

The Library and the Law: The Theory & Legality of Tarot

A Welcome from the Fool's Guild

Welcome to the third courtyard lesson in the Fool's Guild of Tarot Professionals. As a honorary student of the Guild, you will be receiving each of the five lessons on a weekly basis to ensure that you have a good grounding in the art and science of the tarot.

Whether a newcomer to tarot or an experienced practitioner, we hope these lessons cover a complete overview of the best in academic and practical approaches to tarot, and we look forward to your questions in our lively courtyard forum.

This third lesson looks at the theory of tarot and uses a more analytical approach to the cards, taking one to pieces to see how it ticks. We give exercises for contrasting and comparing the Major Arcana in **layouts**, and explain why that is different to a **spread**. This is also to demonstrate the variety of ways in which we can approach tarot – we do not favour any particular method, and encourage you to explore whichever route takes your imagination and enthusiasm. In this Air Courtyard, we hope to deliver ideas that will provide many months of research and insight for you ahead!

It is hoped that by learning the tarot with us, you will be able to deepen your appreciation of the subject, apply this knowledge to enhance your practice, and widen your experience of learning about life through tarot to positive effect. Our aim is that after this course of five lessons you will be thoroughly informed, extremely enthused, and looking to develop your tarot with innovation and creativity. We look to truly inspire as well as inform!

Over the remaining three weeks ahead, you can ask any general questions in our forum, or if you'd like to speak to an Outer Courtyard Supervisor about these lessons, please contact enquiries@tarotprofessionals.com.

For the best experience with these lessons, although they are intended for self-study, you should join the forum discussions for the courtyard classes and share your experience whilst benefitting from the experience of others.

The Third Week is in the Library.

Your third week in the Outer Courtyard is announced as a Study Week. This is met with both groans from some students and quiet cheers from others. Not everyone likes study, and sometimes a subject can be made entirely lifeless with too much theory and no practice. Here in the Outer Courts we prefer to do both, realising that one can support the other.

So, before we begin we should have a word from the legal library. Our lawyers in their Tower (that's the one with the Scales of Justice at the top of it, you can see in the northern distance of the Fool's Guild) are not often called into business, but there are a few things they have to say to all students who might go on to read Tarot for reward, either money or gifts, or even charity.

It is difficult to say anything specific about the US as States will have their own laws and even individual towns or districts may have their own ordinances. Our lawyers advise you to contact your local council or governing office and let us know what they say on our Legal Forum!

Here in the UK, until Summer 2008, we were governed by the Fraudulent Mediums Act – this is the law that came into effect in 1951 to replace the Witchcraft Act. That's right – we had a Witchcraft Act until 1951! However, the Fraudulent Mediums Act has now been repealed as one of many outdated laws, with the introduction of a new European “Consumer Protection (from Unfair Trading) Legislation”.

Repeal of Fraudulent Mediums Act

The CPR (Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading) was introduced in April 2008. The Regulations and Guidance (May 2007) PDF file for the CPR's is at:

http://www.offt.gov.uk/shared_offt/reports/consumer_protection/oft931con.pdf

And you'll find (on page 81) that under the "Effects on UK Law", the Repeal of the Fraudulent Mediums Act (1951) is listed. This was introduced into the CPR's in 2006 following "consultation" with businesses, although all that is listed in that consultation document for the repeal of the 1951 Act is:

Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951

The effect of this Act is largely replicated by the UCPD, and indeed the Directive should provide better protections for vulnerable consumers than the Act. It can therefore safely be repealed.

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file35750.pdf> (page 12)

To cut a long story very short, so long as you and your client have a clear understanding and agreement of the service you are offering, you have nothing to worry about. The legislation is to protect vulnerable people against unfair trading or those deliberately misrepresenting their product or service.

In the Tarot Professionals Membership Area, you can get our document on legal advice for this UK and European Act. There is also a copy in the Legal Forum.

You should never have to approach the Tower of Law in the Fool's Guild ever again, you'll be pleased to know, if you follow our general advice.

Insurance

A number of students in the Courtyard take advantage of the presence of Lawyers', who rarely make the way down their spiral staircase, to ask about Insurance. "Do tarot readers require insurance?" is a simple enough question, but then one Lawyer ominously responds with "What type of insurance?" and you realise that it may be a long day ...

However, having listened to a long debate you realise a few things, which you jot down on the back of a napkin you brought from the kitchen:

1. It is not 'required' to have insurance but it is 'advised' – and some venues will definitely 'require' insurance for you to get work/stalls with them.
2. There have been no claims ever made against tarot readers. There have only been 8 cases under the fraudulent mediums act, which were for definite fraud, in fifty years!
3. Insurance for tarot readers would be one of two types; *public* liability (PLI) and *professional* liability.
4. It is unlikely that any insurer would provide 'professional' cover as this would hinge on some standard of service offering or quality standard. This does not exist - legally - for tarot readings.
5. Public Liability, however, is available, which covers damage or events that might cause a claim against you from a third party, i.e. member of the public, This would cover accidental damage if you dropped a large crystal on someone's foot, or set fire to the town hall with your candles.
6. You can get public liability as an *individual* through some insurance agencies, but usually only as an "entertainer". This costs around £90-£110 at present.
7. Tarot Professionals can offer *Block* Public Liability at only £20-£30 as we have negotiated a unique cover plan for tarot readers. Contact us for details!

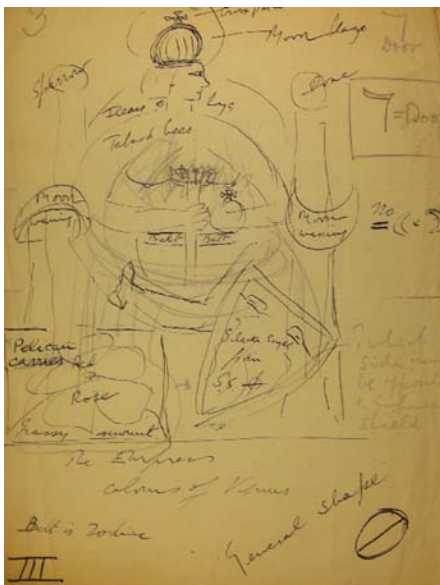
Taking a Knife to a Card



In amongst the students coming to the Fool's Guild, there are many different ways of learning the Tarot; and even in just looking at one card in a crowd you discover lots of new insights. Someone gets out the Empress tarot card from the Aleister Crowley Thoth deck. They say it was designed over several years between the notorious occultist Crowley and the painter, Frieda Harris. She was also knowledgeable in the occult, and one of the few people Crowley respected enough to work with for a long period of time, producing this incredibly rich deck.

There are different ways of approaching this card, as with any other. You'll find more in our Thoth lessons in the Advanced Course material.

Analysis	Breaking the card down into parts
Reflection	Attending to ones own response to the card
Artistic	Looking at the card as a piece of artwork
Symbolic	Interpreting each of the items on the card
Correspondence	Understanding the card as a part of a system
Astrology, Numerology, Runes	Using other systems to understand the card
Textual Study	Reading the written materials relating to the card
Biographical Study	Appreciating the life of the designer(s)/artist(s)



Here we see Crowley's original sketch for the card. See how he has written "general shape" for the Empress as a circle with a line through it? That's the alchemical symbol of Salt. He wanted Harris to encode this symbol in the shape of the card. He also specified the lunar crescents, the pillars (representing the Tree of Life), the lunar headdress – see how Harris has brilliantly interpreted his sketch – the Pelican, shield, zodiacal belt, and the Hebrew letter "Daleth" meaning "door". You might also see that Harris has drawn two circles on the card like halos around the moons to signify the Empress as conjoining the Sephiroth of Chokmah and Binah on the Tree of Life. Phew! That's a lot of symbols!

That's not to say this is the only way of looking at a card – what it evokes in you is equally important. But in the Court of Air, we take the Sword out to a card!

Layouts and Spreads – Analysis and Synthesis

An important element of the Court of Air is defining terms and ensuring our thoughts are in order and presented clearly. In the realm of the Mind, to which Air and Swords correspond, we learn through reason, comparison and contrast. We analyse and then we synthesis, breaking things down to pieces and putting them together again. Sometimes we come up with entirely new thoughts and learning as a result. One way of doing this in Tarot is actually in every spread you do for a reading!

A **spread** is simply an arrangement of positions indicating the relationship of the card that will be placed in that position to the real world. The best spreads are comprehensive – they cover many aspects of a situation – or specific – they cover aspects that relate directly to the situation to be examined. Most popular spreads have about ten cards; this is likely because we human beings are able to recall chunks of information in groups of roughly nine, give or take two, i.e. between 7 to 11.

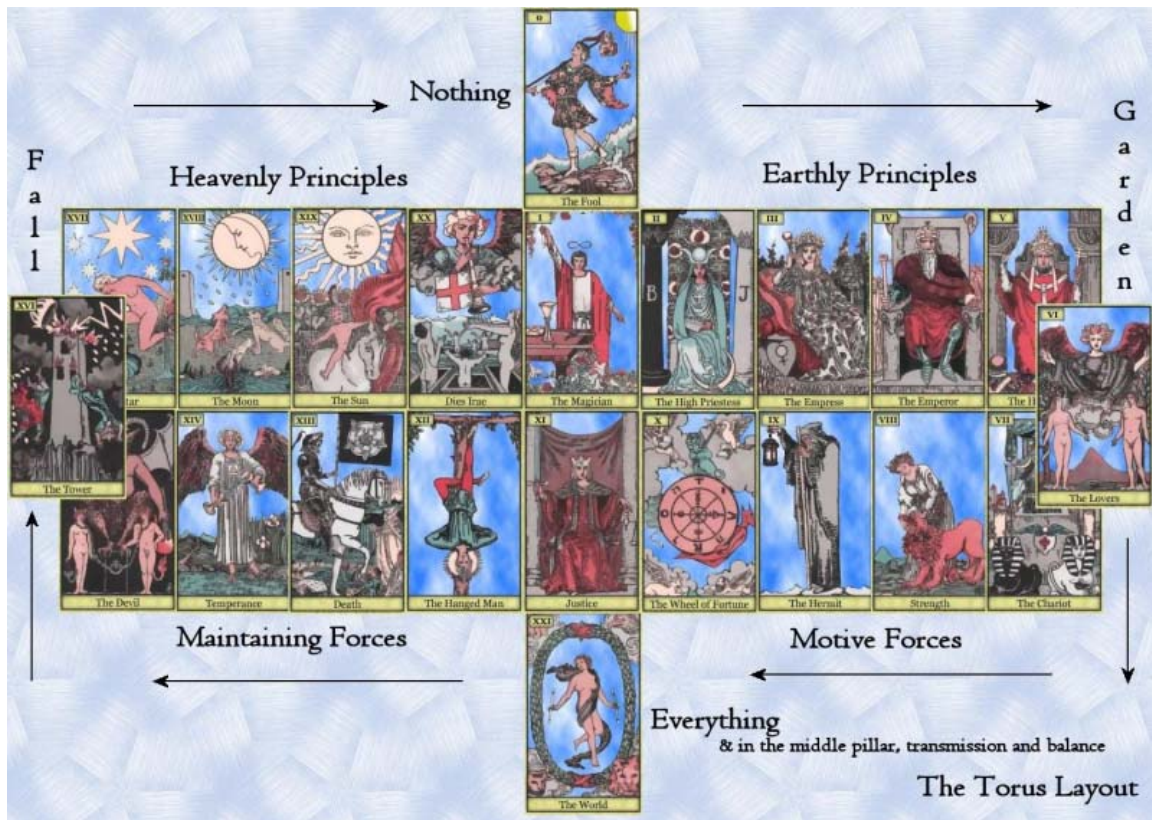
When you perform a Tarot Reading, particularly a larger one with say, ten cards, it is statistically unlikely – to an almost impossible degree – that you will ever get that pattern of cards again in your life. Therefore, each reading is truly unique. As such, there are about six quintillion lessons you can learn from a 10-card spread of 78 cards – that's more than enough for the lifetime of every person on the planet, doing a reading every day, until the stars go out!

So, when you do a reading, do consider the uniqueness of the pattern and the lesson it teaches us – that there are patterns underneath even the most apparently random and infinite sequence of apparent events. And each spread will give you another example of those patterns.

A **layout** is slightly different. Here we take a group of cards – usually the 22 major Arcana – and lay them out in a prescribed arrangement to compare and contrast cards as a learning exercise. You can even do this to make up creative stories, as does Italo Calvino in his book, *Castle of Crossed Destinies*.

Here's a layout you might like try out and notice what patterns you can discern between the cards. It is based on a pattern in Itzak Bentov's book, *Chasing the Wild Pendulum*, describing a model for the flow of matter into manifestation. Bentov draws a 'torus' or doughnut shape, showing phases of expansion and contraction of space/time.

We can place the tarot cards in the same shape, matching the flow of direction to the sequence of the tarot cards. This places the Fool and the Universe (World) cards outside the cycle, as "nothing" and "everything", with the cards then cycling out to the Lovers (VI) and to the Blasted Tower (XVI) before returning to the circuit. Once placed, we can then use the layout to contemplate the cards.



One of the first patterns we can see is that the two outer cards on the left and right can be taken to represent the “Garden of Eden” and the “Fall”, particularly interesting if the sequence is taken as a picture of manifestation or myth.

The central cards can be compared; the Magician and Justice. As these are in the centre of our layout, we might look at them as balancing elements. However, we can see that Justice appears to be holding the balance, whilst the Magician is actually “in” balance, channelling the Above to the Below.

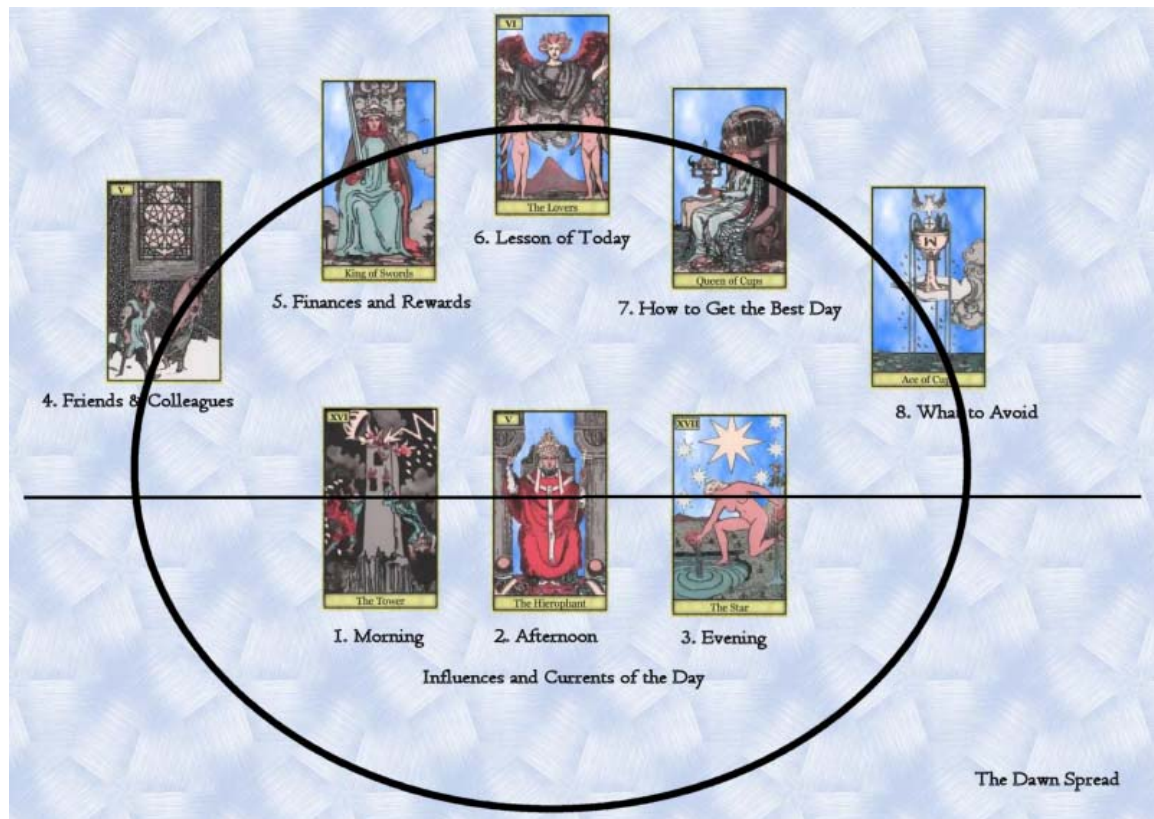
With a layout, we look to discern patterns and themes, unexpected contrasts and comparisons of cards. There is no one single “secret” layout that reveals vast hidden depths of the structure of the tarot, but all layouts give hints – and maybe you’ll discover such a ‘universal key’ yourself!

Spreads and DIY

The best thing about spreads is that you can make them up yourself! If you go beyond the Courtyard, you’ll soon see how, but in the meantime it’s important to realise that you can be creative. The so-called “ancient” “Celtic Cross” spread is neither ancient, nor celtic nor a cross – in fact, it was only designed in the last century! It’s popularity comes from it’s early appearance in publication, accompanied the popular Rider-Waite-Smith deck, it’s comprehensiveness and ease of use.

So, here's an example of a made-up spread. In this case, it's one to use for the rest of this week in the Courtyard of Air, until you receive your next lesson. You don't yet have to know much about tarot – although you should be able to interpret the Court Cards by now – just practice laying out the cards each morning and then reviewing the reading at the end of the day.

What correspondences jump out at you just from looking at the cards at either end of the day as a 'picture' of that same day?



The example above was on a day I was going to a dinner party in the evening. Surely enough, when I came back and looked at the spread, I could see that my morning had been tense, with disagreements about domestic duties, and I spent the rest of the day writing coursework (Hierophant as teacher) and the evening looking forward to the party (Star).

I'm not sure about the "Friends and Colleagues" card, so I'll leave that for now. I had to be very strict with my shopping, as I didn't have much cash (King of Swords), and the lesson of the day was certainly about relationships and company, and perhaps making the right choices (Lovers).

I followed the advice of the Queen of Cups by being very 'watery' and going with my emotions, being enduring and patient. Although the dinner party wasn't as fun as I hoped, I avoided over-drinking and being too effusive (Ace of Cups).

Reaching the Point of Air

Well done! You have spent a third week in the outer courtyard and mastered the basic element of air; the theory and legality of tarot.



You can now progress – come forth to the flag of air and take a bow! You are presented with the Ace of Swords; a card signifying the seed of thought itself, and all that comes of it; learning, education, rationality and reason. These all have a place in our Art and Science of Tarot.

In this Ace from the Golden Tarot deck, we see the energy of the Ace, and notice how the butterfly is in flight; it has gone through a process of many stages to attain its beauty. So must education be a process of many stages until our inspiration and ideas take flight in the clear sky!

Onwards! Your next lesson awaits!