

Aleister Crowley's
The Book of Thoth
TAROT CARD IMAGES



Ace of Swords

DIGITALLY REMASTERED EDITION

An open letter to Alestair* Crowley

SOCIETY OF HIDDEN MASTERS

Dear Sir,

For many years we have watched your career with benevolent interest; while we have been unable to approve many of your activities in particular your policy of revealing secret knowledge which we consider dangerous if in the possession of untrained and uninitiated people. We have always respected your passionate integrity, your fanatical (and in our opinion, indiscreet) love of Truth.

In our view, this mistaken policy has been responsible for many of your own personal mishaps. For this reason we are surprised that you should acquiesce, even by silence, in so blatant and impudent a hoax as the exhibition of Tarot Cards at the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, 26/7 Conduit Street, W.1. beginning 4th August 1942.

We hereby challenge you to deny any of the statements here following:--

1. During the winter of 1898/9 you were entrusted by the Order of A..A.. with the Secret Lecture on the Tarot, giving the initiated attributions.
2. You published these attributions at the command of the Secret Chiefs of the order in a Book of Reference numbered 777 in 1909.
3. You issued the Official Lecture of the Order on the Tarot, in the Equinox Vol. I Nos VII and VIII, March and September 1912.
4. You have made the Tarot your continual study and used it daily, since the Winter of 1898/9.
5. You have made the Tarot the skeleton or schema of all your writings on mystical and magical subjects. We would instance particularly "Ambrosia", "Magi Hortus Rosarum" (The Wake-World), "The Vision and the Voice", "Theory and Practice of Magick".
6. You have been recognized everywhere in Europe and America (even, to a less extent, in India) as the supreme Authority on the Tarot; that is, by serious students of the subject.
7. You have contemplated the construction and publication of a properly designed and executed pack, based on the Equinox information ever since the issue of the grotesque and falsified parody which appeared under the auspices of the late A.E. Waite.
8. In a series of conversations in 1937 beginning at Mr. Clifford Bax' chambers in Albany St., W.1., you suggested to Lady Harris that she might be able to carry out this work. Although she very rightly protested that her knowledge of the subject hardly extended beyond the name, you, with the imbecile optimism characteristic of you, persuaded her that the descriptions of the cards given in the Equinox would be sufficient guide, and persuaded her to make the attempt.

9. It became obvious almost at once that the Equinox designs were artistically impracticable. Lady Harris very properly asked you to take the whole subject in hand ab ovo esque ad umbilicum. You thereupon agreed to devote your whole knowledge to the work of designing an entirely original pack of cards, incorporating the results of your 39 years of constant study of the subject with your profound--if at times unacceptably unorthodox--knowledge of comparative religion, mathematical physics, philosophy and Magick. Also that you should compose a Treatise explaining the subject in full. It appears from a notice in the Exhibition that there is a proposal to publish the cards as a pack without this book. To do so would limit their use to fortune-telling, a form of fraud against which you have constantly set your face your whole life long. We refuse to believe that you have now consented to prostitute the Sacred Wisdom of Thoth to this base and dishonest purpose and we insist upon this point being made clear.

10. On May 11, 1938, Lady Harris became officially your disciple, and was permitted to affiliate to the other Order of which you are Head, the O.T.O.

11. You made an agreement with Lady Harris by which you were to have a 66 2/3% interest in the work.

12. For the next four years approximately, Lady Harris prepared water-colours of the cards. She did this from your rough sketches and descriptions under your continual direction, subject to your constant and repeated corrections. In some cases you made her redraw and re-paint a card which you found unsatisfactory as many as five or six times. She has, when left to herself, no sense of dignity or congruity; one of us has seen some attempts which you rejected, for instance, her ideal figure for "The Fool", the Holy Ghost, was Harpo Marx. Did you really pass this and Trump I? She gave the Sphinx in Trump X a French cabahy sabre! And her first conception of "The Lord of the Winds and the Breezes; the King of the Spirits of the Air", was a clown in plate armour, waving rapier and dagger, sprawling over a demented nag, diving through a paper screen in a circus!

13. You left Lady Harris a comparatively free hand in respect of insignificant details; but at no time did she contribute a single idea of any kind to any card, and she is in fact almost as ignorant of the Tarot and its true meaning and use as when she began. We cannot however, blame you for this.

14. You have followed with as much fidelity as was possible the traditional designs of the mediaeval packs; but you have notably enriched and revived some of them, especially the Trumps, with your scholarship, as observed above in paragraph 9.

15. In every trump you have not only incorporated symbols illustrating the doctrines of Payne Knight, Hargrave Jennings, Arthur Eddington, J.G. Frazer, Bertrand Russell, J.W.N. Sullivan, Eliphaz Levi and how many others! --but introduced very many ideas purely personal to yourself and based on your own personal magical experience--see "The Vision and the Voice", "The Paris Working" etc.

16. In certain cases, in order to make sure that your doctrine of the New Aeon is clearly manifest as the spiritual-magical basis of the whole work, you have given new names to the cards. Notably Trumps XI, XIV, and numerous "small" cards. You have made the final correction to the attributions--Trumps IV and XVII, according to the Book fo the Law given to you in Cairo April 8, 9, and 10 1904. You have used "The Stele of Revealing" (see "The Book of the Law" Chap. I 49, III 19) to replace "The Last Judgment" (Trump XX) to affirm the supersession of the Aeon of Osiris the Dying God by that of Horus the Crowned and Conquering Child. The entire composition is soaked in and reeks of your own private and personal point of view with regard to Magick.

17. You undertook this Work with two main motives:--

1. That it should serve as a Magical Atlas of and Guide to the Universe, for this "New Aeon of Horus", that is, for the next 2,000 years.

2. That its undeniable beauty and majesty should be an intelligible vindication of the whole of your life's work. You rightly foresaw that sooner or later it would be clear that you are the sole responsible author of the Work and Lady Harris only your more or less docile and intelligent instrument.

18. You and Lady Harris were at first agreed that the Work should be put forth anonymously. She wrote to a friend "I intend to remain anonymous when the cards are shown". You had, of course, pointed out that any student of the subject would recognise your authorship at a glance.

19. Too well aware that in the past your work has been stolen and exploited by unscrupulous rascals and also that doctrinal argument of a lightly technical kind may all too frequently prove rather hard for a jury, you took the precaution of introducing certain symbols into the designs of such a character that the most stupid would be compelled to acknowledge your authorship of the Work. Your conduct is abominable and inexcusable to allow Lady Harris to issue a catalogue crammed with the grossest errors of fact, blunders of scholarship, irrelevancies and absurdities; to allow her to make herself the laughing-stock of London by laying claim to the authorship of pictures of which all artists know her to be utterly incapable, her work having been that of a wealthy amateur persistent enough to acquire a good technique but with no personality, no "message" groping in Bloomsbury fogs for the parasitic adulation of a gaggle of sycophants.

We can understand your passionate wish to get these cards exhibited, even by a subterfuge, but you had no right to sacrifice Lady Harris and you have no right to lend yourself, even by silence to the perpetration of a hoax transparent and nauseant as it must naturally be, which affects the honour of the Fraternity of Art and Letters.

We repeat that we are surprised; for whatever your faults, you have always been honourable and truthful with more than ancient Roman rigour. You must speak now.

for the Society of Hidden Masters.

Justus M.
Sic vos non vobis.
Sunur evique.

[Actually written by Crowley, to himself; the "Society" is fictitious as such.]

**Spelling as in original letter. Most likely, Crowley deliberately misspelled his own name as a way to further the idea that he was not the author. SVV.*









Princess of Disks



Queen of Disks



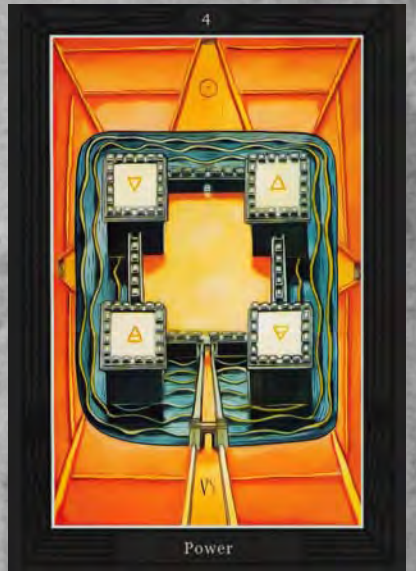
Ace of Disks



Change



Works



Power



Worry



Success



Failure



Prudence



Gain



Wealth



Knight of Disks



Prince of Cups



Princess of Cups



Queen of Cups



Ace of Cups



Love



Abundance



Luxury



Disappointment



Pleasure



Debauch



Indolence



Happiness



Satiety



Knight of Swords



Prince of Swords



Princess of Swords



Queen of Swords



Ace of Swords



Peace



Sorrow



Truec



Defeat



Science



