

TAROT INTERPRETATION

Lesson Five

The fifth stage of spiritual unfoldment corresponds to Keys 19, 12 and 5. Review the lessons of TAROT FUNDAMENTALS dealing with these Keys. Review also the meanings of *Ruach*, Spirit, given in the first lesson of this series.

Key 19, which represents this stage of unfoldment, corresponds to the first letter of רוּחַ, *ruach*. Key 5, connected also with this step on the Path of Return, is the second letter of ruach, Vav (ו). Mem (מ) and the Hanged Man, because מַיִם means “water,” and Key 12 represents a state of perfect receptivity to the influx of the universal Life-power, have many correspondences to the letter Cheth (ח), and to Key 7. For Cheth is the letter attributed to the watery sign Cancer, ruled by the Moon, and Mem represents the Great Sea, which is also the Great Mother, the subconscious aspect of the Life-power.

Resh (ר) is truly a symbol of the ruling principle in human personality. To it is attributed the Collective Intelligence, concerning which we are told: “Thence astrologers, by the judgement of the stars and the heavenly signs, derive their speculations and the perfection of their science, according to the motions of the stars.”

The Intelligence so described is precisely what scientists utilize in their work. It observes facts, classifies them, discerns hidden links of relationship and order, formulates laws. It reasons inductively from particulars to generals, fits facts and inferences together to frame hypotheses. In short, it is self-consciousness; and in this stage of unfoldment a new type of self-consciousness becomes manifest.

A double letter, Resh stands for the pair of opposites, Fruitfulness and Sterility. Fruitfulness, because the onlooking of the universal self-consciousness incites the activity of the universal subconsciousness, and thus brings about all the rich productiveness of the world of Name and Form. Sterility, because the same self-conscious awareness, working through personal centers of expression, at last penetrates by induction through the veil of Name and Form and prepares the way for return to the Nameless and Formless Source of all. Through self-consciousness the Life-power involves itself in relativity and the illusions of appearance. By the same kind of conscious activity it extricates itself from the bondage of appearances and returns to the seeming sterility of the No-Thing.

Even the number of the Key implies the same idea. 19 is a combination of 1 and 9. 1, as a symbol of beginning, suggests seed-forms and therefore fruitfulness. 9, as a type of ending, suggests the cessation of production and therefore sterility. Similarly, the Magician,

numbered 1, is a young man at the height of his virility, while the Hermit, numbered 9, is a sterile sage near the close of his life journey.

So we may read these Keys, from one point of view. Yet we ought to say that this last interpretation is based strictly on the world of appearances. One truly versed in practical occultism might reverse the interpretation of the numbers 1 and 9, and yet be telling the truth. Such are the paradoxes of occult speech.

The universal self-conscious level of the Life-power's activity is the actual reality expressed in all phases of personal self-consciousness. Through some personal vehicles, expression is free and clear from obstructions. Through others it is partial and distorted by imperfections and inadequacies of personality. Just as a great singer's voice, sent over the radio, sounds in every receiving set, yet is heard with varying degrees of clarity and purity of intonation due to differences in the quality of the receivers, so is the Life-power's perfect self-consciousness distorted when it manifests through an undeveloped personality.

This power is now unfolding through us. It has brought us to the point of sharing some part of its knowledge of itself. So long as we remain within the limits of ordinary human consciousness, we must continually remind ourselves to work in harmony with the law of the Life-power. We must remember that Spirit works primarily through our self-consciousness, and through the higher centers of our brains. Then, from what we know of self-consciousness and its modes of operation, we shall see that our liberation demands trained use of our senses, accurate and logical inductive reasoning, and intelligent application of the law of suggestion. These come first.

Next we must bear in mind that the Life-Breath links all things together, and that this uniting agency is at work in the field of subconsciousness. Subconsciousness, as we have said before, is not a personal possession. It is universal, and a human body is simply one of its innumerable channels of manifestation.

It unites us to all persons everywhere, to all creatures living on planes below man, and even to the vital essence of those forms of appearance classified as inorganic. This linkage, moreover, is not merely to terrestrial things and beings, but extends also to everything in the universe, even to the outermost limits of space, and to planes and beings beyond the range of the physical.

Finally, since the Spirit unfolding through us presents itself to us as a power working always toward definite, articulate expression, we shall take pains to make our speech truly representative of our consciousness. It is folly to suppose that one may have any lasting experience of the higher consciousness before he has attained to ripeness in the lower stages. To enter the consciousness beyond thought requires as its preliminary no little clarification of the consciousness for which thought is the vehicle. One means of clarification is right speech.

One mark of readiness for the higher kind of knowing is ability to express thought in clear, precise, accurate terms.

Great sages speak with authority. Jesus was a master of the spoken word. So was Buddha. So was Ramakrishna. A truly illuminated man knows what to say and how to say it. He will not employ sesquipedalian polysyllables. He will certainly choose appropriate and beautiful words, and will so combine them that what he thinks is made intelligible to others.

Analytical psychologists, led by Carl Jung, have discovered a truth long familiar to occultists, namely, that symbols are universal. We do not have to invent a theory of migration to account for the fact that persons living far apart use the same symbols to express the same ideas. The human mind is practically the same in every place and in every age. When a man tries to express an idea, the mental laws of association and representation determine the symbol he selects. It is on this account that symbolism is truly a universal language.

Analytical psychology has discovered also that the dream symbol of a little child usually refers to the impulse toward sex-expression. This is a clue to the meaning of the two little children in Key 19, for the same rule holds good in occult symbolism.

What does this imply? Simply that the power we direct and control in practical occultism is the power which, for innumerable generations, has insured the perpetuation of the race.

In this way it provided vehicles for the slow evolution of the potencies of the I AM through human bodies. That slow evolution brings us at last to a stage of development where we may, and must, consciously participate in the working of the Life-power which regenerates our minds and bodies.

Little children are its symbols, because at this stage, the power that was formerly utilized for physical reproduction only is directed into other and higher channels. Thus Key 19 shows the children turning their backs to the wall which represents the sense life. They typify the transmutation of the creative force from a lower or slower rate of vibration to a higher rate.

They dance in a fairy ring in which the basic pattern of design is that of the Wheel of Fortune—concentric circles. This is to show that this higher rate of vibration synchronizes their activity with the forces represented in Key 10 by the central circle of the wheel. In this connection, observe that 10 results from adding the digits of 19.

The goal of the Great Work, here depicted as a dance, is the height beyond the pillars of Key 18. Tarot represents it also by the central figure of Key 21.

Note that the children, like that figure, are dancing. Dancing is movement to music in which rhythm is the basis. Rhythm is also the basis of astronomical fact and is the key to truth in astrological judgment.

In Key 18, the beginning of the Path of Return is shown. The shellfish crawling out of the water stands for what the children symbolize in Key 19; but in Key 18 the higher is encased in the lower, as the vital and directive parts of the organism of a shellfish are concealed in its bony carapace. The children of Key 19 have been liberated from this hard and fast appearance of form. They are nearing perfection of self-consciousness.

We have called this “fourth-dimensional consciousness.” This is a **name**, but it is far from being a definition. Jacob Boehme tried to describe this higher order of knowing, but what he wrote seems to be gibberish unless one has shared his experience. Then it makes perfect sense. The visions of Ezekiel and St. John describe the same thing, but convey little to the average reader. Yet we should read writings like these over and over again.

No effort should be made to interpret them, or even to understand them. They were not written for that purpose. They are meant to prepare the mind of the reader to have similar experiences.

The more one’s consciousness unfolds, the more intelligible do such visions become. The same may be said of the writings of genuine alchemists. Thus d’Espagnet, in his HERMETIC ARCANUM, insists that any man who wishes to apply himself to Hermetic philosophy should make use of few authors and should not be content with reading them once or twice, but should read them ten times or more without becoming discouraged.

When this is done, here a sentence becomes luminous, there a phrase, once dark, turns crystal-clear. Books of this kind are meant to be tests of our advancement. The ripper we are, the more they have to say to us.

The little children in Key 19 remind us also that in this stage of unfoldment one grasps definitely the truth that one is really and truly a child of the Life-power. During this fifth stage, by persistent practice in meditation on the consequences of this perception, it will become evident that personality does nothing of itself, that it is merely an instrument for a power having aims extending far beyond the limits of personal vision.

Do you doubt this? Read history and see how the Life-power has worked to its own ends without respect for persons. Look back over your own life to see how significant were little things you hardly noticed at the time they occurred, and how relatively unimportant were many things which you supposed to be the only matters of real account.

We have to **learn** to be little children. “Of such,” said Jesus, “is the kingdom.” They who are the most open channels for the Life-power’s operation, they whose child-like confidence in guidance is the strongest are nearest to freedom because they depend utterly on the indwelling presence of the One.

There is no surrender of freedom in obedience to guidance. The Life-power's methods are the fruit of its perfect wisdom. In perfect obedience is therefore our best assurance of success, in little details as well as in the more massive aspects of our activity. Nature is our adversary so long as we disagree with her. By agreeing quickly, we make her our friend and servant.

To the degree that we accept the guidance of the Life-power, to that degree are we liberated from the worst delusions, the notion that we do anything whatever of ourselves. Obedience soon brings us to understand that the law is not imposed on us from outside. It comes from within. We are its personal expressions. The creative method of the universe is specialized in every human personality. Every human being is a living fruit on the Tree of Life.

This is shown in the symbolism of Key 12. The attitude of personal surrender it typifies is developed in the fifth stage of unfoldment. In this mental attitude, which is exactly the reverse of that held by most persons, we learn the secret of true repose, the arcanum of eternal rest. For when all things, from least to greatest, are done **through us and not by us**, then fatigue is banished. He who is really guided by the Life-power in all things wastes neither time nor strength. Best of all, such a person has forgotten how to be anxious about anything.

We arrive at this stage as a result of logical inductive reasoning. We experience this unfoldment by keeping after it. It comes because we seek it. Sitting down and waiting for it will never bring it. If we are truly beginning to be unobstructed channels for the flow of the Life-power, the expression of its potencies through us as its personal centers will take form as persistence in study and practice.

Sooner or later in this work, which at first **seems** to be one's own personal undertaking, a change of consciousness is effected, and it becomes evident that the personal self does nothing whatever. The Life-power is the real, and only, Artist. It accomplishes the Great Work in and through us.

Then one understands why schools of secret science have always been so insistent on the pupil's strict obedience to his teacher. We ought to know that when we follow the instructions of a teacher we really obey the I AM. The Life-power leads us to personal centers of its wisdom who are qualified to help us. It even leads us to those whose own channels of expression are so distorted that the only lesson we can learn from them is the lesson of discrimination between true doctrine and ridiculous fantasy. Whoever the teacher, while we are numbered among his pupils we should obey his instruction. We ought not to worship personalities. We must, nevertheless, be ready to accept the guidance of the ONE speaking through the personal instructor.

Every teacher who knows this principle, when he speaks or writes, does his best to let the One Teacher find him an open channel of expression. When the pupil makes himself a receptive hearer or reader, he then makes sure that he gets correctly the spoken or written words.

Do not confuse this open receptivity to instruction with passive acceptance of whatever may be taught. The point is that you cannot exercise discrimination unless you really take what has been said or written. Accept nothing until your own inner Teacher, identical with the One who speaks or writes through any instructor, confirms the doctrine.

In Tarot, the Teacher is the Hierophant. He is your own real Self. The ministers who kneel before him are the personal modes of self-consciousness and subconsciousness. The One Teacher speaks to you with a thousand tongues, writes His Law for you to read in the innumerable symbols of the Book of Nature.

See yourself as His child, possessing as your birthright all the potencies of divinity, all its powers of control over subhuman forms of being, organic and inorganic. Submit yourself without reserve to the guidance which comes, not from above and without, but from within at the very center of your being. The law you obey is not that of an alien sovereign usurping the direction of your life. It is **your own law**, the perfect method whereby the Eternal One expresses through you. Open yourself to the instruction of that One and you will not only know the Law, but you will also know how to live it, moment by moment, day by day.

This, remember, is only the beginning. Hitherto, the forces at work have been operating at the subconscious level. In the first stage of unfoldment, one is, first of all, conscious of bondage. Then comes awakening to the sources of error. Meditation brings more light, but, as yet, freedom is a goal, not an experience. The same is true during the period represented by Key 18 when the new concepts are being built into the organism.

Only with the fifth stage of unfoldment does conscious liberation become a realized experience. Even at this stage the work is by no means complete. Hence, in Key 19 we see little children just on the verge of adolescence. There is more to come, and of this the following lessons will tell you.