

THE CELESTIAL TAROT

cards designed by Kay Steventon

text by Brian Clark

Celestial Tarot was released in 2005 and the comprehensive book and book/deck set were released in 2007. In the FAA journal (www.faainc.org.au) Brian Clark introduced some of the Tarot cards from the minor arcana of *Celestial Tarot*. For astrologers the minor arcana of this deck are particularly important as they utilise the extra zodiacal constellations recorded by Ptolemy. Included are:

- Eight of Pentacles, represented by the constellation of Centaurus and the centaur Chiron, a ‘handy’ addition to the planetary pantheon since his discovery in 1977. Traditionally the Eight of Pentacles refers to the earthy domain of craftsmanship in work. *Celestial Tarot* amplifies the card with the image of Chiron who helps ensoul the mundane sphere of our life work.
- The Ace of Swords, represented by the constellation of the Southern Cross which burns brightly in the Southern skies and initiates the journey into the Swords, the domain of Air..
- The Nine of Cups, the constellation of Andromeda, depicts the chained woman breaking free from her father’s shackles integrating the initiatory journey through the Cups
- The Five of Cups, Ophiuchus, represents the god of healing Asclepius who awakens us to our own inner images of healing.

In the 2005 AstroLog (www.astrolog.com.au) Brian’s article, *A Journey through the Tarot Trumps*, on the Major Arcana of the *Celestial Tarot* was published. Included are some excerpts from this article.

The book *Celestial Tarot* is available from the Chiron Centre.



The workbooks on the Major, Minor and Royal Arcanas of *Celestial Tarot* are available in print or on disc in PDF format from the Chiron Centre

THE EIGHT OF PENTACLES: Centaurus

With the Eight of Pentacles we enter the sphere of Chiron, the wise and humble centaur whose name is derived from the root meaning 'hand'. Unlike the other wild and barbaric centaurs Chiron's instinctual side was channelled into being masterful and 'handy', skilled in the preparation and application of herbs and tinctures. Recognised as both a teacher of the ancient wisdom and as a natural healer Chiron taught his apprentices the sacred heroic arts with great respect for the traditions of the Earth. Through attention to detail, persistence and dedication to his craft, his heroic students learned to engage the soul through their life's work. When this card appears the individual is apprenticing, called by an inner voice to practically apply their skills and talents to a work in progress. With the Eight of Pentacles the sphere of work is in the process of developing, the craft is being mastered and the skills are being sharpened. The individual is more directed and dedicated as their occupation is becoming more aligned with their soul. This card confirms that the individual is in touch with their vocation and focusing on developing that.



The constellation Centaurus is one of the larger southern constellations linked with Lupus (The Two of Swords) and Ara (The Eight of Wands) in a trinity of devotional sacrifice. At the altar of the gods Chiron offers up the wild beast Lupus symbolising the sacrifice of the bestial and primitive aspects of the self in service to the divine. Hence the constellation has also been linked to another Centaur Pholus, who like Chiron was gentle and served the gods. Neither was born with the race of the other Centaurs who were wild, savage and unruly.

Chiron and Pholus, while still Centaurs and beasts, are cultured and refined representing the civilisation and education of primitive instincts. The Eight of Pentacles reveals that raw materials and primal energy have been shaped and used in the pursuit of satisfying work. Chiron has often been mistaken as the centaur in the constellation of Sagittarius. Zeus placed Chiron in the constellation of Centaurus after he voluntarily exchanged a place in the underworld with Prometheus, releasing the hero from his torturous imprisonment. Chiron had been accidentally wounded by the deadly arrows of Heracles that had been infected with the terminal toxins of the Hydra's blood. As the son of Cronus he was immortal yet the arrow had punctured the flesh of his lower animal nature, which was excruciatingly painful. Zeus permitted Prometheus to go free in exchange for Chiron and therefore both were freed from the cycle of pain. Chiron represents the interconnection between the instinctual and

the divine which often results in the spirit-body split. However his myth reminds that both are intertwined and the Eight of Pentacles reveals that the individual is mastering the creative spirit through his or her work.

While we are most familiar with Chiron in his role as the wounded healer he was the chthonic deity who symbolised the ancient ways of healing and heroism in the Greek myths. As a hybrid he represented a vestige of the ancient link to the earth, its magic and its healing potentials. To his cave on Mount Pelion young boys who were orphaned, disenfranchised, and abandoned would come to train as heroes. Their tuition included reverence for the gods, the arts of healing, herbs, and homeopathy, astral divination and astronomy, skills at archery and combat as well as the arts of civilisation. In his presence the young would be trained to become skilled, masters of their profession. Here in the mountainous cave Chiron gave Jason his name which means healer. Here he taught Asclepius the healing arts and Heracles astral divination. Chiron underlies the Eight of Pentacles and when the card appears the individual metaphorically is in the tutelage of Chiron training to be masterful and skilled at what they do. Like its namesake the atmosphere of the constellation is devotional and the message of this card suggests that the sphere of work needs to be united with meaning. When the card appears the individual is challenged to find fulfilment in what they do and the soul in their everyday routines.

Saturn, the ruler of the second decan of Virgo, was the mythological father to Chiron. However in the myth neither parent was available to raise Chiron and as an embodiment of an archetype he identifies with what is marginal, disenfranchised and excommunicated. However these are the very souls that Chiron fosters and mentors suggesting that this energy has an ability to reshape the damaged aspects of one's self. Chiron's healing is through acceptance, not through triumphing over the wound or fixing it. His healing balm is applied through the acceptance of what is misshapen and cannot conform. Therefore when the card appears it signals the need to accept our skills and talents the way they are, not to try to force them to conform to a standard shape or align them with someone else's ideal form. Chironic craftsmanship is forged out of perfecting of the innate raw material.

Astrologically the combination of Saturn and Virgo speak about the need for attention to detail, autonomy at work, the need for self-discipline and structure. Both need practical application and also suggest precision and excellence of craft. Saturn acknowledges work well done and the appearance of this card reveals the need to attend and persist with the project. Chiron's nature is also a maverick and therefore the appearance of the card encourages the individual to be more accepting of what they identify as misshapen or marginal in the system, as this is the wellspring of creativity and spirit. On an oracular level the Eight of Pentacles heralds an encounter with a mentor or teacher who inspires our vocation in a practical and useful way. Metaphorically the individual has reached the cave of Chiron, a transitional place where the sacred and the mundane can be interwoven through craftsmanship and spiritual work.

THE ACE OF SWORDS: Crusis

Initiating the journey into Swords is Crucis or Crux the smallest of all the constellations. Commonly known as the Southern Cross, Crusis contains four stars in the shape of a cross that burn like a bright torch in southern skies. For nations like Australia, Brazil and New Zealand the stars of the Southern Cross are emblematic of their place in the Southern Hemisphere as the constellation is not visible at the majority of northern latitudes. In antiquity these four stars were part of the constellation of Centaurus and at that time were visible in the Northern Hemisphere. However, due to the precession of the equinoxes, the shifting of the heavens has meant that the constellation has disappeared from northern skies. Synchronistically, from a Euro-centric perspective, the last era when Crux appeared in the northern firmament was at the latitude of Jerusalem during the time of Christ. The image of his crucifixion has remained the most powerful icon in Europe making the cross one of the most commonly recognised symbols in western theology.



In the last quarter of the 17th century the Southern Cross became recognised as a separate constellation. Ptolemy and his predecessors had catalogued the four stars as belonging to the Southern Centaurus. From the sacred ground of Chiron the celestial cross evolved into its own star pattern. Due to its proximity to the celestial pole the cross is one of the constellations, which circumnavigate the South Pole. In Celestial Tarot the Ace of Cups represents the constellation of the Lesser Bear, a northern circumpolar constellation. As the polar constellations both these Aces represent the polar processes of heart and mind. With the Ace of Cups the journey into feelings begins symbolised by one of the most ancient totems of the goddess, the bear. With the Ace of Swords the power of the mind is awakened to begin the journey into the mental realm with the discovery of new ways of thinking. Seminal ideas, the application of discrimination and will, and fresh insights reshape how we define the truth. Both Aces in representing circumpolar constellations also symbolise the human poles of instinct versus reason and the cosmic axis of the Earth Goddess and the Heavenly Father.

The Ace of Swords depicts the sword emerging out of the heavenly cross, a contemporary religious symbol, yet also the ancient symbol of the Earth. The cutting edge of the sword symbolises consciousness beginning to separate from Gaia, or from the body and its instinctive life. With this card the initiation into objectivity, logic, rationality and consciousness of the other is beginning to occur. Through the process of separation from the object consciousness begins to dawn, however with consciousness the pain of being separate is awakened. Therefore this card implies the ambivalence of becoming conscious; on one hand we are enlightened in discovering the truth, yet

on the other hand this discovery may bring conflict and pain. The Ace of Swords represents the duality embedded in becoming consciously awakened.

In the Southern Hemisphere the cross is easily identifiable and therefore has become animated with the projections of southern folklore. To the Wairao a Venezuelan tribe, the star pattern is a celestial bird with bright feathers that protects their children. Sheltered under the bird's vast plumage the children are safe from dark spirits and evil forces. Symbolically the bird is a link between heaven and earth and a messenger of the gods. It is a creature of the air and is a totem for this element and the suit of Swords. This folktale reminds us of the mystical and protective power of the mind embodied by this celestial bird. When the Ace of Swords appears it suggests using the healing aspects of the mind to protect oneself from negative patterns of thought. The card signifies that the emergence of new patterns of thought, different viewpoints and ideas are threatening the old way of being. Truth as it was once known is changing through the experience of becoming more mature and aware. The intellect is being sharpened, discrimination is heightened, and perceptions are clearer; all challenge the old way of knowing things. Conflict is natural during the transition and the card reminds the individual to utilise the affirming power of the intellect to resolve the schism.

Astrologically the cross is a potent image of both conflict and resolution. The aspect pattern of the 'grand cross' involves the conflicted angular arrangement of four or more planets. Each planetary archetype is in a tense alignment, yet through the management of this tension balance is possible. The cross of matter relates to the four angles of the horoscope and their different orientations to life. And embedded in the wheel of the year and the zodiac are the four cardinal points which represent the beginning of a new season or phase of being. One of these cardinal points is Libra the sign that oversees the Ace of Swords. Libra and its ruler Venus, goddess of this first decan, both suggest that resolution to conflict or opposition comes through clarity and balance of perceptions, the ability to weigh and judge situations, the facility to see both sides of a situation and the gift of being able to negotiate and compromise in order to reach the truth. Libra also represents strategy and the ability to detach from emotional responses and reactions long enough to be able to see them in perspective. It is the only inanimate sign of the zodiac and one of the guardians of the equinox when the night and day forces are evenly balanced. Instinctually its urge is to balance, weigh, judge to arrive at the most enlightened perspective. Libra abhors the darkness of ignorance and suggests the conception of a new phase of social learning. Venus the brightest planet also rules over this card and symbolises the brightening of the mental faculties and the commitment to a more enlightened way of knowing. On an oracular level the Ace of Swords suggest that clarity and discrimination are now necessary, as a new pattern is constellating and the old order is being questioned. When this card appears it suggests that new strategies are emerging to birth a progressive way of understanding the current situation.

THE NINE OF CUPS: ANDROMEDA

Since antiquity Andromeda has been a muse for many poets, authors, vase painters and playwrights as the mythic motif of the woman in chains rescued by the hero stirs the imagination. This figure of the Chained Woman has been consistently projected onto the eponymous constellation. She is princess to the prince Perseus in the court of her father King Cepheus and mother Queen Cassiopeia; all four representing neighbouring constellations, which astronomers have categorized as the Andromeda Group. How these constellations came to represent this dynasty may have been revealed in Euripides lost play named for the heroine.

Andromeda's myth of the sacrificed virginal daughter of the king has many parallels in Greek myth. After Poseidon had labored building the walls of Troy the king Laomedon failed to appropriately honour the god for his toil. Raging at being unacknowledged Poseidon sent a sea-monster to ravage the land. The oracle's solution to rid Troy of Poseidon's monstrous plague was to sacrifice Hesione, the king's daughter, who was then chained to a cliff and rescued by the hero Heracles. Similarly Iphigenia, the innocent daughter of King Agamemnon, was sacrificed in order for the curse of Artemis to be lifted. With the Nine of Cups we encounter the figure of vulnerable Andromeda who had been chained to the rock as a sacrifice for her father and his kingdom.

Underlying the images of the myth lay the ancient tradition of the sacred marriage. Andromeda's name 'ruler of men' is the Greek title for the ancient tradition of the queen, the surrogate of the goddess Astarte, who weds the hero after he destroys the primal monster. Along the ancient shores where Andromeda was chained to the rock, the goddess was worshipped in temples to the local deity Atargatis. Earlier the constellation had also been associated with Astarte by the Egyptians. Therefore the image of Andromeda as the sacrificial victim of the latter Greek stories belies her powerful link to the goddess Astarte whose cult was continuous in the ancient world. The Greeks knew her as Aphrodite the power of love. However her introduction to Greek myth through Homer's epic The Iliad stripped her of her power. Aphrodite is now the daughter of Zeus, not the potent and primal goddess born out of the sea foam the generation before him from the severed genitals of the sky god. Her chaotic, exotic and erotic nature is now subject to ridicule and disrespect. Like Aphrodite Andromeda's myth became reduced to the daughter of the king rescued by the hero. However a powerful tradition linking her to the great goddess of love and desire underpins her classical myth of the sacrificial daughter. When the Nine of Cups appears it brings this powerful tradition of the sacred marriage and the power of love to conscious awareness reminding us of the sacrifices of feelings we make when denying the potent goddess of desire. While the myth illustrates the socio-political repression of feminine power and its affect on the collective psyche there is also a personal parallel. When the feminine power of personal feelings is sacrificed to an outer authority or tradition we may feel chained and imprisoned.

THE FIVE OF CUPS: OPHIUCHUS, The Serpent Bearer

Ophiuchus means 'he who holds the serpent' and to the ancient Greeks the serpent bearer was Asclepius, placed in the heavens by his grandfather, Zeus, who was responsible for also striking him down with one of his lightning bolts. Later myth suggests the reason for his demise was that Asclepius had restored life to fallen heroes. Resurrecting the dead infuriated Pluto, the god of Death, who demanded Zeus retract Asclepius' immortality. It was Apollo, Asclepius' father, who petitioned Zeus to resurrect his son and place him in the constellations to eternally honour his healing legacy. Today Ophiuchus reminds us of the Greek God of Healing whose cult in the ancient world developed alongside Hippocratic medicine. Two streams of medical practice existed in the ancient world, one sacred and the other secular. The card illustrates Asclepius holding the caduceus. The intertwining serpents symbolise panacea, the god's ability to cure all sickness; a motif used in cultures even more ancient than the Greeks. Scholars have traced the image of the caduceus back to the design on a sacrificial cup of a Mesopotamian king. But the Five of Cups reminds us of the ancient Greek king, Asclepius, both hero and God who is petitioned during time of illness.

To the ancients illness was a divine calling, the disease being the god's way of making the soul's malcontent known through the body. In contemporary psychological thought this is the parallel of psychosomatic illness, the bodily symptom serving as the voice for psyche's ills. This illness prompted the ancient Greek to make a pilgrimage to one of Asclepius' sacred healing sanctuaries. The healing temples were the touchstone for our contemporary healing and psychotherapy clinics. Once the patient arrived at the sanctuary of Asclepius they prepared themselves for their encounter with the healing god through cleansing rituals of bathing and fasting. Priests guided them through the labyrinthine way to the temple where the patients laid down in the sacred space and fell asleep in anticipation of a dream. It was in the dream where the visitation of the god of healing, generally in the guise of a serpent appeared to activate the healing process. This ritual alerts us to the necessity to create enough sacred space in our lives to attend to the soul's needs.

Asclepius is often deemed the founder of the medical tradition which he inherited from his divine father Apollo. The legendary physician Hippocrates honoured this tradition by claiming an ancestral link to Asclepius. However in the Asclepian tradition the medical remedy was not prescribed by the doctor but fostered through contact with the patient's internal psychic images, honouring the potency of self-healing and the imaginal processes. Like many heroes Asclepius was raised by Chiron who mentored the young god in the arts of medicine, herbalism, homeopathy and surgery. It was Hermes who brought Asclepius to the wise centaur's cave after he had been rescued from the womb of his dead mother. Apollo had sentenced his mother Coronis to death for infidelity. As she lay burning on the funeral pyre Apollo realised it was his child in her womb and summoned Hermes to rescue the unborn child, Asclepius. Snatched from the clutches of death Asclepius' miraculous birth allowed him to

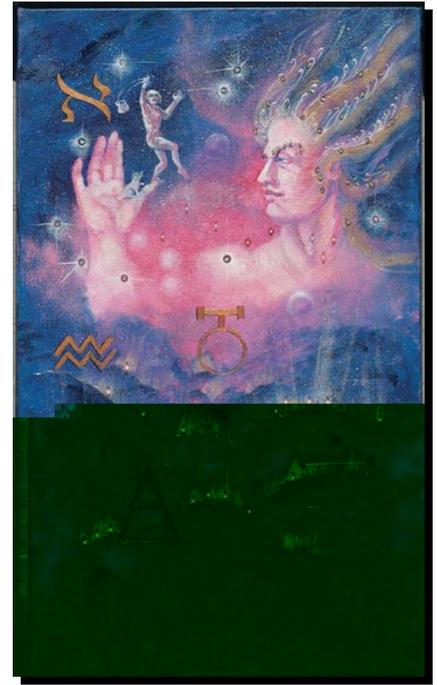
survive to become the god of healing, echoing the shamanistic motif of the healer called to his vocation through his own suffering and encounter with death. Like a shaman Asclepius also had the power to retrieve the souls from the realm of the dead. The goddess Athena bequeathed two vials of the Gorgon's blood to Asclepius; one vial of blood from the right side of the body restored life while the other vial from the left side of her body brought death. Asclepius personifies the mysterious amalgam of wounding and healing.

Asclepius healed the sick by creating a therapeutic space where images from the unconscious could be honoured, activating the healing power of the psyche released through dream images. This along with the respect for the patient's internal psychological processes allowed the soul to be restored to health. With the Five of Cups we meet this powerful *daemon* that reminds us of the rich and creative inner world of dreams and symbols. The second developmental phase of Scorpio is ruled by Neptune, the astrological symbol that confirms the urge to embrace the Divine. Neptune's presence with the Five of Cups suggests we are in the internal realm of the imagination, longing to encounter the Divine. However, we must be aware that the language of the soul reveals itself through paradoxical images and magical symbols. A sacrifice to the gods of one's ego identity is also necessary. With this card surrender to the ego's way of knowing facilitates entry into the soulful domain of divine possibilities. With the combination of Scorpio and Neptune we are pulled into other inner world of fantasy, the dream and the imagination in order to restore well being.

The Five of Cups depicts Asclepius calling us to the inner sanctuary because the split between soul and body has widened and the imbalance may ignite a healing crisis. Surrounding him are the five cups, which suggest a creative outcome to the process, the healing symbol of Scorpio and the glyph for Neptune, symbolising the imaginative process of the divine. Wounding is an archetypal aspect of the individuation process and the accompanying emotional pain scars the soul. Drawing this card alerts us to the possibility that well being may be restored. First the wounded feelings, the sense of disappointment, and the pain of suffering must be acknowledged. Secondly we need to journey to a sacred space to honour the soul with the intention of embracing the inner world of psyche and her images. The Five of Cups draws us into the liminal space between the wounding and the healing where we can restore our sense of self through interaction with the gods of the imagination. When this card appears we are beckoned into this inner realm to awaken our own healing images.

0 THE FOOL: Uranus, Herald of Change

Innocent and unaware of the initiations and lessons lying ahead the Fool is poised to step into the unknown to begin his unfolding journey into self-understanding, ready to follow a dream, a hunch or a sign wherever it may lead him. His card is numbered zero, as he is outside the 'pack', marginal to the incarnate world of form and substance, still spirit with unlimited potential and endless possibilities. Not yet encumbered with possessions or weighed down by earthy attachments the fool is free to explore the new world in front of him. In the Tarot the Fool demarcates the conception and emergence of a new spirit of being.



In *The Celestial Tarot* the planet Uranus is the *daimon* guiding the Fool. The cosmic power of Uranus is sudden and unexpected, disembodied and future-directed, uprooting the past to make way for progress. Preferring spiritual ideals and altruistic principles Uranus inspires the individual to take a risk and rebel against the status quo. Uranian energy disengages from attachments seeking a world of perfection, possibility and utopia. Seeking freedom in its encounters and space in its environment the Uranian atmosphere can feel disconnected. Separation is a hallmark of this archetype as its urge to progress and willingness to jump into new adventures is far greater than its need to remain static. While this need to separate is motivated by the urge to discover the self, others may experience it as pushing away, disengaging, cutting off or being aloof. Attachments, routines and possessions may feel suffocating therefore the individual responds defensively to find their space and separateness. Uranian separation is not necessarily literal as in a separation from a person, a place or a career. The separation may be from old habits and programs, past thought patterns or ways of being, generally experienced as a relief since it liberates time and energy to pursue new paths. When Uranus unexpectedly bursts into our life it significantly alters our everyday reality. While the journey may often feel like a roller coaster ride the path that unfolds leads to greater self-awareness and authenticity.

Until the late eighteenth century Saturn marked the boundary of our Solar System. In 1781 amidst an atmosphere of revolution (i.e. the French, American and Industrial Revolutions) the planet Uranus was discovered heralding a new order of science, industry and technology. Like the Fool Uranus was marginal to the pack of visible planets. Uranus' discovery led to a new political ethos which challenged tyranny and suppression. Uranus ushers in the *New Age* of Aquarius, an age whose ideals are devoted to equality and freedom for all, as well as the liberation of human rights and truths.

When the Fool appears it suggests a new age filled with unexpected changes, a fresh start with challenges lying ahead. The atmosphere is charged with the electricity of excitement and the thrill of adventure. Anything is possible. The card suggests the most effective way to meet the challenge is with open arms, faith, innocence and the willingness to be in the moment to be led in any direction. On a divinatory level the card symbolises a spontaneous approach to life, a leap of faith and the courage to let things happen by disengaging all forms of control. On an oracular level the appearance of the Fool suggests a turning point and a beginning. A redemptive aspect of ourselves is urging us to change and become more authentic by stepping forward into a new adventure.

I THE MAGICIAN: The Mercurial Guide

Leading the sequence of the Major Arcana is the Magician. Traditionally this card has evolved from earlier depictions of a juggler and conjurer into later images of a magus and shaman, two extremes of the archetype governed by Mercury, the quicksilver messenger of the Gods. In *The Celestial Tarot* we meet youthful Mercury ready to guide us through the labyrinthine path ahead. Astronomically Mercury is the fastest moving planet. Due to its speed the ancients likened it to their fleet-footed god Mercury. Similarly alchemists named the eponymous element known for its quickness of movement. Astrologically the planet Uranus is the higher octave of Mercury and both govern the intellect and its powers. However Mercury's sphere is not as altruistic, often fraught with trickery, mischief and sleight of hand.



Mercury is the surrogate of Uranus initiating the Fool into the game of life by endowing him with the skills necessary not only to play but also to outwit his opponents. The Magician reflects the ability to be in control of the situation and direct it energetically in the appropriate direction. At hand are Mercury's numerous gifts to navigate the new territory.

The Magician highlights the need to become conscious of goals as well as the will, ingenuity and intellect needed to pursue them. As thief, trickster and boundary crosser mythological Mercury is aligned with the tradition of the shaman. As a master of the occult Mercury has guided the evolution of knowledge and wisdom from the magic-wielding seers of antiquity through the wonder-working alchemists of the Middle Ages to the artificial intelligence used today. With knowledge we can inform ourselves, become more conscious of our goals and masterful with our

creations. This is the Magician's role and when he appears it suggests the time to take charge of our life by consciously creating something out of the possibilities surrounding us.

Astrologically Mercury is associated with the process of learning, communicating, the sharing of ideas. It rules two signs, Gemini and Virgo, which reflect the duality and dexterity of Mercury's approach to learning. Gemini represents the quicksilver ability to gather and adapt ideas while Virgo digests and analyses information into a coherent formula. Along with other intellectual processes such as rationale, logic, reflection and communication, the Magician's skills help us to understand our motives and urges educating us to not be solely reliant on instinctual and subjective responses. Mercury allows the process of objectification to occur so separation can lead into a broader social network. His skill is in guiding us to the right place, therefore when the Magician appears it stresses the need to be objective and conscious of the path ahead. Mercury is never static, always in motion and it is necessary to be flexible and open to generate the power to move forward.

Youthful Mercury beckons us. As a patron of youth he reminds us that we are filled with possibilities and the power to pursue them. On his head is his wide-brimmed traveller's hat suggesting that we are about to embark on a journey. In his left hand is his herald's wand. As a magician with knowledge of herbs, healing and hypnosis the staff is also his magician's wand used to induce a trance. However, now his wand heralds the new possibilities that lay ahead for the traveller. His gaze draws us into his atmosphere for when the Magician appears we are able to feel more confident, capable and wilful about moving along the right path. The card signals the momentum of a new phase filled with youthful spirit and synchronicity. A creative process is underfoot and the god Mercury is ready to guide us across the threshold of change.

II THE HIGH PRIESTESS: The Inner Mysteries of Moon

Mercury is the hermetic guide who leads us to the threshold of the inner world. At the portal to the inner realms is the High Priestess, the spirit of the Moon in the *Celestial Tarot*. Astrological wisdom has always linked the two guiding principles of Mercury and the Moon together as co-rulers of the mind; therefore it is appropriate that the Moon as *daimon* of this card follows Mercury's lead. Both are lifelong guides; Mercury informs the way we communicate to the world around us while the Moon remembers every nuance of the human experience. Mercury recalls the outer journey while the Moon records our inner biography informed by the shades and textures of our familial inheritance and feeling responses.



Contained by the Moon are the mysteries of life: what has past, what underlies the present and what destiny lies ahead of us. As High Priestess the Moon governs the night, the dark world whose wisdom is revealed through dreams, feelings, responses, intuitions and visions. Her insight reaches underneath the corporeal world and extends beyond linear time.

The Moon's phases religiously records, reflects and reveals each heartbeat, every breath and nuance of primitive life. It is the memory bank for everything we have ever wanted, touched, tasted, smelt, the barometer of our feelings, the receptacle of repressed traumas, the touchstone of our earliest impressions. Throughout life the Moon absorbs the imprints of the veiled world representing the feeling memory embedded in our emotional responses, somatised in our bodies and personified through our dreams. Therefore the oracle of the High Priestess is encoded in our feelings and moods, our aches and pains, muscular tension, headaches, stress as well as through dream images and symbols. She speaks the poetic language of the soul through image, story, myth, symbol and metaphor, unveiling herself when we engage in her mystery and uncertainty. The High Priestess honours this way of knowing through the wisdom of the body and its cycles, as well as through intuition and feeling responses.

Selene, the original Greek goddess of the Moon, is the surrogate of the High Priestess in *Celestial Tarot*. Selene rose out of the depth of the oceans yoked her dazzling horses to the chariot of the Moon and drove it across the night sky mesmerizing the earth with the gentle glow of her moonlight. Bathed in soft blue hues the Goddess holds the veil over herself. As half-veiled she invites us into her mysteries. Through her we respond to the seasons of life, know the inevitability of decay yet intuit the return of life. Her cycle is timeless and cyclical, not linear. In the background of the card is the shadow of the traditional High Priestess who carries the essence of wisdom from ages past. She is the matriarch of feminine wisdom and the amalgam of cross-cultural goddesses who embody this spirit of feminine knowing.

Lunar wisdom is instinctual, born from knowing moods and cycles. Therefore the appearance of the High Priestess encourages the individual to seek this path of knowing by being attentive and receptive. Prepare a space to invite insight by quieting the self. Dialogue with the inner world of symbol and fantasy, explore the image of the dream, and acknowledge your intuition and responses. On an oracular level the appearance of the High Priestess invites us to be more aware of symbols and signs, feeling responses, bodily aches and pains, emotional reactions, mood swings, in general the inner life. Insight and revelations are aspects of the High Priestess and the card suggests the individual will become more aware of the right path by listening to the inner voice.

III THE EMPRESS: The Bountiful World of Venus

In the astrological pantheon the personal feminine is symbolised by the Moon and Venus. As archetypal symbols they personify the anima; the Moon being Mother, Caretaker and Provider while Venus reflects the Other, Sister, Lover, Equal. The Moon represents first love or mother love, attachment figures and nurturers, while Venus' urge is equal love, based on her desires and values. Developmentally the Moon governs infancy and childhood while Venus governs the transition into puberty when passions are awoken and the urge for independence flourishes. In anima development Venus follows the Moon as libido is withdrawn from its projection onto mother and transferred onto sister, sister's friends and female equals, the surrogates of Venus. Appropriately Venus governs the Empress, the card following the lunar domain of the High Priestess.



As goddess of love, sexuality and beauty Venus' origins are rooted in the Near East. To the Greeks she was Aphrodite whose cult of worship was brought to Cyprus by the seafaring Phoenicians. While her cult was imported she became uniquely Greek, a goddess who often conflicted with the emerging culture and tradition. Later the Romans claimed Venus as their patroness being mother to Aeneas, the ancient founder of Rome. Aphrodite's genealogy is not consistent in our ancient sources. According to Homer Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and Dione. However Hesiod portrays the great goddess of sexual love being fathered by the severed genitals of Ouranus and brought into creation out of the womb of the sea, ostensibly goddesses without parents. Energetically Aphrodite represents a force that is not easily parented. The double tradition of Aphrodite's birth is also consistent with her dual nature. In Greece she was known as *Aphrodite Urania*, the ethereal and sublime one, born of heaven who represented heavenly and spiritual love as well as *Aphrodite Pandemos*, the goddess embodied physical and sensual love.

Astrologically we see the duality of Venus represented by her domiciles of earthy Taurus and heavenly Libra. Taurus carries the earthy, sensual, fertile and resourceful sides of the goddess while Libra reflects her heavenly sides of culture and beauty. United in her image they reflect her passion for beauty, love and life and the Empress embraces this duality: her arms are open and her breasts are bare as a gesture of her openness and desire to be known. Venus wears her magic girdle animating her ability to cast love spells and be overwhelmed with desire. Her sash is fertile green symbolising the abundance and fertility of her realm.

Attending the goddess is the sacred dove, messenger of peace and reconciliation. Her heavenly side inspires peace and tranquillity easing differences through reconciliation and acceptance, demanding equality and harmony. Also at her side is Eros, her constant companion. As her emissary he is the force of love that bursts into our lives to change the way we relate and share. Once struck by one of his arrows nothing can ever be the same! Similarly Venus as the Empress symbolises an alchemical process as she passionately transforms any situation she encounters.

However Venus as the mother of Cupid also represents motherhood, another aspect of the Empress. When the card appears it may signify maternal urges or represent a mother figure or nurturing atmosphere. As Empress, Venus represents the spectrum of mature femininity encompassing the desire for pleasure and abundance accompanied by responsibility for what she creates. The Empress asks the question “what area of your life needs abundance, fertility and creativity?” She also points to a relationship in the individual’s life which needs nurturance and love. On an oracular level she predicts a phase of growth and abundance, a desire to be creative and an urge to be involved both physically and cerebrally.

IV THE EMPEROR: Aries and the Mythic Motif of Kingship and Conquest

Aries, the leading sign of the zodiac, derives its inspiration from the constellation of the Ram, the archetype underpinning the Emperor. Egyptian myths connected this constellation with their ram-god, Ammon. Later the Greeks associated Ammon with Zeus, their kingly god and Emperor of the order of Olympian deities. Even the early Christians likened the ram of Aries to the Lamb of God, personified as Christ, the King of kings. A rich mythic tradition associates the ram of Aries with supremacy and kingship.



Aries was not always the leading sign of the zodiac. When Hipparchus systemised the tropical zodiac in the 2nd Century BCE he began the zodiacal year at the vernal equinox in Aries. To the ancients the vernal equinox marked the rise of spring, fertility, and the reanimation of life. The Vernal Equinox in the stars of Aries paralleled the gradual triumph of masculine values, which culminated during the Roman Empire. The mythic founder of the Roman Empire was Romulus, the son of Mars, the ruler of Aries. Unconsciously the powerful mythic ram had

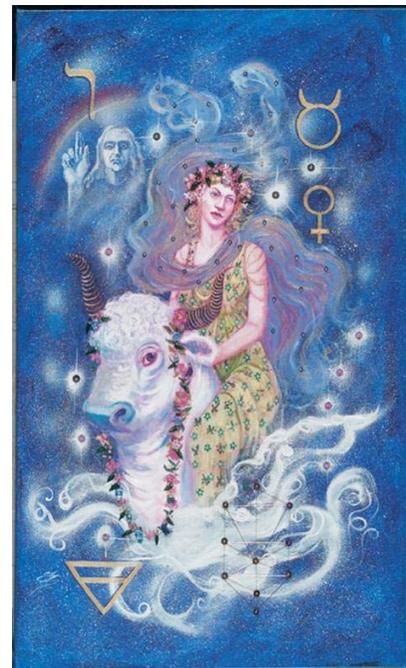
been woven into the character of the emperor, the god-like king. When the Greeks assigned a myth to this zodiacal constellation they retold the story of Jason's quest for its Golden Fleece.

The card depicts the Emperor with the Golden Fleece around his shoulders and the symbol of Aries, the ram's horn, on his sceptre. The Emperor personifies power, authority and leadership. With the emblematic fleece around his neck he is in touch with the archetypal hero-king. Like Jason, his birthright is kingship and the card suggests that a particular sphere of our lives may need control or governorship. Like the mythic hero we may need to quest to reclaim this heritage. Four pillars, the number of the emperor, are on the eastern side of the temple symbolising both the masculine sphere and the manifested world, reminding us of the need to structure and govern the outer world. They also symbolise the four elemental types, pillars of the self. However it is the superior function that must now lead aligned with the ego and its will. The emperor's lineage descends from the gods; he is in charge of the situation, autonomous and authoritative. On his left arm is the eagle another reminder of Zeus, the supreme god and father of Mars. The colour red infuses the card with energy, force, and will, instincts of Aries and necessary for the Emperor to remain in control. When this card appears the unconscious is acknowledging the necessity to establish authority in the outer world by taking command of a situation needing direction.

To continue on the path of individuation a strong ego is necessary in order to take control of the external forces and anchor ourselves in the world. To be in charge of our destiny we need to develop our authority and leadership backed by the pillars of our own internal wisdom and unique psychological makeup. On an oracular level the card may be referring to a particular situation that needs management or control, where we may need to be more focused and authoritative. Drawing this card suggests the unconscious aspects of the present situation need to be more aligned with the ego-identity and its desires. With this card we are given permission to have dominion over the current situation and are empowered to be in control. However, like the Arian temperament we need to be more adventuresome, confronting and assertive to truly become emperor of the situation.

V THE HIEROPHANT: The Power of Taurus

The Hierophant brings the mythic pattern of Taurus to light with Zeus in the guise of a beautiful white bull, the most revered and powerful animal in Indo-European myth. Throughout Mediterranean cultures the bull was a symbol of potency, wealth, strength and sexuality. For the Babylonians the Great Bull of Heaven represented power and fertility and for the ancient Greeks and Egyptians it was an important sacrificial animal. Greek myths included many bulls especially those connected to the successive generations of the dynasty of Crete.



Underneath the Cretan palace, hidden in a labyrinthine chamber, was the Minotaur, the shameful shadow of the Minoan clan. Two generations earlier Zeus shape shifted into a beautiful white bull to seduce the young Phoenician princess Europa instigating the familial complex. Europa had been playing in a field gathering spring flowers when she became mesmerised by a large charismatic bull that meandered through the meadow. Zeus, the bull-god, gently beckoned to Europa. Possessed with desire to know the bull, she moved closer, climbed upon him. Slowly he took her step-by-step across the meadow towards the sea and with the power of a great god the bull strode the waves. Europa clung tightly as she rode farther and farther away from her homeland. Zeus had made his conquest. He took Europa as his lover, fathering three children by her; one was Minos the founder of the Cretan dynasty.

King Minos claimed the throne of Crete. To bless the new dynasty Poseidon, his divine great grandfather, lavished a sacred white bull on Minos. The bull was so regal and powerful, Minos decided not to sacrifice it to the gods and substituted another prized white bull. Outraged at the deceit Poseidon placed a curse on the house of Minos. Pasiphaë, Minos' wife, became sexually consumed with an uncontrollable passion for the bull and schemed to find a way to mate with the creature. Pasiphaë commissioned the palace architect to construct a large mechanical cow, which she could enter and in this disguise she seduced the bull. However she fell pregnant and gave birth to the monstrous Minotaur, who had the head of a bull and the body of a man. Filled with shame, Minos built a labyrinth in the depths of the palace where the monster was hidden.

Greed and failure to respect the laws of the gods produced a monster that had to be buried beneath the surface of the family. Buried shame or repression lurking under the family atmosphere eventually surfaces, often through the next generation. This became evident through the fate of Minos' daughters Ariadne and Phaedra whose earthy passions and desires are reminiscent of the bull archetype of Taurus. Behind Europa and the Bull stands the Hierophant, the priest who initiated thousands of pilgrims into the Eleusinian Mysteries, the greatest mystery initiations of the ancient world. He stands behind the great Bull that abducts us into the pleasures of the outer world, the desires of the body and the rapture of our passions. Behind the feelings of shame, worthlessness, and self-incrimination stands the Hierophant, the ancient one whose essence centres our passions, secures our self-doubt and distils our worldly experience. The Hierophant is the inner priest, mentor or spiritual father who initiates us into the quest for self-knowledge, beckoning us to journey beyond our comfort zone. On an oracular level the appearance of the card illuminates the necessity to channel our passions towards self-knowledge and understanding while remaining grounded in the world.