

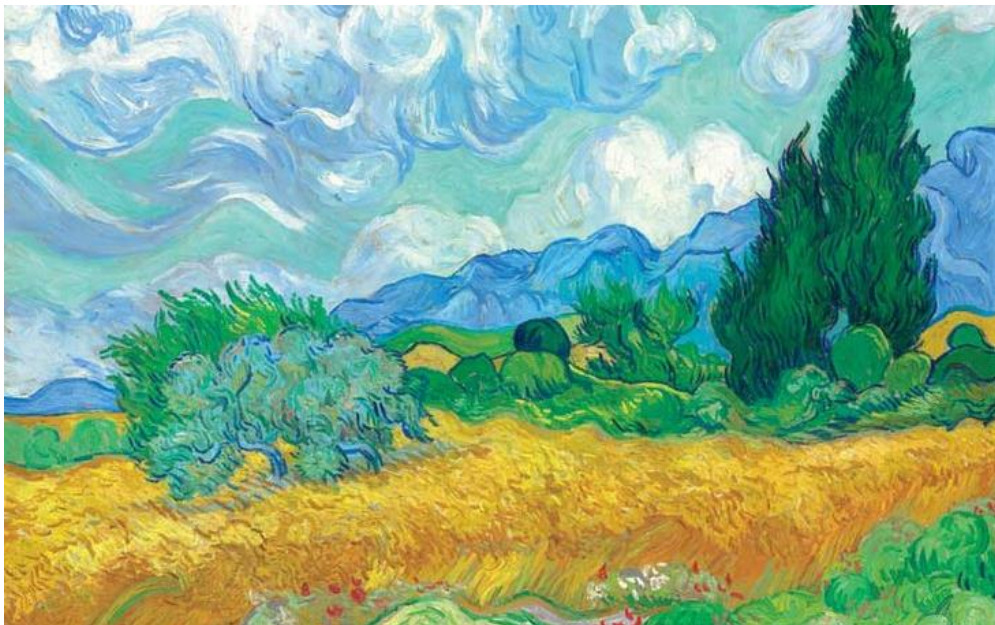
## The Ground of Earth *Incarnation and Embodiment*

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*That I am part of the Earth,  
my feet know perfectly well*  
- D H Lawrence

### ***Gaia and the Goddesses of Earth***

Inspired by the Muses, Hesiod, in his creation epic *Theogony*, recounts the appearance of the gods: from the yawning void of Chaos, Gaia emerges along with four other primal deities, Tartarus, Eros, Erebus and Night (Nyx). But first was Gaia, the Great Mother, Caretaker, Nature and the ground on which we stand and grow. Strong and fertile, patient and enduring, Gaia is the womb through which all creation first emerges and the soil in which all vegetation is rooted.



***Wheat Fields with Cypresses – Van Gogh, 1889***

Gaia parthenogenetically births Ouranus, the Heavens, and Pontus, the Sea. She is grandmother to Helios, the fiery ball of the Sun. Mythologically we could suggest that Earth precedes the other elements Air, Water and Fire. While different pre-Socratic philosophers promoted their own elemental hierarchy unique to Earth is that it is substantial, material, cyclical; it is the physical landscape that sustains life. It is the form and substance that mental images, feelings and spirit inhabit. Before lifestyles became focused in the cities, gods of agriculture and nature and the chthonic gods of earth and underworld were always present and highly revered.

A female deity has consistently personified Earth. Across many mythologies, the Great Mother embodies birth, but also death; she signifies the womb and the tomb, flesh and incarnation, growth and decay. Death was part of Her cycle and so Earth was also the grave to which we returned. Earth, as the element of incarnation, cycles, and mortality supports and sustains life; yet it also recognizes the inevitability of death and endings. As life giving, yet also life taking, Earth characterizes the cycles of birth, death and rebirth. Goddesses of nature, the environment, agriculture, cultivation, flora and fauna are her embodied surrogates.

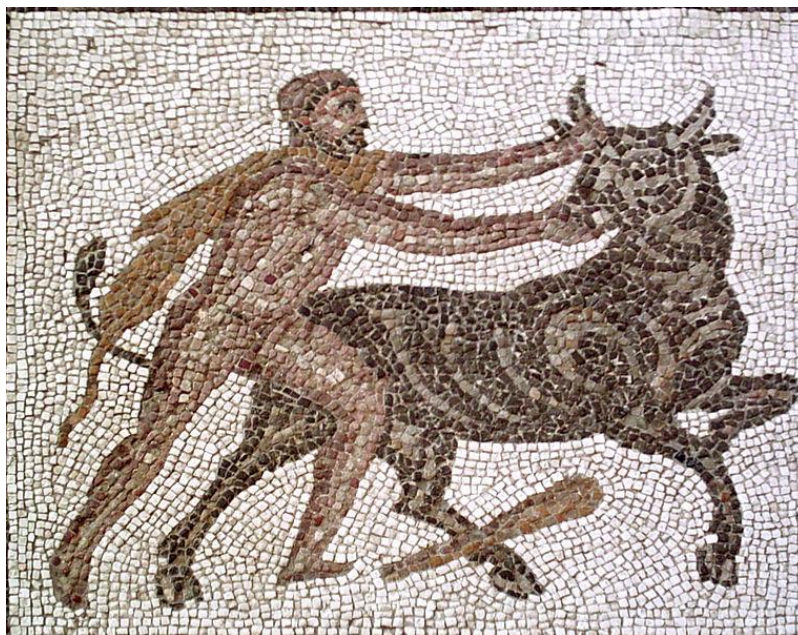
In Greek myth, Demeter was the goddess of the grain and her sanctuaries were strategically placed

looking over her fertile plains. Her daughter Persephone was the goddess of the Underworld, not only the sanctuary of the dead but the womb where seeds for new life germinated. Artemis presided over childbirth as well as the transition into puberty. She was goddess of the wild and of nature, ready to avenge any transgression to her sacred wildlife or put down an animal in distress. Her sanctuaries were often placed on the edge of cultivated land where the land ceded to marshes, forests and wilderness.

### ***Mythic Earth***

Astrologically the element of Earth comprises the astrological signs of Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn. Their focus in life is firmly grounded in the present. Unlike Fire, which is more inclined to use the sixth sense, Earth employs the reality of the five physical senses - taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing. For Earth, experiencing the sensual world is important: looking at beautiful art, listening to an inspired piece of music, sharing a sumptuous meal, filling the space with fragrant essences or embracing and being affectionate with one another - all images of the essential world of Earthly pleasure. As an element of the physical world, it symbolizes the gifts of the goddess. Astrologically the three Earth sign myths unveil these endowments.

Throughout Mediterranean cultures **Taurus**, the bull, was a symbol of wealth, supremacy and influence. For the Babylonians the Great Bull of Heaven represented power and fertility. In Mithraic religion the bull was sacred, and for the ancient Greeks, it was a significant sacrificial animal, adorned with garlands before its sacrifice. Taurus embodies the goddess' gifts of sensuality and power.



***Heracles capturing the Cretan Bull***

Greek myths included many bulls, and one of the most beloved bull myths is located in Crete, at the palace of Knossos. Deep in the labyrinth beneath the palace lived a bull-man, the Minotaur. Throughout Minoan myth, the bull featured regularly. It is a multi-dimensional symbol threading together some of the Earthy patterns of passion, desire, magnetism and potency that underlie Taurus. Its dark realm of greed, inability to share, materialism and lust cast its shadow on the Minoan family. The myth underpinning Taurus reminds us of the abundant material gifts of the goddess, but it also reminds us that our task is to employ these skills and talents in the service of the divine.

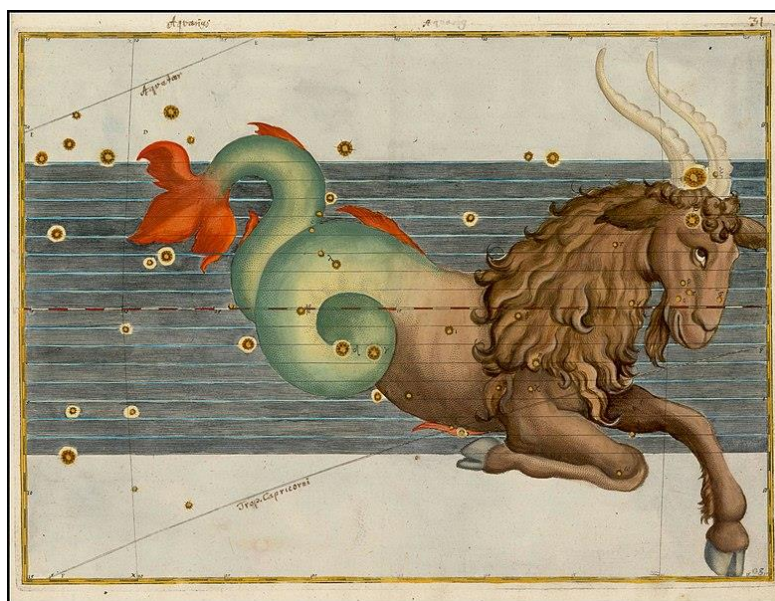
**Virgo** symbolizes the gift of cultivation and crops that the goddess disseminates to mankind. From the earliest records this constellation was associated with the harvest maiden. Spica, its brightest star, represents the wheat sheaf of Virgo, which she holds in her left hand. Since Virgo's tradition connected her to the harvest, the constellation was linked with Demeter, goddess of agriculture. To

the Romans she was known as Ceres, the grain goddess (the root for our word *cereal*), gifting us with our daily bread.

Dike, one of the goddesses of the seasons, personified justice. Her justice revered the natural course of life: nature's way, not man's. Divine justice was inherent in life itself, on earth as well as in heaven. During the Golden Age when the Gods and mankind peacefully coexisted, Dike inhabited the earth. When this peace became violated by aggression, chaos and crime, Dike chose to abandon the earth. To the Greeks she personified Virgo and the values of order, continuity, coherence and respect for natural law and daily ritual, the rhythms of the goddess.

**Capricorn** was recognised as a goat, either a horned or a sea goat, as early as the second millennium BCE. While known as a goat to the Persians, Syrians, and Hindus, it was the Babylonians who identified it as a goat-fish and connected it to their god Ea, a god of ritual purification as well as a form-giving god known as a bearer of culture. He was counterpart to Enki, the god of wisdom, whose wise intervention released Inanna from her internment in the underworld. The Assyrians superimposed the image of the goat-fish onto the constellation about mid-7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, while the Greeks imagined it to be Amaltheia, a sister of the goat-god Pan.

Amaltheia was the goat-nymph who nursed the young Zeus when he was in hiding from his father Cronus. She was immortalized in the heavens as the constellation of Capricorn by a grateful Zeus. Through the mythic connection to Amaltheia, we are reminded of an earlier layer of Capricorn's archaeology: that of protection and nurturing. Zeus praised Amaltheia by placing her image in the heavens as the constellation of Capricorn. He took one of her horns and filled it with the fruits of the harvest. This symbol of abundance was known as the Cornucopia, the Horn of Plenty, an emblem, which reminds us of the plentiful gifts of the goddess.



**Capricorn by Johann Bayer**

These gifts of the Goddess are embedded in all three Earth signs. Yet in contemporary astrology these deeper feminine images are often eclipsed by the shadow cast upon this element when we do not respect the talents and skills the Goddess has bequeathed.

- ♉ **TAURUS** the fertile earth, the sacred ground we stand on and the patient effort to build our lives using the resources at hand. Psychologically, Earth is the value we ascribe to being able to flourish and grow in the world and ourselves. It is the resourcefulness of what I have and learning to share this wealth with others.

♍ **VIRGO** the Earth of practical efficiency and analysis; the life that grows out of the Earth - the grain, the flowers, the trees. Psychologically it is how we support and contain our blossoming in the world. Humble and reverent, Earth represents the rituals, tasks and labours of daily life that allows us to maintain our sense of wellbeing.

♐ **CAPRICORN** the earth of authority, persistence and responsibility, the solid structures of life, be they mountains or earthen structures, the highest peak or a stone wall. Psychologically the process is the autonomy and authorship of one's own life script, becoming the lawmaker of one's own social code. From this place of power, we contribute our vocation to the world.

### *Characterizing Earth*

Earth represents the mundane cycles of everyday life. It was this conventional life that Uranus pushed away, choosing the rarefied atmosphere of Heaven. Earth presides over daily affairs and rituals and extracts its pleasures from the predictability and security of the familiar. The Earth element is realistic and productive, striving to create something that can be deemed 'real'. While the earthy element excels at accumulating facts, it often misses the significance or meaning of the connection between these facts. It focuses on the details and the presentation, not on the meaning or the bottom line. Its function is to determine that something exists and it utilizes the five senses as its measure of reality.

Earth is the element of incarnation and materiality; therefore, resources and possessions are important. Earth's task is learning to share and discriminate between what is mine and what is yours. Contemporary symbols of values, like money and assets are important. Earth has an affinity with the tangible world and it forges a relationship with both Nature as well as inanimate objects and possessions. Earth's gifts are the ability to manage resources, providing material security, and an instinctive ability to cope with the world and its demands. Psychologically Earth is about one's values, self-worth, esteem, resources and talents.

Symbolically, the element is conservative and self-controlled, and has an appreciation of time; its natural inclination is to move slowly and cautiously into the world and relationships. Earth needs stability and security; therefore, it is important that life provides this ongoing structure. While Earth often appears passive, it is far from docile when its security or something of value is threatened.

Earth is associated with outer realms, rather than inner ones. It is concerned with spheres of business, trade, building and the anxieties of the outer world. Like Earth, Pentacles generally focus on the outer images of financial security, health, work and vocation. From a psychological perspective outer concerns and fears about these areas are symptomatic of inner dynamics, pressures and fears.

Like all elements, relationships are part of this temperament's destiny. The Earthy temperament needs to define boundaries within their relationships without cutting off its life force; having a stable and committed relationship without it becoming fixed and bound to routines. Relationships are nurtured through attention and work. Earth individuals are serious about relationships, as they represent an investment of emotional and material resources, as well as a commitment of time. Earth values responsibility, fidelity and devotion, feeling dedicated and protective towards those they love. On the other hand, Earth can become dutiful, compliant or obligated, which inhibits the growth of relationship. With Earth, earlier experience of relationship rules, responsibilities and tasks influence their need to provide a secure structure for ongoing relationship.

Earth can be literal and habitual needing to be aware of not becoming stationary, fixed or caught in negative routines and habits. Earth's immersion and involvement with the practical world can limit their imagination and creativity, leading to narrowness in their point of view. Change is not Earth's forte and its need for stability might constellate immobility. In a rapidly evolving world, it is the Earth

element we often forget. When Earth is ignored the ability to relax, take our time and go slowly is compromised; so is our relationship with our bodies and nature! Robert Louis Stevenson once remarked that 'to be idle requires a strong sense of personal identity'. Earth's gifts are its practicality and reliability as well as the ability to relax, slow down and stop to 'smell the roses'.

### ***Imbalance of Earth***

When Earth is out of balance in an individual's life this may manifest as being ungrounded, feeling 'spaced out' or out of place in the material world. With a tenuous contact to the physical world and its systems, the individual could be continually unable to be on time, have difficulty with money, balancing a budget or providing themselves with the security they need. The imagination may run wild, as the tendency to be disembodied is an aspect of a lack of Earth. This could manifest as being out of touch with their dietary needs or proper nutrition. Lacking routine, the individual may have an undeveloped sense of their need for physical exercise, routine, as well as being unconscious of their eating and sleeping needs.

When Earth is over developed, the individual may overcompensate and feel weighed down with responsibility, stuck, unable to move or change direction and highly controlled and controlling. There could be a strong physical attachment to objects or possessions that give them pleasure; however rather than these attachments being enjoyable, they may feel possessed and governed by them. With too much Earth, the horizon of life may appear dulled and lifeless; the individual may feel uninspired or unable to be motivated by an ideal or a cause. Becoming too earthbound dampens the enthusiasm for growth and spontaneity.

### ***Sensation***

In Jungian typology Earth corresponds with the function of sensation. Sensate types have naturally-developed physical senses and rely on these for determining what is valuable. Sensates do not intellectually or conceptually judge a particular situation but weigh and value it according to the pleasure or sensation that is experienced. Earth is the pleasure of eating a rich slice of chocolate cake, not counting the calories. Earthy types do not judge based on what is 'good' or 'bad', but rather what tastes or feels 'good' or 'bad'. Common expressions like 'salt of the Earth'; 'matter of fact' and 'down to Earth' apply to sensate types. They are observant of the facts, practical, and comfortable with following methods that have proven successful.

While at home with facts; details and instructions, the sensate type can be suspicious of symbols, signs and metaphors. Sensate types learn best when shown, needing an instruction book to guide them, being most at ease with a step-by-step approach. Once they have mastered the technique, they are then able to explore their options. Energetically they tend to be able to pace themselves and set appropriate boundaries, being more aligned with their physical bodies.

### ***Tarot Earth: Pentacles***

The suit of Pentacles resonates with many Earth and Sensate images sharing the concerns of the literal world and its systems such as skills, talents, trade, apprenticeship, money, wealth and wellbeing. When Pentacles appear in a spread, we are alerted to what is worthy, substantial and valuable. Structure, form and material substance is important; however, what is of highest value is that the material world reflects the individual's self-worth, self-esteem and values. The journey of Pentacles illustrates the development of the sensation function through the labours, challenges and triumphs of the manifest world. When Pentacles appear in a spread, they may describe individuals in the environment who embody the Earth archetype.

When Pentacles are highlighted the sensuality of Earth needs to be acknowledged. While Pentacles may profile the Earthy personalities in our lives, they also describe the Earthiness in ourselves that

we may project onto others. Understanding the Earth element assists in profiling the temperament as well as an aid and guide to determine how the mundane issues of life are being affected and influenced.

In the *Celestial Tarot*, the suit of Pentacles is represented by the astrological element of Earth. The first nine cards characterize the nine decans (10-degree markers) of the three Earth signs and each one has a planetary ruler. Each numbered Pentacle is represented by a major constellation, while the 10 represents the fusion of the three signs of that element, as in the following grid.<sup>1</sup>

Minor Arcana	Astrological Harmonic	Constellation	Decanate	Decan Ruler
ACE	Conjunction	Sagitta	1 <sup>st</sup> Capricorn	Saturn
2	Opposition	Aquila	2 <sup>nd</sup> Capricorn	Venus
3	Trine	Delphinus	3 <sup>rd</sup> Capricorn	Mercury
4	Square	Orion	1 <sup>st</sup> Taurus	Venus
5	Quintile	Eridanus	2 <sup>nd</sup> Taurus	Mercury
6	Sextile	Auriga	3 <sup>rd</sup> Taurus	Saturn
7	Septile	Coma	1 <sup>st</sup> Virgo	Mercury
8	Semi-Square	Centaurus	2 <sup>nd</sup> Virgo	Saturn
9	Novile	Bootes	3 <sup>rd</sup> Virgo	Venus
10	The Element of Earth			

Astrologically Earth follows Fire. What was conceived in the imagination of Fire can now be incarnated. Pentacles tell a story of how we can creatively apply our imagination, intuition, emotion as well as our feelings, ideas and thoughts to help structure our lives more appropriately. The suit focuses on our feelings of acknowledgement and self-worth, being rewarded for our work and industry, balance and blessing. In *Celestial Tarot*, the Ace invokes the myth of Prometheus who stole heaven's Fire and brought it to Earth. This begins the journey of Pentacles with how we might focus and apply our divine gifts.

Let's look at a brief description of the first ten cards from the perspective of the *Celestial Tarot* and its mythic images.

**THE ACE OF PENTACLES: Sagitta**

Cardinal Earth represents the practical application of visionary ideals and is the formative image that initiates us on the journey of Pentacles. The Ace is Sagitta, the arrow that Heracles used to kill Aquila, the bird that continuously pecked out Prometheus' liver as punishment for stealing the fires of heaven and disseminating them to mankind. The arrow symbolizes the philanthropic spirit now being free to systematically apply its intuitive ideals. On a divinatory level the card signifies incarnating ideas, embodying inspiration and focusing ideas towards a successful outcome. Like the arrow, goals and plans are far-reaching, supported by material and physical resources.

**THE TWO OF PENTACLES: Aquila**

Zeus' eagle Aquila abducted the young Trojan prince Ganymede to Olympus where he became cupbearer to the Gods. Combining beauty (Ganymede/Venus) with authority (Zeus/Capricorn) suggests the need to control and balance personal resources, whether emotional, physical or financial. The eagle, emblematic of power and ability, is an omen that the individual's resourceful potential can be recognized. The card foreshadows a fertile relationship between commerce and creativity, work and play, striking the balance between masculine action and the feminine way of letting things happen.

**THE THREE OF PENTACLES: Delphinus**

'Sacred fish' was the title the Greeks gave to this constellation, named for Delphinus, the ambassador

of Poseidon, who persuaded Amphitrite to marry the sea god. Poseidon was so grateful that he placed him in the heavens as the dolphin, a symbol of metamorphosis. Delphinus represents a labour completed for the gods, an achievement requiring skill and dedication. Similarly, the Three of Pentacles indicates recognition and rewards for a job well done. Through concentration, hard work and focus, the individual has manifested something of great value and worth.

**THE FOUR OF PENTACLES: Orion**

Glorious Orion shines prominently in the night sky. The Egyptians linked this constellation to Osiris, their divine pharaoh and resurrected god of the underworld. To the Greeks, Orion was a great hunter and companion of Artemis, stung to death by a scorpion for dishonoring Nature. The Four of Pentacles initiates the individual into discriminating between the Earth's sacred and secular spheres, revealing the need to recognize the distinction between inner values and outer possessions. When this card appears the individual needs to reflect on their relationship to the material realm to align these with their inner and divine values.

**THE FIVE OF PENTACLES: Eridanus**

Known as a 'river of many tears', Eridanus is the celestial river that many cultures claim as their own. To the Greeks it was the river Apollo placed in the constellations as a celestial remembrance for his son Phaëthon, who fell from the sky attempting to drive his father's solar chariot across the heavens. Desperately needing to prove his paternity, Phaëthon became inflated by the idea that he too could master the chariot of the Sun. The Five may foreshadow a loss through mishandling one's inheritance, resources or talents. Psychologically the card suggests the need to repair one's sense of self-esteem through honouring one's ancestral inheritance.

**THE SIX OF PENTACLES: Auriga**

The image of the charioteer continues into the Six of Pentacles. Known as a charioteer in Mesopotamia, the constellation Auriga was also imagined as nursing a goat. *Celestial Tarot* combines both traditions: Amaltheia cradles the kid goats and behind her is the spirit of the Charioteer. Thematically the card's tradition centres on sharing one's resources, an ability grounded in the feelings of secure attachment. With the foundation stone of inner security, personified by Amaltheia, we are able to become the author and victor of our own talents, resources and finances that are championed by our Charioteer.

**THE SEVEN OF PENTACLES: Coma**

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE, Bernice, the wife of Ptolemy III sacrificed her beautiful hair as a votive to Aphrodite, petitioning the goddess for her husband's safe return from battle. To commemorate this selfless act of love and devotion Bernice's hair was placed in the heavens as the constellation of Coma. Hair is a vital aspect of one's persona, symbolizing both virtue and spiritual adornment. Cultivating her beautiful locks, then offering her prized hair to the goddess, insured a successful outcome. When this card appears the individual's labour has culminated and it is time to patiently observe and evaluate its growth and progress.

**THE EIGHT OF PENTACLES: Centaurus**

With the Eight of Pentacles, we enter the sphere of the wise and humble Centaur Chiron, whose name implies 'hand' or handy. Unlike other Centaurs, Chiron's instinctual side was channelled into being masterful and skillful. Recognized as a teacher of the ancient wisdom and a natural healer, Chiron taught his apprentices the sacred and heroic arts with great respect for Earth traditions. Through attention to detail, persistence and dedication, his heroic students learned to engage the soul through their craft and their work. When this card appears, the individual is apprenticing, called by an inner voice to apply their skill and talent to a soulful vocation.

**THE NINE OF PENTACLES: Boötes**

Boötes has been known as a hunter, driver of oxen, herdsman, farmer - all emblematic of civilization and cultivation. Celestially the constellation follows the bears around the North Pole, linked with

Arcas, one of many who have been associated with the constellation. As the son of Demeter, the agricultural goddess, Boötes won his mother's approval through inventing the plough, giving mankind the ability to cultivate and make the earth fruitful. The card symbolizes the transition to fertility and prosperity through Boötes, the archetypal worker, who takes pleasure in his labour.



**THE TEN OF PENTACLES:      Embodying Life on Earth**

The Earth signs combine to encourage us to imagine prosperity while also reconnecting us to the ancient mysteries of the ancestors whose blood and fate we inherit. The child born of the earth inherits ancestral and racial memories. This card brings traditions and conventions to light predicting legacies, inheritances or family time devoted to celebrating or resolving the past. The card instructs us to become more aware of our familial environment in order to experience extraordinary delight in our ordinary lives! The Ten of Pentacles reveals the mystery that underneath every moment of time lay the seeds of the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Celestial Tarot Book* is now available in kindle at: <https://www.amazon.com/Celestial-Tarot-Book-Brian-Clark-ebook/dp/B07MVS88SR>.



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**Brian Clark** is the creator of the **Astro\*Synthesis** distance learning program which has been shaped from his experience as an astrological student and educator over the past 40+ years ([www.astrosynthesis.com.au](http://www.astrosynthesis.com.au)). He is the author of many publications, including **Celestial Tarot** (US Games Systems, Inc.) and his newest book **Soul, Symbol and Imagination: *The Artistry of Astrology***. Brian has his MA in Classics and Archaeology from the University of Melbourne and has been honoured with lifetime membership from the state, national and professional astrological organizations in Australia.

