

Let's deep dive into the first major arcana.

For a more practical focus on meanings in a reading head to the book PDF.

I use the words masculine & feminine to describe principles, not gender. We are all a blend of both.

Magician : Who am I, and what is my purpose in life?

Masculine principle.

Magic, "The power of apparently influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces:

"suddenly, as if by magic, the doors start to open"

A magician works with "hidden" forces to create changes that "seem" impossible.

Magic is a strange concept, and however we look at magic it involves a focus of the mind, or that more spiritual concept of mind our "will".

My eldest son picks up a guitar- and as if by magic he can play the most complex music. We understand the process though, and so don't think of it as magic. We KNOW it takes practice, and learning the "formula" of which strings played in which way makes music.

My middle son is a member of the Junior magic circle. He can get me to choose a card at random, put it back the in pack, without showing him. Then when I go to make a coffee the card I chose is in my mug. It feels like magic- because even though I know he put the card there before he handed me the deck, and he "forced" my choice, I still don't know *how* he does it. I know there is a trick, an illusion there.

And yes- the magician can represent a trickster or illusionist.

When I read Tarot and accurately predict a future event-there is magic there too. Logically I "should not be able to". And yet it works.

I suggest to you that magic is only magic because we don't know how it works.

Occult magic- "supernatural, mystical, or magical beliefs, practices, or phenomena." Is considered magic because based on what society believes it shouldn't work, it isn't understood.

And yet each one of the above examples- from guitar playing to occult magic needs the same first step...A focused will, a belief it can be done, and a determination to do it.

There is a focused simplicity to this card that I love. A feeling of “I have gathered what I need, now I await inspiration.”

The darker side of this card is the trickster, the illusionist, someone who is manipulating the situation to their advantage.

Symbols in the magician

For a seemingly simple card everything is very important, as we might expect with a card connected with “focused will”

Red roses: Physical world.

White lilies: Spiritual world.

Belt: Ouroboros – Cycles of life and death. Worn as a belt this could indicate strength, connected with the powerful energy centres in this area. Once we understand the cycles of life, death, and rebirth we can work with the lores of the universe, not the lores of man.

Circlet: Representing authority and power, also a link to divinity. In the Magician this feels to me like personal authority, and self- mastery. The circlet is not designed to be a big symbol of authority over others.

Wand: Focused will and power- concentrating the energy. (Look out for wands- they are a very important symbol of self mastery.)

Table: Working as an altar this also focuses power, energy and will- but in the physical world, rather than the energetic one (balancing the wand perfectly).

The table is wooden, made by man as the laurel wreath in the World is. Reminding us perhaps that we craft our own destiny. It appears to have symbols carved around the side- water or mountains, the dove from the ace of cups. This is a carefully crafted altar rather than a garden table.

The robes: white and red, reflecting the heaven and earth of the lilies.

The infinity symbol: Similar to the Ouroboros, reminding us that nothing is created nor lost, merely changed. The magician knows this- and can use it to his advantage.

The hand positions: A clear embodiment of “As above, so below. As within, so without.”

The four suits: Are all he needs to master his life. (look out for equilateral crosses, squares, and cubes to symbolise these four elements.)

High Priestess: The inner world of dreams, fantasies, the unconscious, and connecting with the Divine.

Femantine principle

Sometimes I hate the “new age” world we live in where people believe that “Priestess” is something that can be bought with a weekend course and a certificate.

High Priestess is a role, an elder in a spiritual group, community or wisdom tradition. Someone who understands the spiritual world and can act as a gateway between the mundane and the spiritual.

It would have been a genuine commitment, a lifestyle, and would probably have come at a personal cost, or perhaps in later life when caring responsibilities are completed.

We link the High Priestess to the concept of virgin- and a virgin is an unmarried woman. I don't think you need to be single to act in the role of priestess, but I do think you need to have the time and freedom to focus on the role. A supportive partner is needed who isn't looking for a caregiver in the home.

Many of us love the High Priestess for her connection with psychic ability, intuition and deep connection with the divine. There is a mystery here, a promise perhaps of something more fulfilling than this everyday life.

I believe true spiritual connection takes us back to the Divine (however you choose to define that) and to a sense of love we have perhaps last felt in the womb. That liminal time when we were with body, but perhaps also connected in a way we can't fully comprehend at this point.

I'd like to share a story about this. I was on a year long shamanic course, my second, and I was really getting a high from the work. The teacher told us we would work in pairs to connect in a deeper way than ever before. I looked around- eager to give it a go, and everyone was quickly forming pairs to avoid me. I was somewhat confused, then one of the group walked up to me declaring loudly "I'll work with Maddy then" as if it was last choice.

I was definitely confused at this point, until the teacher walked up to the two of us and said "its OK, I'll work with you both".

I couldn't hold it any more "what the f###k is wrong with me?"

The teacher's answer was simple. "We all see your face when you are doing this work, you are enraptured, at peace, at home. People don't want to work with you in case you don't come back."

They were right to be worried, it is still a struggle at times, there is nothing more blissful than that deep spiritual connection with source. And it can come in many ways-through music, or sex, or nature, art, dance etc.. **That blissful moment when all seems right in the universe and you want to stay in that moment for ever.**

But we are in human form right now, and for that beautiful moment to last I believe we would need to die. And so, the High Priestess rightly guards her secret with a curtain. To connect for a moment, but not completely- for we still have a life to live and experiences to enjoy.

And so, the role of Priestess is some one who can act as a mediator between the worlds, without losing herself in either world, or in the role.

It does not come through a certificate- but by doing the work, growing into the role.

And if you are this far along the course- this is without doubt an aspect of you.

Symbols in the High Priestess

Two pillars: The pillars form a gateway, between your mundane world, and other world/s. They are black and white to reflect that all creation is through the combining of opposite forces, male & female, hot & cold, light & dark, etc.

Jachin "he will establish" (Grandson of Jacob)

Boaz "in him is strength" (A godly man who married Ruth, in the book of Ruth)

These are pillars described in the bible, and refer to the temple of Solomon. What wisdom is held for us in those names? I'm not sure. Maybe it is a reminder to honour our lineage- whether of kith (spiritual), kin (bloodline) or cultural.

In a way you have purchased this course to connect with my wisdom tradition of Tarot, and without doubt my work is based on the Rider-Waite cards, the art work of Pamela Coleman Smith, and Rachel Pollack's books. We all have a rich heritage, and it is so important to honour it.

Pomegranates: Represent Persephone, who when she was captured by Hades ate the seeds of a pomegranate whilst in the underworld, and was thus destined to always return.

Palms: A suitably phallic symbol the balance the feminine pomegranate.

Moons: waxing, full, waning moon crown links her to the ever-changing cycle of the moon.

The crescent moon at her feet: Representing the unconscious mind.

The equilateral cross: A powerful symbol connecting to manifesting- the 4 directions, 4 suits of Tarot. I sometimes wonder if the move from equilateral cross to crucifix (elongated central axis) was a deliberate attempt to hide this symbol.

Tora scroll (see also wheel of fortune) Tora is the "law" (linking clearly with Justice), and reminding us of the links between the High Priestess and the lores of the spiritual world. This may be connected with what can be called the Akashic records, how the unconscious memory holds a record of everything ever experienced, or perhaps the collective unconscious where tribal memories can be found.

I remember reading once that most people have an aversion to snakes because they were the most dangerous animal to early humans. And even those of us that live in areas where there are no dangerous snakes still have that tribal memory that snakes are dangerous.

The cube: A powerful symbol of physical reality (linked to the square, and the equilateral cross) different to the cuboid found in the Devil.

Head covering: Her hair is veiled, she hides her "glory" as the divine water behind her is also veiled.

This card is deeply connected with many Goddesses.

Persephone, Hel, Isis. Her name changes from culture to culture.

The veiled hair, the curtain across the pillars reminds me of a quote associated with Isis;

"I am that has been and is and shall be. No one has ever lifted my veil"

We are not supposed to connect completely to the divine whilst in physical form. The experience would be too complete to allow us to continue to enjoy this life. And for what ever reason we all chose to be incarnate to experience, to live, love, learn, and grow.

With her deep connections to water and moon this is a deeply feminine, intuitive card.

The moon needs the sun to shine, just as the Emperor needs to Empress to flourish. All is interconnected, and integration is the key.

Empress- Mother. We are all born, all were cared for in our early life. Our mother, our children. Those who care for us, those who we care for.

Divine feminine

I urge you to be careful with this card- because "Mother" is a world of tears.

If you were loved by yours then separation, through adulthood or in time death will be hard.

If you were not loved by yours then it is a wound that will always be raw.

Whether you have children or not. By choice, or not. This is a card of families and children. If you are reading for others and this card crops up- take care. It speaks of the joy of unconditional love, and the pain that our imperfect world can create.

She is creation in all her forms, and nurturing in all her forms- and whatever our family situation this is a part of the Empress that I believe we all need to make peace with.

Empress: “A woman who is a sovereign ruler of great power and rank”

No woman is more important to our life than our mother. She birthed us, and as babies we were dependant on a nurturer (mother or mother figure) to care for us.

Through life we learn to internalise that mother figure and take sovereignty of our own life. **You are of great power.**

Symbols in the Empress

The lush landscape: We often personify the earth as our mother, and the harvest provided as her nurturing us.

The water: Is there a more feminine symbol than water? Here it flows fast, as life itself does.

Twelve pointed headdress: Queen of heaven (signs of the Zodiac), links to Mary and the book of revelations. A feeling that we have here a connection with both the earth and the heavens.

Venus glyph: As well as a symbol of Venus (love and beauty), the universal symbol for female and woman.

The rich pillows: This suggests the card is set in a garden, a place where the wildness of nature is tamed. That the Empress isn't needing to look powerful, she is powerful.

Sceptre: A symbol of her sovereignty and power. We all have that power- if we can make peace with our inner divine mother (regardless of our gender).

Robe: I consider the images on the robe to be pomegranates, linking her with her daughter the High Priestess.

Her outfit, her jewellery, her seat- she encourages you to find beauty, luxury, and joy in your life! That taking the time to meet your needs is an important part of living.

I look at the face of the Empress and I hear her say “enjoy this life. Feel the rain on your feet, drink the best wine, wear your favourite perfume.

Paint for the joy of colour, sing the pleasure of sound, create for the process not the result.

Your very life is a moment of divine creation.”

Or as Withnail might say; **“We want the finest wines available to humanity, we want them here and we want them now!”**

Emperor- Father. Our Father, and father figures in our life. Those who have stood in authority, and how we take sovereignty of our own life.

Divine Masculine

Now this is a loaded card. We live in a patriarchy world, sadly life can still be complicated for women. Many people will struggle with the Emperor- especially if they have had issues with toxic masculinity or harsh authority in their life.

Remember that many men will have struggled with toxic males in their life, just as women have.

The Emperor represents father, authority, rules and structure. But notice;

- The Empress came first. (I'll leave it there for that sentence..)
- The Emperor is looking across at his partner.
- The river from the Empress card flows across his card.
- He holds a sceptre in the shape of the Venus glyph, and a sacred Orb (feminine symbol). To me it feels he rules with the support of the Empress, he does not rule her.

For too long now we have been told by a patriarchal religion that Eve, and all women, are less than men. That they are created from and for men. That childbirth is a result of sin not an act of creation.

We have here a matched pair. Equal yet different. And we all need to embody and internalise the emperor regardless of our gender.

The emperor is structure, discipline, authority, order and logic.

Perhaps our own father was absent or heavy handed. Perhaps we have struggled with toxic masculinity in our life. Perhaps we have suffered at the hand of misused authority. Leading us to reject this card, this archetype.

Then we reject our personal authority. We perceive others having the power to make decisions, and don't appreciate our own authority.

Symbols in the Emperor

Rams heads: a symbol of Aries, first of the astrology signs, ruled by Mars. Key word "assertive".

White hair & beard: Indicate he is older. Interestingly the Empress is not drawn as an older woman. Do women emotionally mature quicker than men because the consequences of unprotected sex with a man are not so easily escaped? Is the physical monthly reminder of the potential of pregnancy a huge part of a female growing up? I'm just pondering...

The mountains. This is a deck based on Jewish and Christian wisdom, and the Jewish God (who is of course the Christian God) is a God of the mountains. A harsh authority.

There is no equal feminine in Christianity. No Empress with her running water to soothe and balance the Masculine.

The barrenness of the landscape reminds us clearly how we need the balance of masculine and feminine in our inner and outer life.

The throne: Built to show authority, unlike the Empress who reclines knowing she has an authority.

The armour: Perhaps a sense the Emperor had to earn his authority.

Crown: The Emperor's crown is enclosed, he is not connecting to a higher power (as perhaps the Magician is with his circlet) he is his higher power.

Very much worn as a symbol to others.

We make friends with the Emperor through planning, by being self-disciplined enough to make time for the things that matter to us.

By journaling, writing, naming.

By finding joy in order and organisation- whether that is labelling your spice rack or organising your books!

Know yourself, know your boundaries, and step into sovereignty of yourself.

Hierophant-Communicating wisdom. Our education, our teachers, how we learn as adults, and how we teach others.

OK- how many of you have issues with this card?

Is it the Christian symbolism, the clear hierarchy, or the fact you struggled with your education?

Here we want to look beyond those archetypes, at the role of this card in our spiritual journey.

The Hierophant is a matched pair with the High priestess- where the High priestess is the direct spiritual connection, and the Hierophant is how we understand and integrate that experience.

We all need teachers and mentors in our life. It would be foolhardy to not pause and learn from others who have studied, learnt and experienced more than us. And this is the Hierophant.

Education has been a political tool for far too long now- used to indoctrinate and disempower people.

Right now I am in the place of Hierophant for you. I am pouring over 20 years of study, over 10 years as a working pro, into this course. But I give you both

keys- all the information I have- and it is yours to integrate, understand, and make yours. And in time when you talk about Tarot, or teach Tarot you will know more because of me, just as I know more because of my education, and so the journey continues.

Don't shy away from this beautiful card, seek the wisdom all around you- from books to songs, teachers to mentors.

Remember the High Priestess needs the Hierophant to frame and express her experience. Without the Hierophants her experiences are but a dream.

Symbols in the Hierophant

Checker board pattern: This comes from (possibly unsubstantiated) references to Solomon's temple, and Masonic symbolism. At its simplest it reflects the duality of life.

The two monks: The red roses (physical world- earth) and the white lilies (spiritual world- heaven).

The two keys: Again, the keys to heaven and earth.

The white shoes with equilateral crosses, and the four circles with equilateral crosses: Representing the physical world, and "walking the walk" as it were. A true teacher lives their life in alignment with what they teach.

The blue collar: I associate blue with the throat chakra, to me this is emphasising the sound of his voice, and the spoken word.

Grey pillars: The pillars are the gateway to the spiritual world. It is the High Priestess that accesses this world, the Hierophant connects through the High Priestess rather than directly. So, the pillars are grey (muted, blended) rather than the powerful duality of black and white.

Hand position: This is a symbol of blessing (repeated in the 10 of swords).

Crown: The three-tiered crown (triregnum) is a papal symbol (as is the 2 keys). It reflects several trio's- principally signifying that the Pope is ruler of three worlds; Father of kings, Governor of the world, Vicar of Christ.

Sun glyph either side of the throne: Linking him to the Divine, solar plexus, and how his ego is in alignment with the Divine.

Triad cross: This is the orthodox cross, with a horizontal line for the sign placed above Jesus, his hands, and his feet. It is a more authentic symbol than the Catholic crucifix, and older.

The triad: There are several triads in Tarot (Chariot, Lovers, Devil). Look at the communication between the Triad to gain insight into the card. Here we do have a hierarchy- but there is communication between the three (unlike the Devil).

Lovers- Experiencing equal relationships. Those we form equal bonds with outside of our family. From friends to lovers. In time creating our adult family.

For our species to continue many of us need to form heterosexual relationships and create babies. In modern society this may reflect any adult committed relationship where a new family is created.

Just as Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden and became incarnate, we leave our family of birth to make independent choices and forge our own lives.

Yes this card can reflect relationships, especially romantic ones. But it also reflects you. The beautiful triad that exists in each of us; our logical self (Adam), our emotional self (Eve), and our Higher Guidance (Angel).

Are you balanced in all three?

Do you nurture this triad within yourself?

I Believe this triad expresses the process of a Tarot reading;

The intuition flows from source (angel)

We feel the information within, through the psychic connection (Eve/High priestess)

We create words to express and understand the intuitive flow (Adam/Hierophant)

In many ways the Lovers is the ultimate card of balanced integration, and if you are looking for that in relationships, you need to first find it within yourself.

Symbols in the Lovers

The 2 trees: These reflect the two pillars (forming a gate way).

The tree of life (Adam) from the Garden of Eden, described as having “12 kinds of fruit” in Revelations.

The tree of “knowledge of Good and Evil” (Eve) with 4 fruits shown. God told Adam & Eve they would die if they ate from this tree. Perhaps having full knowledge of good and evil needed a physical experience, which naturally included death.

In principle these trees can represent life and death, the duality of human existence.

Adam & Eve: Divine feminine (intuition, right brain) and Divine masculine (logic, left brain).

The mountain: This always has a sexual feeling to me- the creation that occurs when opposites create something new.

Angel & sun: Here we have a more direct connection with the Divine than the Hierophant- perhaps a messenger of the Divine, or our own higher guidance, inner divinity.

Notice how the angels face is golden like the sun, the 2 almost seem one.

Which angel is this? There are various ways of interpreting this as sources differ as to which angel represents the sun. Personally, I connect this with Uriel (“God is my light”). And I link the Angel, sun, and flames on the tree of life with the light of the Divine. That eternal spark that is within all of us- even if forgotten at times when we are in mortal form.

The sun represents the source, or the divine.

Clothing: Adam and Eve are naked (not a common image in the Rider-Waite Tarot) suggesting they are hiding nothing. The angel is draped in cloth- again this idea that we can not connect completely to the divine whilst in physical form.

Snake: Represent sexual (kundalini) energy which in turn led to physical life, birth, and death.

Hand gesture: Open, almost comforting or creating a safe space (compared to the Hierophant & Devil)

Triad: Another of our big Triad cards- Adam seems to look at Eve (our logic connects with our intuition) and Eve seems to look at the angel (our intuition connects with the divine)

[Chariot-I know who I am, and nothing will stop me now...](#)

I adore how Pamela Coleman-Smith integrated the other cards into this image.

For good or bad we are all the result of all our experiences up to this point.

This card has a powerful message for us that applies to the entire major arcana- integrate, integrate, integrate.

As you move through each card- learn what the card has to say, build that into your psyche, and move on.

This is not about racing to the end, there is no end, the World is just another start.

The journey is what matters, and what you learn along the way.

There is a brittleness to this card, all that ostentatious showiness. He needs to prove to others, and himself, that he is confident. In time- when we reach the Hermit- that is fully internalised and integrated. No show is needed.

He still wears his confidence as armour, needing to prove himself. Perhaps his fear of being wrong is what creates that stuckness that is so evident in the lying sphinxes and concrete chariot. Integration is still in process!

Symbols in the Chariot

We find all of the Majors contained in this one card.

1: The wand held in the hand.

: Both hands pointing down- he is now manifesting in the physical plane.

: The circlet which seems different to the starry crown.

:The belt is now looser and marked with magical symbols.

2:The black & white sphinxes (pillars)

:The moons he now wears almost as armour on his shoulders.

:The water flowing behind him.

: The curtain at the back of the chariot.

3:The starry canopy and crown.

:The lush garden between the wall & river.

:The fast flowing river.

4: The concrete nature of the chariot.

:The armour, now worn as a breastplate (perhaps ceremonial rather than practical).

:The holding of the wand as if it was a sceptre of object of authority.

5: The triad nature of the card.

:There seem to be three, or multiple, layers to his crown.

6: the male and female union, with the angel wings at the front of the chariot.

And the rest..

The walled city: He has left a place of safety, making his own way in life.

Moons on this shoulder: Perhaps this is just a link to the High Priestess, maybe it links to the 2 paths of the kabbalah (severity & mercy) the faces do look sad and happy. He seems to wear them as armour, perhaps using his intuition to protect him.

Sphinxes: (also seen on wheel of fortune) Now I am not an expert in Egyptian mythology, so if this interests you do dive deeper. I see the sphinxes as being connected with wisdom. There is a suggestion the sphinx represents the sun god- so we have a feel of the divine pulling the chariot (rather than horses). To me this is someone who is aiming to follow his soul path.

Breastplate: The breastplate protects the heart, and has religious associations with connecting the wearer to the divine.

Square: With have the square of manifestation (4 directions, 4 tarot suits) on the breast plate.