

THE VIRTUES OF TAROT

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MAY 1, 2021



CARDINAL VIRTUES

- What Are They?
- A Bit of History
- Images and Tarot Tour
- Meanings Traditional and Esoteric
- Spread



Three of the four cardinal virtues are represented by name in tarot, and the fourth is hidden in plain sight.

We'll learn some background about the cardinal virtues and what they have to offer tarot readers.

I'll reveal my candidate for the "hidden" virtue, and then

we'll take a visual tour of how the virtues are depicted in historic "not quite tarot" decks, "regular" historic tarot decks, and a few esoteric tarot decks.

And a spread. There's always a spread.

CARDINAL VIRTUES

- **Virtue:** Greek *arête* (excellence), Latin *virtus* (manliness)
- **Cardinal:** Latin *cardo* (hinge)
- **Prudence:** Greek *phrónēsis* (practical wisdom), Latin *prudentia*
 - Other forms of wisdom in Greek: *sophia* (wisdom), *téchhnē*, (craft), *epistēmē* (science), *nous* (mind)
- **Justice:** Greek *dikaíosynē* (righteousness), Latin *iustitia*
- **Fortitude:** Greek *andreía* (manliness), Latin *fortitudo*
 - Strength, force, courage
- **Temperance:** Greek *sōphrosynē* (sound-mindedness), Latin *temperantia*

There are many virtues, but today we're going to only talk about the 4 cardinal virtues.

(Which are often combined with the 3 theological virtues to hit the literally magic number of 7),

But we tarotists are quite interested in the number 4, too!

Cardinal: Latin *cardo* (hinge)

These four are the hinges upon which all virtues turn. Also generals in the army of virtue, principals or leaders.

Prudence:

phrónēsis (practical wisdom, knowing what to do)

sophia (higher wisdom in spiritual matters)

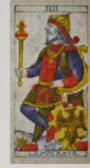
techne (craft, knowing how to make something)

episteme (science, learning about nature)

nous (mind, rationality of humans)

Justice: You've heard of *nike* (victory). This is *dike* (justice).

HOW VIRTUOUS ARE THEY?



This is the war memorial in College Park, Maryland, listing the virtues: Honor, Courage, Sacrifice, Service

All of these virtues can be used for an evil end.

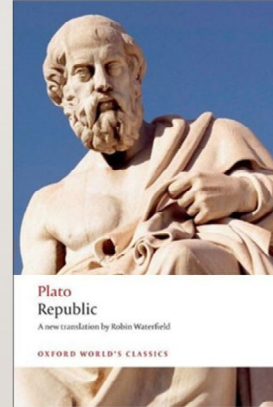
Of the cardinal virtues, maybe Justice and maybe Temperance can't be used for an evil end?

A BIT OF HISTORY



CLASSICAL AGE

- Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius
 - Plato's *Republic* aligns virtues with the classes
 - Leaders: Prudence
 - Military and police: Fortitude
 - Farmers and workers: Temperance
 - So that all work together: Justice
 - Justice is the leader of these leading virtues
- Other say prudence is the leader because all the others also require understanding of what to do

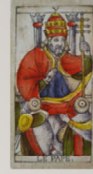


Cicero and Marcus Aurelius were Stoics. Marcus Aurelius was also a Roman emperor, a true philosopher king!

Perhaps Temperance is for the workers because they need to just accept things, keep their heads down, and work hard. Or because they have to deal with plenty and shortages through the agricultural year.

Prudence being the leader of the virtues may be why it's the "missing" virtue.

IN THE BIBLE?



- In two (pre-Christian) books of the Catholic Bible that are not in Hebrew or protestant Bibles
- Most probably citing Aristotle
 - “**She [Wisdom (Chokhmah, Sophia, Sapientia)]** teaches temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life.”
 - Wisdom of Solomon 8:7
 - “Now the kinds of wisdom are right judgment, justice, courage, and self-control. **Right judgment is supreme over all of these since by means of it reason rules over the emotions.**”
 - 4 Maccabees 1:18–19

First quote says the more spiritual wisdom than prudence teaches the cardinal virtues: Hebrew, Greek, Latin

Second quote declares prudence as the leader.

MIDDLE AGES

- Aristotle: **The** Philosopher
- Christian philosophers who followed his list: Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, Dante
 - Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1274
 - Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, 1320



In the Middle Ages, Aristotle was literally known as THE philosopher, so he was very influential. But some Christian writers were still wary of pagan philosophy. Tertullian, 225 CE: “What does Athens to do with Jerusalem?”

Aquinas wrote an (unfinished) summary of all theology, *Summa Theologiae*, 1274, and is a doctor of the church (and saint), so is also very influential with all subsequent philosophers, including contemporaries.

Dante put four women representing the cardinal virtues (along with three representing the theological virtues) in the earthly paradise at the top of his mountain of Purgatory, and associates the virtues with the celestial spheres of his Paradiso.

MODERN ERA

- Images remain popular today, especially in Catholic and Masonic contexts
 - Images are on four cornerstones of St. Anselm's Abbey School in NE, built 1940s?
- Concept returning to academic popularity in philosophy: "Virtue ethics"



I think this is a Masonic illustration.

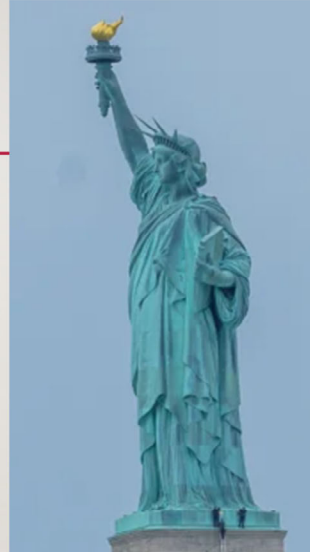
My son attended St. Anselm's Abbey School in Northeast Washington, DC. The four cornerstones of the old gym (now the library) had symbols of the virtues. Prudence was a bridle.

IMAGES AND TAROT TOUR



IMAGERY

- Women as allegory
- Four elements and suits



Females: A lot of ink has been spilled about Strength being female. But really she's female because she's an allegorical figure, like the Statue of Liberty. But there were suffragist protests at the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty, citing her femaleness, so tarotists aren't the only ones who notice.

IMAGERY

- Halos
 - Circle: Anyone holy or humans now in heaven
 - Triangle: God
 - Square: Living human
 - Hexagon: Allegorical figure



Triangular halo for the trinity. Usually seen around a dove to show that it's the Holy Spirit, not a bird.

ATTRIBUTES

- Prudence
 - Mirror, globe, two faces, snake
 - Coins or other circle or oval
- Justice
 - Scales and sword, blindfold
 - Swords
- Fortitude
 - Armor, club, lion, column
 - Clubs or columns
- Temperance
 - Two jugs, bridle
 - Cups



Through the attributes, cardinal virtues can be associated with the suits.

This is an illustration of the Ballet Comique de la Reine, 1582, produced and performed by Catherine de Medici, along with her son, King Henri III, and others of the French court.

DECKS: HISTORIC NOT QUITE TAROT

- Cary-Yale Visconti Tarocchi Deck, Tarocchi Visconti di Madrone (11 extant trumps including theological virtues; male and female knights and pages), 1463 (Faith)
- Mantegna Tarot (Renaissance flash cards), 1465 and 1470-5 (contents page)
- Tarocchino Mitelli (Additional popes replace Priestess, Empress, and Emperor; no 2-5 suit cards), c. 1660
- Minchiate Etruria (extra trumps), 1725
- Vandenborre Flemish Tarot (Bachus replaces Pope; Spanish Captain replaces Popess), c. 1780 (upright Hanged)

Decks in black are on the following pages. Grayed out ones are other places in this presentation.

Cary-Yale Visconti Tarocchi Deck, Tarocchi Visconti di Madrone (only 11 extant majors, including theological virtues), 1463. Also has male and female knights and pages.

Mantegna Tarot is neither Mantegna nor tarot. 5 sets of 10 cards listing planets/celestial spheres, virtues, liberal arts, muses + Apollo, and statuses of men (beggar to pope). Line drawings/engravings are available online. On second page. LS and Il Meneghello have colorized.

Visconti Tarots: Colorized by LS of Visconti-Sforza. Missing only Devil and Tower.

The Golden Tarot of the Renaissance is an LS restoration based on the fifteenth-century French deck, the Charles VI (also known as the Estensi or Charles VI or Gringonneur) of which only 17 cards remain.

DECKS: HISTORIC TAROT

- Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi Deck, c. 1451 (Sophia)
- Visconti Tarots, c. 1451
- Golden Tarot of the Renaissance (Estensi, Charles VI, Gringonneur), c. 1470 (halos)
- Tarot de Jacques Vieville, c. 1663
- Budapest Tarot, beginning of 16th century
- Tarot de Marseille (Pierre Madenié), 1709 (title page and thumbnails)
- Tarot de Paris, 17th century

DECKS: ESOTERIC TAROT

- Grand Etteilla Egyptian Gypsies Tarot (Etteilla I), 1804 (Prudence not Hanged)
- Book of Thoth Etteilla Tarot (Grand Jeu de Oracle des Dames, Etteilla III), 1870 (Prudence not Hanged)
- Oswald Wirth Tarot, 1889
- Waite-Smith Tarot, 1909
- Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot, completed 1943, published 1969

PRUDENCE IS NOT THE HANGED



Engravers and printers sometimes got it upside down. And many forgot or never knew what it meant.

It's not a rope, it's a snake! It's prudent to avoid stepping on a snake.

Oh, just give up and make 12 Prudence with her attributes of mirror and snake.

PRUDENCE IS NOT THE PRIESTESS

SOPHIA



FAITH



Sophia: Why I've been harping on different kinds of wisdom.

Also not the Hermit (wisdom of age).

This Priestess with the Pope's triple crown could be allegory of the Church, or Papacy. Or just a high ranking nun.

Not Faith either, one of the theological virtues.

PRUDENCE IS THE WORLD!



Mantegna card: Two faces (looking to the past and future?, wisdom of age?), mirror, not snake but a cute little dragon!
Roundness, mirror, holding up the world or standing on it

PRUDENCE



World of Golden Tarot of the Renaissance is holding a coin.
Mandorla of Christ in Majesty in most Marseille decks

PRUDENCE



Snake comes back in esoteric decks.

The Golden Dawn snuck in the “missing” prudence as 8 of Disks (8 mercury, thinking + disks, practical matters = prudence).

JUSTICE



Justice has the most consistent attributes, scale and sword.

JUSTICE



Tarot de Paris has **two faces** here (usually for Prudence) and the only **blindfold**, which means equality before the law.

JUSTICE



In the Thoth, Justice herself becomes the balance, and she balances on the point of the sword. It's never still, always moving and adjusting toward equilibrium.

FORTITUDE



Fortitude is the second most diverse in attributes, column, club, lion, armor.
I love the lion armor in the Mantenga!

FORTITUDE



A labor of Hercules was to kill a lion that couldn't be hurt with a weapon, so he strangled it.
Then he could be recognized by wearing the lion's skin and holding a big club.
Marseille decks tend to have just a lion with the figure, so most esoteric decks do the same.

FORTITUDE



No, it's NOT a big black sheep.

Lust = The Whore of Babylon and the Great Beast of Revelation because Crowley.

TEMPERANCE



The attributes of Temperance are pretty consistent.
Mantegna adds an ermine looking in a mirror (which is more Prudence).
Sol Fama = our only claim to fame is temperance?

TEMPERANCE



Two pitchers. Sometimes one is on the ground instead of two in two hands. Pouring water on a fire can become combining fire and water, the alchemy or art of the esoteric decks.

TEMPERANCE

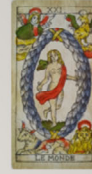


Here we see a bridle in one esoteric deck.
I don't know when or how wings come into the picture, a topic for more research!
In the Thoth, combining fire and water.

MEANINGS TRADITIONAL AND ESOTERIC



PRUDENCE



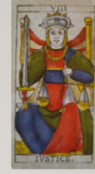
TRADITIONAL

- Practical wisdom
 - Understanding what to do
- Carefulness

ESOTERIC

- Successful completion
- Taking everything into consideration
- Life, the universe, and everything

JUSTICE



TRADITIONAL

- Fairness
- Give everyone their due
- Equality before the law
- Righteousness in general

ESOTERIC

- Balance
- Equilibrium, adjustment

Are all cards about balance? Lovers, Chariot, Justice, Temperance, World, 2s, etc.
It's difficult to distinguish between them.

FORTITUDE



TRADITIONAL

- Courage
- Defending
- Duty
- Force
- Physical strength
- Moral strength

ESOTERIC

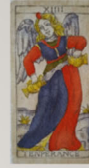
- Feminine power
- Taming with love
- Taming self (Temperance?)
- Lust

Taming with or without violence. Could be a feminist commentary on a masculine trait.

Taming self, too. But isn't that Temperance?

Lust = cooperation with body and instincts

TEMPERANCE



TRADITIONAL

- Moderation
- Happy medium (Aristotle)
- A sound mind in a sound body
- Abstinence?

ESOTERIC

- Middle way
- Blending
- Continuum
- Unity of opposites
- Alchemy
- Art

Tarot people either don't know what this means or are offended by the idea of moderation.

But, as Oscar Wilde said, "everything in moderation, including moderation."

Some even call it "time lord" or some nonsense because "temp." Might as well be "heat lord" for temperature!

According to Aristotle, Temperance can be considered the lead virtue because all virtues are happy mediums, and all vices are either excesses or deficiencies.

A sound mind in a sound body: The phrase comes Juvenal, a Roman poet in the late first and early second century AD. It is the first in a list of what is desirable in life: "You should pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body."

Abstinence? The crusade against alcohol included "Temperance Leagues" that advocated abstinence. But Temperance isn't all one side. Of course, abstinence from a dangerous addicting drug might be the idea of a sound mind in a sound body.

Esoteric meaning:

(Buddhist) middle way (has many meanings, too!)

Blending leads to continuum leads to unity of opposites leads to alchemy leads to art.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES AND ME SPREAD



Outer

1. Fortitude: What is my greatest strength?
2. Temperance: What do I have too much or too little of?
3. Justice: Where in my life do I need to be more fair, or who do I need to be fair to?
4. Prudence: What should I be doing?

Inner

5. Fortitude: What is my goddess superpower? (Gentlemen, you have them too!)
6. Temperance: What's my paradox? That is, what two opposite ideas are both true for me?
7. Justice: What in my life needs a more healthful balance?
8. Prudence: What do I need to look at from a higher level? What's the big picture?

		4		
		8		
1	5		7	3
		6		
		2		

QUESTIONS?

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