

LESSON 122

DEATH

The Golden Dawn version of this card is very much in the traditional mode. Here we have the typical archetypal image of the 'Grim Reaper' or the figure of death itself. Overall this shows the underlying factor of what we will transform into, after death. In many ways death is a continuation of the journey of the Hanged Man. Now that the suffering of the former has given way, to enlightenment, the cross over from one boundary to another can be accomplished.

Crowley made the comment in his Book of Thoth that Death is a Saturnian Symbol and found it strange to be associated to Scorpio. However even though the standard archetype associations were done before the discovery of Pluto, which is exalted in Scorpio, an esoteric study of Pluto in Scorpio will reveal that it is more associated to death than Saturn, for before the discovery of this planet Saturn had many associations attributed to it that in the light of modern knowledge can now be attributed to Pluto. In addition the sign Scorpio is well known as a transformative sign.

Mathers says of this card: 'The 13th Key of the tarot represents the figure of a skeleton, upon which some portions of flesh still remain. In a field he is reaping off with a Scythe of Death the fresh vegetation which springs from the corrupting bodies buried therein - fragments of which - such as hands, heads and feet appear above the soil. Bones are also strewn upon the surface. One of the heads wears a kingly crown; another is apparently that of a person of little note, showing that Death is the equaliser of all conditions. The five extremities, the Soul, hands and feet allude to the powers of number five, the Letter of Heh, the Pentagram - the concealed Spirit of Life and the Four Elements - the originator of all living form. The Sign of Scorpio especially alludes to stagnant and foetid water - that property of moist nature which initiates putrefaction and decay. The eternal change from life into death through death into life, is symbolised by the grass which springs from and is nourished by putrifying and corrupting carcasses; the herbage, in its turn affords food to animals and to man, which again when dead, nourisheth vegetable life and brings growth and perfection to the living herbage. This is further shown by the figure itself putrifying and decaying as it reaps the grass of the field. "As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field, so he

flourisheth." The top of the scythe forms the Tau Cross of Life, showing that what destroys also renews.'

'The whole is a representation of the essential transformation of the life of nature, which reforms all things into fresh images and similitudes. This symbol represents the corrosive and destructive action of the infernal Fire as opposed to the celestial the Dragon of the Waters, the Typhon of the Egyptians, the Slayer of Osiris - which later yet rises against Horus. The Scorpion, Serpent of Evil delineated before the figure of Death in the more ancient form of the Key, refers to the mixed and transforming, therefore deceptive, nature of this emblem. Behind him, is the Symbol of the Nameless One, representing the seed and its germ, not yet differentiated into Life, therefore unacceptable of definition. The Scorpion is the emblem of ruthless destruction; the Snake is the mixed and deceptive nature, serving alike for good and evil; the Eagle is the higher and Divine Nature, yet to be found herein, the Alchemical eagle of distillation, the renewer of Life. As it is said:- "Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagles." Great indeed, and many are the mysteries of this terrible card.'

Also with the Mathers description, which is really quite profound, there are other meanings that are but barely hinted at. Overall the card shows the plight of man in Macrocosm though clearly we are also dealing with the man, the microcosm as well. The figures on the ground can also stand for the many lives that one must transmute through, from begger to King so that he will know power and fortune as well as poverty, so the soul experiences all these phases of human existence. To appreciate this card in context of the Golden Dawn rituals one really has to study the symbolism of Typhon the Destroyer which is mentioned just before, during, and just after this card was introduced in the Portal ritual to the postulant. Typhon is clearly part of this card's meaning and is further elaborated on in a description given to the postulant which in fact shows but another aspect of Death.

The drawing of the Solar Annular Eclipse at the top of the card relates to the Neshamah blocking out the expression of the Ruach. The Annular or Ringed Eclipses, as they are sometimes called, relate to a completion of a cycle on a higher plane which forces the Nephesh to release itself from its two senior counterparts which result in the termination or death of the physical body.

The colour of the field is the Blue Green of the King Scale while the sky above it is its translucent colour in its upper stage with the Jasper Red sunset of the Queen Scale (in its translucent colour) where it merges with the earth on the

horizon. The serpent, eagle and part of the sun that is not obscured are also coloured in the Jasper Red of the Queen Scale. The skeleton is the Teak Brown of the Princess Scale (combining the translucent colour for shadings), as is the scythe also. The body parts on the ground are coloured in the translucent Agate of the Princess Scale as is the darkened part of the Sun. On the scythe there is blood (the complementary colour of the King Scale).

The psychological concept of this card shows transformation through the intensity of emotional sexual energy. There are times when the individual will be dormant in his or her activities during certain phases while the opposite will then occur. This card is not one of half heartedness but is dramatic and extreme in one phase or another. Here, the individual has an overwhelming instinctive urge to merge with other forces, persons or places. The intensity and finality of Death is somewhat overwhelming for the individual. Any action he or she takes will be followed through to the bitter end. There is an urge to identify with the Greater Whole of Humanity and every act done relates back to this in one form or another. Though partly obsessed with sexuality, the individual will find that it will tend to take up ones very existence on many different levels. In some ways we are reminded of the psychological makeup of the Indian Tantric followers and their approach to their own levels of consciousness through the sex act - which has many underlying and far reaching effects. This card shows individuals who seem frustrated as well and can produce a type of sexual neuroses - which is produced when one finds that the sex drive has no outlet for the Greater Whole. Like the eagle in the card, it is a symbol of things yet to come.

The alchemical aspect of this card is Putrefaction, it is the Primea Materia which is liberated through Putrefication, symbolised by the eagle at the top of the card. The lunar crescent (the Moon in front of the Sun) hints at various states of change that the Primea Materia has gone through to be liberated. The parts of bodies, at the feet of the skeleton, show the shattered crucible where the spirit has risen from the material and left this plane of existence.

DIVINATION

Note: A number of Tarot authors have tried to steer clear of taking the literal meaning of this card as death and have gone on to discuss the meaning of transformation. It is precisely because of this manipulating that we have created the meaning of the cards in the astrological houses. For each main fundamental level

is then researched. Death is a distasteful subject for most of us, and when this card turns up in a reading it can cause a lot of discomfort and distress to the querent. The problem on interpretation of this card lies squarely in the method of divination utilised. As an example, take the end result of a simple reading as in the Celtic Cross method, it can be frightening due to the fact that it is general, applied to no particular house division. With the use of the astrological house system, as given in this course, Death will mean Death only when it applies to the house you have allocated it to which will be the eighth house. The 8th house shows when and how it will occur but it is imperative that the house one is asking about is defined first so that no error can be made in judging the card. While death can also occur equally in the 4th and 12 houses the 8th is possibly the one that the literal meaning of the card can be taken.

ON MATTERS OF Selfhood; Self Projection; new ideas; new beginnings; reactions to outside stimuli; the life force; first encounters:

Death, under the above matters is illusory and is representative of things to come. Here, its most effect is on the personality where there is a death phase of hindering patterns to release a new mode of projection. Ideas and concepts are changed as the old personality dies. New beginnings are yet to come, however an ending has taken (or will take) place when a final phase is worked through which will not again be repeated. On first encounters there is no response to outside stimulus, as it is of an internal nature where images are formed for understanding although externally one appears uncompromising.

ON MATTERS OF possessions and personal attitude towards such; personal estate and resources both physical and material; principles and feelings; management and projection; commerce, personal, commercial, governmental and national financial affairs directly relating to the self:

If you condemn yourself you cannot expect any thing less from others. Treat yourself fairly, with respect, and you will receive such treatment from external and internal forces. The key impetus for the death card is survival and that is exactly what one does under the above matters - survive. There are threatening situations where one may lose all, and if not willingly, you'll experience it anyway, unwillingly. Fundamentally an exchange of existence takes place whether for better or worse. One should not expect too much on a material or financial level when the Death card appears here.

ON MATTERS OF short journeys; communications; relationships; brothers, sisters, neighbours; humour; identity; early education; books; correspondence; enlarging ones field of activity:

The end of a journey is in sight. There is a separation from relations and relationships, and also a transformation of the levels of the type of relationship one has with people. This card, Death, represents a loss of identity causing disorientation, however this loss is necessary so that a new image can be formed. In early education there were changes in schools. For some this shows a finishing of one form of learning and going on to higher forms of education. Expect no correspondence or a temporary setback in one field of activity.

ON MATTERS OF the end of one stage and the commencement of another; the home and private life; buildings; land; parents; security; emotions; significant shifts in lifes directions; concerning the soul; the occult in its practical terms; divination:

Here, the Death card, literally means the end of one stage of ones life but where there is an end there is a beginning. It is representative of the soul's journey in life and death. Occult activities are advised against except those that can convey transformation. Significant shifts in lifes directions are generally not noticed as this card represents the results of long expected changes, of which, occur very subtlety, and as matter of course. The influence of the home and private life environment is transformative. There may be a death in the family - or have been - from which you may benefit by (depending on the surrounding cards).

ON MATTERS OF love given; creativity of selfhood; the creative will; children; entertainment; recreation; speculation; sports; the arts; gambling; fulfilling potentiality:

The Death card here exemplifies the love-pain-death complex, which distinguishes the psyche from physical love. Such physical love is felt as consuming anguish and insatiable desire which surpasses all pleasure of love. It is an idolising love which is an illusion of which actual possession of the loved object causes disappointment and disillusion of the godlike status it was once given, hence death of the illusion. This card is representative of a birth, and the transformative growing pains of children. Concerning the creative Will, this card is analogous to divine wisdom. On all of the rest of the above matters however, this card is not fortunate and advises against such activities.

ON MATTERS OF sickness; employment; employees; relationships within the work environment; conflicts; service; ones sense of service; the acquiring of skills; psychology:

The Death card here represents a psychological reorientation after effort and sacrifice. In matters of employment a job is completed, one cannot (and should not) return as that phase in your life has ended. Any sickness is a common ailment and ailments from which all humanity suffer from time to time. If one is ill then this card shows the end (termination) of an illness. However do not take physical illness at face value - look into the deep recesses of the psyche and try to treat the root cause of the ailment. Concerning the work environment there is a breakdown of a situation. There is a powerful recreative force involved here by the Death card. It is the will to live, but through surrendering all, to live again anew, for the old must be cleared away for the new. Radionic healing is depicted here.

ON MATTERS OF marriage and divorce; contracts; the other party; competitors, adversaries, and known enemies; partnerships; public relationships; social interaction; the law of compensation; what is lacking; the workings of karma:

The Death card in this position shows the end of relationships, the end of a contract or business deal, painful times and crises, transitions which must be made. Relationships die a natural death - nothing is expected, however one must be aware that for many the Death card shows situations experiencing 'little deaths' and rebirths, and not necessarily a complete death of a matter. Nevertheless this card is likened to the God of destruction in this position. Relationships act as a catalyst for transformation and change, which is necessary in the workings of karma, where deep emotional complexes must be released.

ON MATTERS OF death and rebirth; accidents; effects of others; crime and retribution; legacies; wills; others estates and finances; joint resources; moods; sex; spiritualism; rejuvenation; mysticism; transformation; psychotherapy:

When enquiring about life and death this card in this position generally means death at the most or otherwise it represents transformation and regeneration. There is an immense ability to tap the regenerative forces of nature. On a sexual level this card shows conquering passions and loosing the self to make a union (through sex) with life/God/beloved or society. On another level there is losing ones conscious boundaries, slipping into the recesses of the unconscious. It also shows partnerships

where one person has relinquished control to the other. Through seeing the face of death one can be born - let death jolt you into life.

ON MATTERS OF religion; metaphysics; philosophy; higher study and education; legal systems; morals; institutions of learning; long distance travel; exploration; public communications; the collective mind:

In this position the death card suggests one to consider the wisdom of the serpent and its transformation into the eagle. It is also associated to the death or sudden change of an in-law but to the person experiencing the change it is not sudden, but something that is a matter of course to preceding circumstances. This card shows someone searching for the answer to life and death or someone averse or with a fear of the answers and becoming nihilistic. However 'to philosophize is to prepare for death' (Cicero), and one should not die unless one has lived well: This is what is suggested by this card under the above matters, to go on life's journey and learn as much as one can learn. Through higher education, transformations can occur and any journeys taken will be long although this card represents life's journey rather than individual journeys.

ON MATTERS OF public honour; status; ambitions and goals reached; achievements; profession; the other parent; causes for disgrace; recognition; identity:

A parent represented in this position may be archetyped with a devouring nature, for some there is a loss or early death of a parent. In either case problems occur as a result of this parent. The Death card here also shows the feelings of being devoured in ones profession - a situation too overpowering for you. This card shows a person/state or country coming out of a crises renewed and regenerated. Under the above matters the death card represents a conclusion of affairs, ambitions, goals. Illusions, dreams are shattered and one realises the hopelessness of them. One should retire from current activities.

ON MATTERS OF friends; income; social alliances; legislation; ones attitude; group activities; government, counsellors; love received; spiritual and intellectual aspirations; ideals; fulfilment; what you yield and how you benefit others:

Friends and friendship is lost. Newer alliances are formed. A person's attitude is changed, old ideas are wiped. In terms of love received a person will see you in a different light. There

is total fulfilment here - what you had to do has been completed. In group activities or organisations this card shows the end of something, a dissolving of a group, a rebuilding of new values, rules, regulations etc, the changing of parliament/congress. Concerning spiritual matters a certain amount of understanding is attained after personal experience, and there a bright new beginning is seen. This card does not bode well for financial income.

ON MATTERS OF responsibility and contribution to others; humanistic concerns; karmic debts; unresolved problems; hidden resources; the unconscious; sorrow; health afflictions; secret enemies; hospitals; secret societies; self undoing; total identification:

In this position the death card shows a person having the death wish, and for some there is death-anxiety. Any change is psychologically equated with death. There is a dread of 'not-being' yet a person must traverse this state for any kind of transformation. If negatively aspected this card shows death, and in some cases a disappearance. Positively aspected it shows a redirection of energies towards strengthening oneself and for higher development. As regards hidden enemies, one must strengthen and protect ones weak points as they will be located and used as an advantage. In karma debts must be paid, you cannot delay them any longer. In ones total identity a person comes face to face with him/herself.

~~~~~

#### MEDITATION ON THE CARD DEATH:

Let the Student first study the overall picture of the card, then study each detail: Each symbol and image. Study the colours. Now let the Student look at the card and feel its vibrations. Write down your overall impression.

~~~~~

exercise

Now paint this card with the above described colours. An outlined drawing is supplied with this lesson.

~~~~~