movement, that from which living



men move as they evolve. This old man who progresses but slowly, in spite of his wings, makes us think of Saturn, the god of Time, seen as the eternal continuation always on the move to conquer the future which he imperceptibly unfolds from the past. In this connection let us note that Charles VI's pack makes the Hermit hold not a lantern but an hourglass.

Divinatory Interpretations

Jesod, basis. The potential living being, the potential strength within the seed. The living plan existing before its materialization. The invisible weft of the organism that is to be constructed, the prototype putting the stamp of the species onto individuals. The Astral body of the occultists.

Tradition. Experience. Unperishable patrimony of the past. Profound knowledge. Prudence. Circumspection. Meditation. Silence. Discretion. Reserve. Isolation. Continenence. Chastity. Celibacy. Austerity.

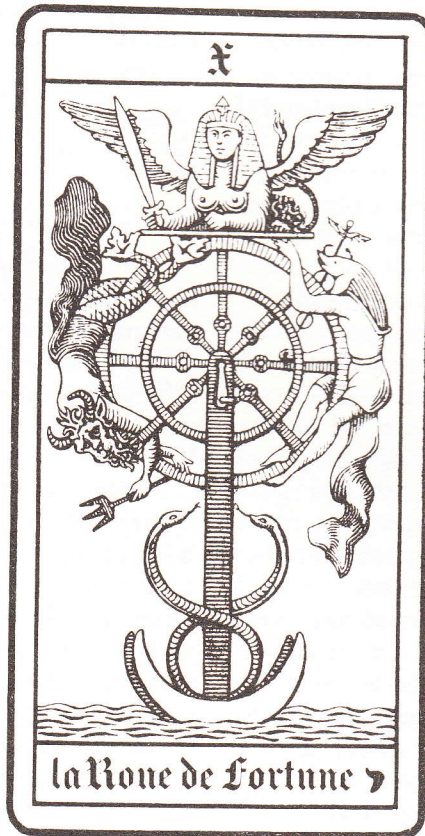
The wise man detached from the world, dead to wicked passions and ambitions.

Profound, meditating spirit, adverse to all frivolity. Experienced doctor of the mind, soul and body. An Initiate practising Universal Medicine. The Hermetic philosopher possessing the secret of the Stone of the Wise. Initiator. Master capable of directing the work of others and of

discerning what is in embryo in the sphere of human development. Midwife.

The character of Saturn, serious, taciturn, sullen, distrustful. Timorous nature, meticulous, heavy. Sadness, misanthropy, scepticism, discouragement, avarice, poverty.

The Wheel of Fortune



The first chapter of the book of Ezekiel describes a vision upon which innumerable Kabbalists have made unending comments. When the heavens had opened the prophet saw in them strange animals grouped in fours, and near to them four wheels of fire, each being double. The tenth key of the Tarot, whose symbolism has been affirmed by Eliphas Lévi, was inspired by the sacred text where it shows us a wheel with two concentric rims, the image of the double whirl which generates the life of each individual.⁴⁶

This life is engendered like an electric current as soon as a whirl, checked in its movement, takes the opposite direction to the girating movement around it. The individual is the result of the force opposing

everything of which he is in fact a part. He only becomes the central point by rebelling against universality. His life proceeds from a vaster life which he strives to preserve. He only manages this to a limited extent, hence the brevity of individual existence to which the Wheel of Fortune alludes. This is also the wheel of the Future or of Destiny.

A starting handle sets this fateful wheel in motion, rapid at first, but slowing down till its stop marks death. After the precipitation of the strong rhythm of youth comes the calm regularity of maturity then the decline into old age which ends in a fatal and complete standstill.

The Wheel of Becoming moves on the sombre ocean of chaotic life supported by the masts of two boats side by side, of which

one is red, the other green. Their shape reminds us of the crescent Isis, the great creator, the mother of all beings.

From each boat springs forth a snake; one is male, the other female. They correspond to the two types of vital currents, positive or negative, and become propulsion (red) and sensitivity (green).

The movement of the Wheel of Fortune draws with it as it rises a Hermanubis holding the caduceus of Mercury. As it comes down a Typhonic monster armed with a trident is drawn with it. Thus on one side are symbolized all the beneficial and constructive energies which favour the growth of the individual and stimulate vital development, and on the other hand we have the collection of destructive agents which the living person must resist.

The two opposing factors represent summer, whose warmth is favourable to life, and winter, which restricts the radiation of life. The character with the dog's head corresponds to the canicular constellations of which *Sirius* is the chief star. Its opposite takes us to Capricorn, fish-goat, amphibious, hence a miry, chaotic monster as the earth-green colour of its body indicates. If the face and smoky clothes of the winter devil are of dark red, it is because a hidden force burns within him: the fire of selfish passion, for he is the spirit of chaotic matter, Hyle, to which he tends to lead everything that is organized, co-ordinated and subject to rule. But cold which condenses and materializes is not to be taken only in a derogatory sense. Without it, there would be no incarnation of the Word, nor redemption. Capricorn has therefore not been considered evil by the Christians of the Catacombs who have associated it with the trident of Neptune on the wall of one of the crypts of the Ardéatine. They obviously saw in it the symbol of fallen man, but regenerated through the power of the water of baptism.

Hermanubis, whose body is blue, therefore ethereal, corresponds to the Azoth of the Wise, an ethereal substance which penetrates all things, to excite, support and revitalize if

need be, the movement of life. This sort of mysterious fluid is, at the same time, the vehicle of a directive Intelligence⁴⁷, the great Mercury, the messenger of the co-ordinating gods of Chaos.



The life-bestowing divinities number seven; they have their counterpart in the planetary influences of astrology which reflect on all that exists. Hence the differently coloured seven spheres which are crossed by the seven spokes of the Wheel of Becoming.

Above this, on a motionless platform a Sphinx is firmly placed. It represents the principle of equilibrium and fixity which assures the transitory stability of individual forms. Like Justice (arcana 8), it is armed with a sword, for it is for him to cut through and decide by intervening in the conflict of condensing or expanding forces, selfish in a restricting way or over-generous in their outward-going desires. It is the Archeus of the Hermetists, the fixed and determining core of individuality, in the centre of which burns Sulphur \blacktriangle . This principle of unity has power over elementary attractions which it synthesizes and converts into vital energy. This explains the four colours of the Sphinx which correspond to the elements: red head, Fire; blue wings, Air; chest and front legs green, Water; back part, black, Earth. The Sphinx is, moreover, human in its face and woman's breasts, an eagle in its wings, a lion in its claws and a bull in the main part of its body. In it can be found the animals of Ezekiel's vision which have become the symbols of the four Evangelists: Man or Angel, Saint Matthew; Bull or Ox, Saint Luke; Lion, Saint Mark; Eagle, Saint John.

In connection with Capricorn-Typhon and Dog-Hermanubis which correspond astronomically to the solstices, the Sphinx occupies the place of Libra (the Scales) in the

zodiac which Justice is holding (arcana 8). It is in contrast to the snakes which transform the supporting beam of the Wheel of Fortune into Mercury's wand. Just like Aries whom they substitute, the reptiles symbolize the awakening of life in spring. They emerge from the Ocean of chaos



depicted by the region in the sky where Pisces and Cetus (the Whale) swim, not far from the mouth of the river of Eridan. As is stated in Genesis, the Spirit of Elohim hovers thus above the dark waters as the impenetrable master of the turning of the cosmic wheel.

Severe, placid and forever enigmatic, the eternal Sphinx remains master of his secret which is the great Arcana, the creative Word, hidden from created beings, the initial Yod of the divine tetragram.

Divinatory Interpretations

Malcut, kingdom. The sphere of the sovereignty of the will. The principle of individuality. Involution, seed, sowing, sperm, fertilizing energy. Yod, Jachin's column.

Initiative, sagacity, presence of mind, spontaneity, aptitude for inventions.

Divination of a practical type. Success due to opportunities seized at the right moment.

Luck, fortuitous discoveries which enrich or lead to success. Favourable destiny which brings about success outside any real personal merit. Advantages seized by chance. An envied but unstable situation. 'Ups and downs' of fortune. Inconstancy. Minor good fortune in geomancy. Transitory benefits.