

The Fool – Key to Potentiality

What messages do you get when “The Fool” turns up in a reading? Search in a traditional old Tarot cookbook and what do you find? My first book on Tarot, from back in the 1970s, gave blind faith, foolishness, unwarranted optimism, errors of judgement, “you learn from your mistakes or are doomed to repeat them.”⁽¹⁾ Oh dear! How limiting and narrow could a reading be, if we hadn’t moved onwards and upward?



Yes of course the Fool is naïve and inexperienced, but he is also open to anything and everything. He has no preconceived ideas of how things are supposed to turn out and no fear, be it of failure, or not conforming or being thought of as “off with the fairies”. He experiences the full range of possibilities, because nothing is off limits. Is it really foolish to have blind faith? Isn’t that what we often tell our clients that this energy is about when this card shows up?

Whilst I am not too fond of the costume worn by the Fool in my beloved “Tarot of Dreams”, I love the symbolism of him holding the whole world in one hand and experiencing a rainbow at the same time as a night time Moon.

Anything is indeed possible, even balancing on a magical ball, suspended over water with a kitten weaving in and out of your legs chasing a butterfly!

The creativity of Ciro Marchetti’s graphics is truly awe inspiring, he is an incredibly talented man, but his author Lee Bernstein got a little bit too creative in marrying the deck to other modalities like Numerology and the Tree of Life paths in some instances. It could be assumed that I chose this deck to read with because of these influences and the fact that I integrate the other modalities into my

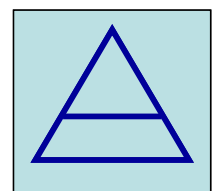
readings. Funnily enough, although I use knowledge from these sources, I have never used the symbols in the corner of the cards, my sense of vision never gets past the beauty of the central picture! Maybe my intuition told me that there was some incongruence to be found in the corners, before I ever understood it on a conscious level!

So let's examine the Fool using those other sources of wisdom. He is Trump 0 sometimes thought of as Trump 22, whatever the system, he is alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. Zero is actually a cipher, exhibiting no quality and everything, so it has no real meaning in numerology besides providing a link to the other world of the divine. When it is added to other numbers zero intensifies them. When there is an absence of a certain number in the profile, then this indicates that by its absence there is a karmic lesson brought forward to be learned from its qualities.

On the Tree Of Life, the model which implements the esoteric knowledge of the Kabbalah, the Fool card is associated with path 11, the first path down from Kether the Crown or enlightenment (sephira 1) to Chochmah (sephira 2), Wisdom or potentiality. This is the brightest path of the Supernal Triangle at the top of the tree, where looking up we get to glimpse God directly, through all the potential that exists in the world. But to return to God is to cease to exist, thus it represents both the first step forward and the return to nothingness.



Its Hebrew letter is aleph (shown to the left) and literally translates as an ox (shaped like an ox's head), but signifies the wind or "a breath of fresh air", so it too has that meaning of nothingness.

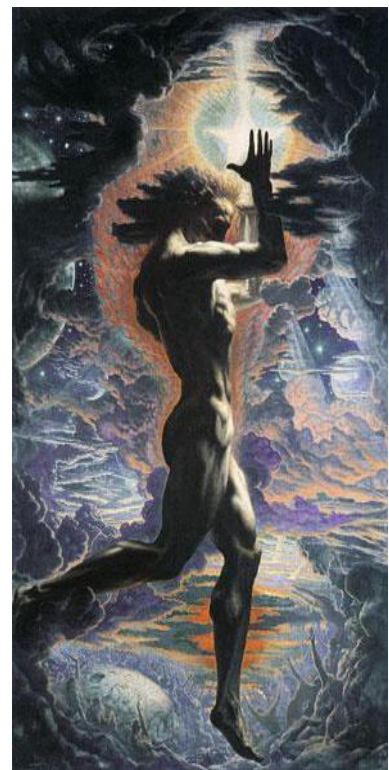


The Fool is in fact the Major Arcana Trump to which Eliphas Levi and the Golden Dawn allocated the quality of the element of Air. The glyph for Air (shown to the right), replicates the shape of the Supernal Triangle as it appears on the Tree of Life. It is an adaption of the alchemical symbol for Air which divided the bright and pure *aether* above the clouds from the lower *aer*, which existed in a muddier form in the lower atmosphere. So the

archetype of the Fool is true to the fundamental qualities of Air, in that it is essential to breathe for life, to have the space to be either nothing or everything.

Now let's turn to story or myth and look at the archetype of the Fool. How many stories follow the pattern of the simpleton brother, who is neglected or derided by his brothers, only to in the end to be the one who triumphs or succeeds, because he has a good heart and follows it. The court jester or fool nevertheless had the ear of the King and can get away with parodying truths, which would be unpalatable and impossible for him to hear from another.

The astrological connection for the Fool can only be Uranus, the planet of individuality, it even rotates on its belly around the Sun lying on its side at 90 degrees to the way the other planets behave. From Greek myth Ouranos (Uranus) was the first child of Gaia or Mother Earth, conceived in her dreams out of the primordial chaos. He was pure potentiality, able to create anything. Gazing down on his sleeping mother, he lovingly created gentle rain to fall on her enabling her to become fertile and produce all the green abundance of nature, hence, his association with Aquarius the Zodiac Sign of the water carrier. He later mated with his mother, producing a series of monsters like the Giants and Cyclops, but also the seven Titans and their spouse-sister Titanesses, the forerunners of the Olympian Gods and Goddesses. However he turned into a tyrant, shutting his monstrous children away in the underworld, where he no longer had to look at them.



The furious Gaia loved all her children and so persuaded their youngest Titan son Cronus (Saturn), to castrate him with a special flint sickle. His seed spread onto the earth creating the terrible Furies but also falling into the ocean to give birth to the beautiful Venus Aphrodite. So we can see that too much potential or creativity needed to be brought back to reality through a more responsible approach but there was still room for beauty to emerge.

So we see from all these sources that the energy of the Fool involves working close to God and all the potential that exists in the world. It involves being impulsive and trusting our instincts, listening out for our life purpose amongst all the possibilities and then living it without fear.

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1. Understanding the Tarot by Dr Leo Martello, published by Castle Books 1972, pages 28-29.
2. The Fool from the Tarot of Dreams deck, reproduced by kind permission of Ciro Marchetti.