

TAROT INTERPRETATION

Lesson Nineteen

PERPETUAL TRANSFORMATION

THE TABLEAU for this week is:

9	10	11
12	13	14
15	16	17

The magic square is:

12	17	10
11	13	15
16	9	14

In both arrangements, the central Key is 13, Death. The constant summation of the magic square is 39. It shows reversal (Key 12), expressing the Law of Response (Key 9) by the agency of creative imagination (Key 3). Key 13 represents the principal means whereby the forces symbolized by the pairs of opposites in the tableau are balanced. Key 12 shows the outcome of this equilibration.

All the meanings of this tableau revolve round the idea of change symbolized by Key 13. Remember that although there is a sense in which Key 13 does relate to the phenomenon of the cessation of a particular personal existence on the physical plane, it refers also to many other deeply esoteric doctrines. The saying in the Bible that the last enemy to be overcome is death has a direct bearing on these deeper meanings.

Plainly and briefly, the doctrine of Ageless Wisdom is that the actual processes which bring about the death of the human body are expressions of laws and forces which need only to be

understood in order to release us from bondage to death. When we thoroughly understand what makes us physically die, we shall learn also the secret of eternal life.

It is because mankind has feared death, has been so terrified by it that few indeed have had courage to study death closely. Little progress has been made in this important branch of occult knowledge. The few who **have** looked death in the face have reaped as their reward the revelation of a priceless secret. This is what the alchemists mean by saying: "Dissolution is the secret of the Great Work."

So begin your study this week by attentive examination of Key 13, reviewing whatever explanation of the symbols you have received in other texts. Give special thought to the rising sun. Open your inner ear to any suggestion which may come to you from the Inner School concerning the seed symbol in the upper left-hand corner of the picture. When the Keys are laid out in the tableau, this seed form seems to point upward toward the Hermit, but in the magic square it points toward the Hanged Man.

In this connection, consider all you know about the letter Yod, to which the Hermit is attributed and all we have said concerning the significance of the element of water. Observe, also, that the rising sun is really one of the stars pictured in Key 17.

Consider Keys 10, 12, 16 and 14, as they are placed in the tableau. At the top you see a symbol of the turning wheel of time. The unmoved sphinx, symbol of the spirit of humanity is sitting still while the wheel turns. At the left is the Key showing human personality as the temporary suspension of the whirling forces of the universe by the condensation of those forces into a particular form.

Thus one of the meanings of Key 12 is that personality is like a whirlpool. It maintains its identity because of forces flowing through it, and when these are turned in another direction, the whirlpool of personality disappears. Our apparent stability as entities on the physical plane is only temporary.

If we fall into the error of supposing physical plane existence to be our whole being, if we let this error develop into the delusion that a human life on the physical plane is an isolated fact, unrelated to the whole sweep of cosmic manifestation, then, inevitably, come the terror and destruction pictured by Key 16, which, in this tableau, is beneath Key 13, Death.

Wiser counsel, and certain types of experiment which are open to us, will overcome the delusion. Then we shall see that physical existence is but an incident in our total life expression and the open way shown in Key 14 will take us to the heights of spiritual realization.

Fundamentally, it is the energy of the Primal Will, symbolized by the light in the Hermit's lantern, which is at work in the various processes which break down the tissues of the human

body. The breakdown of tissue releases this energy in various forms of our personal activity—thinking, feeling, doing. Even a person apparently as inactive as a sage who sits motionless in profound meditation is, nevertheless, engaged in action. One evidence of this is that genuine work in mental control by concentration and meditation makes the body perspire freely. Intense mental work of the kind leading to direct perception of higher forms of reality, is work that breaks down cell tissue just as certainly as does muscular effort. Perspiration is always evidence that the skin is eliminating fatigue poison, and fatigue poison is a consequence of the disintegration of cells. (Keys 9, 13, 17)

Look again at the Keys in this tableau. Notice the symbol has two wavy lines at the bottom of the wheel just over the letter R, and, in this arrangement, over Key 13. This is an alchemical symbol for dissolution, but it is also the character used by astrologers for Aquarius, the zodiacal sign which is represented in the upper left-hand corner of Key 10 by the head of a man. The man's head is in the same relative position as the seed symbol in Key 13. This is also the place occupied in Key 16 by the falling crown.

Man is the seed form of a state of life-manifestation **beyond himself**. One error that besets him is the supposition that his present state is the crown of creation. In a sense, to be sure, that which is the essence of human life is identical with the one great Reality. The error is in the supposition that the Great Work is brought to its completion by the appearance of the “natural man.”

When the human race stops, so to say, and loses its vision of the Beyond, then confusion and terror come. Read the Bible story of the Tower of Babel. You will notice that the desire to build a memorial to present glory caused all the trouble. Key 16 shows the same error depicted. The Tower is a symbol of a vain attempt to arrest the onward flow of the Life-power. It represents the sum-total of the errors growing out of the folly of supposing that humanity, at its present level of development, is the be-all and end-all of the creative process.

As most of us know it, human personality is only a **stage** of that process. Beyond this stage lie untold and unguessed glories. More than this, some few beings in every generation, grasping this truth, have in their own persons verified it, and have passed beyond the limitations which the majority suppose to be fixed, unalterable laws. Some persons know the past and the future, as well as the present. Some persons can read the innermost secrets of the human heart. Some persons are not restricted to the one spot on earth where their physical body happens to be. Even some of us, who have caught barely a glimpse of the tremendous possibilities of this seed form we call “Man,” have received our own small but definite assurance that our limits are not so fixed as once we believed. (Keys 10, 13, 16)

Even exoteric dogmas have their germ of truth because they are veils for deeper meanings. We may smile at the popular notion that death is the gate to a heaven where all the injustices which seem to be rampant on this globe will be made right. Yet there is a deep occult sense in which it is true that by dying we enter the heaven-world where evil ceases to hold us in

bondage. Have you ever stopped to think that even the person who began to study this course of lessons is actually no more? To the degree that your occult study has brought you enlightenment, to that degree the disintegrative process symbolized by Key 13 has eliminated some portion of the person you were when you began your studies.

Problems that terrified you then have been solved. Difficulties have been overcome. You can see the working of justice in situations which formerly appeared to you to be unmixed evils. Your faith—an open-eyed, reasonable faith, enables you to look forward to further adjustments.

You have come to know that whatever bondage you seem to be enduring is really a result of ignorance. You are beginning to understand ignorance as resistance of certain parts of your physical organism to the passage of the light of the Life-power's perfect knowledge of all things. Thus, by dying to the old personality, you are already glimpsing your place in the great cosmic order, and that place is, in very truth, the "heaven" where no unrighteousness can enter, where sorrow is at an end, where perfect justice is the unvarying rule. (Keys 11, 13, 15)

Returning to the simile of the whirlpool as a symbol for existence on the physical plane, remember that every whirlpool is in a state of intense activity. Yet the working power behind the activity is the flow of the river through the whirlpool. So it is with human life. False mysticism is the refuge of deluded souls who fancy that by refusing to engage in action they come closer to Reality. Such persons try to avoid doing what their hands find to do. True realization is what is pictured by the Hanged Man, the knowledge that the motive power does not reside in the personality.

One suspends the false notion that what one does is self-originated. True mystics, therefore, are never mere Quietists. Many of them are prodigious workers. None ever are shirkers. Some work with their brains and nerve centers rather than with their hands, but just the same, they work. Yet in all they do, they are aware that their personal activity is but a phase of the world process on which that activity depends.

This mental attitude is especially favorable to the subtle changes in body chemistry (closely connected with nerve currents active in the area of the body governed by Scorpio) which bring about the awakening of the higher functions of the brain. As these functions become active, the consciousness of the person changes. He dies to the old man and rises again into a higher order of knowing which old books on magic call "The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel."

Remember, "angel" means **messenger**. The particular angel now having charge of the unfoldment of your life may not be anything like what most persons imagine angels to be. There are angels and angels, and that center of the Life-power's expression which is the means of leading you higher is your particular angel for this stage of your journey along the Way to Freedom. (Keys 12, 13, 14)

Remember this fundamental doctrine of Ageless Wisdom: **All forms of life-expression are vehicles of the One Identity.** Behind and above your particular “guardian angel” for the present moment is the over-shadowing perfection of the One Identity. He (or it may be she) to whom is entrusted the work of supervising the present stage of your progress, is but a messenger and representative of that Supreme One.

The journey you are making toward the heights is the Way of Return. It is the upward arc of the wheel of manifestation. You, and the rest of humanity, are like Hermanubis on the Wheel of Fortune. Your spiritual eyes are beginning to catch glimpses of the glorious Beyond which the Fool sees (hence the eyes of Hermanubis are level with the letter A, or Aleph.) Your spiritual ears are beginning to bring you some inkling of the truth that your **real** being is one with the ONLY ONE.

Your faith is being confirmed by experience, even as it is founded on reason. You do not believe blindly. Ageless Wisdom says to you: “Come, let us reason together.” It shows you relationships among the various phases of existence which are passed over by most persons. It sharpens your powers of observation. It points out the footprints of the Master Principle, and develops your creative imagination so that you can see with the eye of faith what your physical eyes have not yet witnessed.

On its practical side, it is enabling you to make fine adjustments in your thinking, and is teaching you how to direct your emotional life into better channels of expression. All this is making you gradually into a new person. What you were is passing away. What you are is better than what you were.

As your spiritual vision grows keener through creative imagery, you will come to understand that pregnant saying: “Beloved, **now** are we the children of God, and although it has not been made manifest what we shall be, we know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, **for we shall see Him as He is.**” (Keys 9, 10, 11)

The world of natural men and women see Him as He is not. Because of this, the “God” of exoteric theology is all too often more devilish than divine. Thus the fearful image of the Devil in Tarot is a picture of God misunderstood, or seen mentally as He is not. This vision of terror has been conjured up by the collective imagination of the natural man who looks with dread on anything which seems to threaten the continuance of fixed states of existence; for the natural man puts his trust in form and seeks the perpetuation of form. Therefore he fears change, dreads novelty, detests difference. Conformity is his fetish, and when any of his fellows dares be different, the natural man will go to any length to suppress the innovation and get rid of the innovator. Look about you, and you will find many evidences that this is all too prevalent, even in our supposedly more enlightened times.

Examine closely this picture of the Devil. He represents all that does not “fit in” with our comfortable preconceptions. But the Life-power will not be limited by our ignorance. It is always presenting us with new appearances which seem to be exceptions to our notions of order. Thus the natural man personifies these unknown activities as the demon and ascribes his failures to the malicious influence of the Adversary. (Keys 15, 16, 17)

MEDITATIONS

FIRST DAY: Keys 9, 13, 17. The resistless energy of the Primal Will courses through me. It breaks down every obstacle to its onward movement. It opens my understanding, so that I perceive the beauty of the Great Pattern of manifestation. **The One Identity transforms me into Its likeness and opens my eyes to the wonders of Its Perfect Law.**

SECOND DAY: Keys 10, 13, 16. I am ascending into a higher order of being. This very day is a day of change from the imperfections of the past into a closer approach to the Divine Reality. The lightning-flash of inspiration overthrows my mistaken structures of ignorance and prejudice. **I am an expression of the eternal progress and transforming power of life which breaks down every prison house of ignorance.**

THIRD DAY: Keys 11, 13, 15. Mine is a reasoned faith. I die daily away from the misapprehensions of the past. I begin to see that evil and seeming injustice are but aspects of the Good, stages of the Life-power's unfoldment which I have yet to understand. **I am a center of the power of cosmic adjustment which overcomes and transforms into beauty every appearance of evil.**

FOURTH DAY: Keys 12, 13, 14. The Life-power in me, and flowing through me, does all this. My thoughts and words and deeds are but phases of the Great Transformation. Let me be guided this day by that Messenger of Reality whose office it is to direct my steps along the Way to Freedom. **I am calm and poised in the midst of all these changes, for I know they are transforming me into a more perfect image of the One Reality.**

FIFTH DAY: Keys 9, 10, 11. The One Identity watches over me. The cycles of necessity bring me ever nearer to the Inevitable Perfection. The forces of my life are balanced and true. **My true Self is the Witness, the Mover, and the Regulator of Its perfect work.**

SIXTH DAY: Keys 15, 16, 17. There is no bondage save that of ignorance and fear. Am I in prison? Then I have built the walls myself. Reality needs no walls for its protection, nor will Truth suffer herself to be veiled. **Seeming evil is my opportunity to break down some barrier of ignorance and find my way into the paradise of things as they really are.**

This week, spend a short part of your seventh day in a little self-analysis. See if you can discover where you are still hanging on to conditioned responses developed in the past.

Our greatest problems arise from our emotional unwillingness to flow freely with the river of Life as shown in Key 13. We are like swimmers who hang on desperately to the sharp rocks, cutting and bruising ourselves, rather than entering into the flow of evolution through conscious participation.

Try to develop a willingness to change! Embrace every change in your mental-emotional attitudes and environmental conditions as you would embrace your dearly beloved.

Willingness to die to your old self with the host of immature notions it holds is one of the great secrets of Eternal Life.