

THE TAROT
by **A. E. WAITE** and
P. COLMAN SMITH



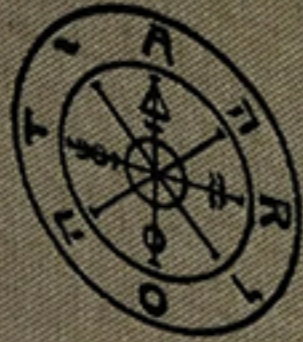
**The Story of the World's
Most Popular Tarot**

With Facsimiles of the Original 1890 Tarot Deck
and A. E. Waite's The Key to the Tarot

TASCHEN

Johannes Fibbig (ed.)

**THE
TAROT**
of
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THE WONDERFUL AND THE UNEXPECTED

Tarot for You

*"Mystery is at the heart of creativity.
That, and surprise."*

Julia Cameron, 1996

Millions of people in countless countries around the world make practical use of Tarot cards. Such widespread interest in the Tarot is a recent phenomenon; throughout its long history it has never been as popular as it is today. What is also new is the way the cards are used. They are now used namely for personal, self-determined reasons; interpreted as creatively as a dream or daydream, or a meditation over a picture; and are found to be as exciting as a novel or a computer game but with a decisive difference: the user is the main protagonist.

These many millions of Tarot users remains relatively invisible on a public level, and that applies to all countries. On the Internet, you can find small discussion groups and numerous websites that offer well-meaning but often banal and cliché advice—for a price. But this is not representative of the main community of today's Tarot users. I can confirm this from my own experience. I have held Tarot seminars and taken part in Tarot events in many countries in Europe and Russia as well as in the United States. For three decades, I was a publisher and CEO of publishing houses specializing in the Tarot, dream interpretation, and other symbolic languages, among much else. This allowed me to gather information about who buys Tarot cards, and why.

Finding Orientation Among the Cards

These days, most Tarot users see reading cards not as something strange or spooky, but as a normal part of their everyday lives, just as one talks about dreams within one's circle of family and friends or engages in remembrance work; just as one is open to psychological topics and interested in spiritual matters, such as acknowledging, for instance, that birth and death are both part of life, and that we need dedicated celebrations and rituals for these things.

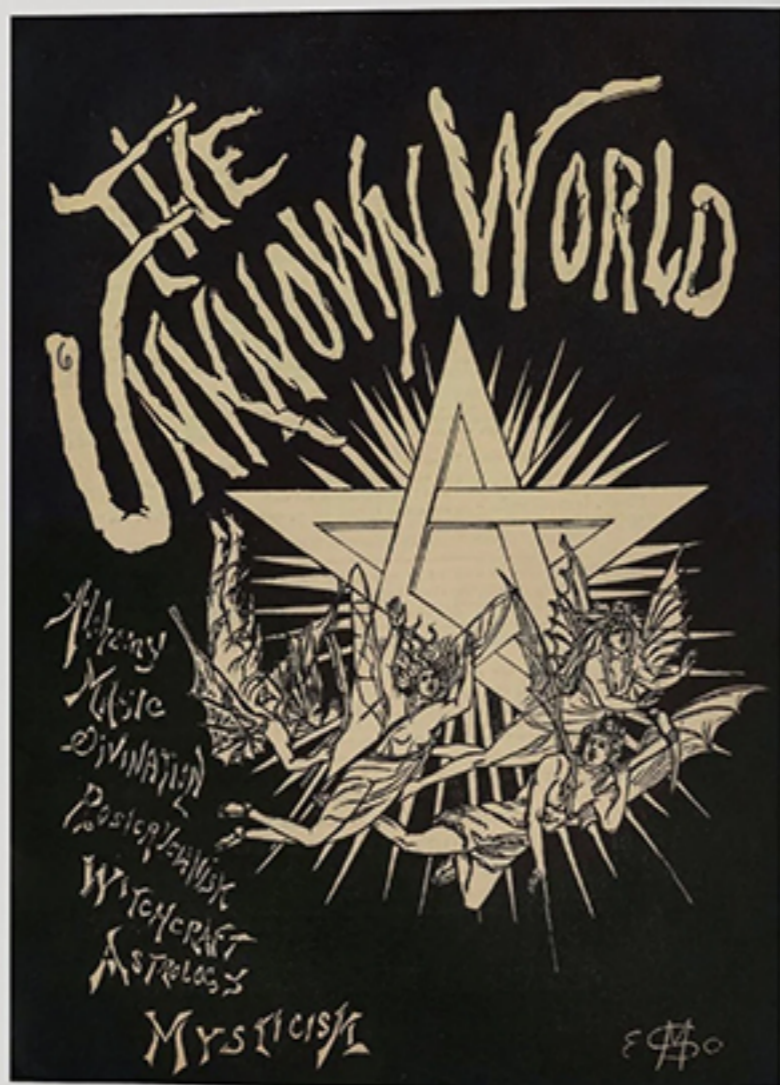
Today, Tarot is part of everyday life, like yoga, forms of meditation, and awareness exercises. Drawing or selecting a card of the day is often done alongside keeping a diary, working through experiences, and consciously realigning one's own energies and intentions. Many people also find that the card of the day provides a framework for a daily space of one's own, for reflection without words. Tarot today can be associated with a more-aware life in many different ways. A mindful, self-determined use of the Tarot supports the joy of living in two ways at the same time—by experiencing and understanding.

Doing this does involve something of a challenge, of course. But if everything were clear and simple all along, we wouldn't need the assistance of the Tarot or other symbolic languages. Tarot makes difficult things easier. Or, to use Mary K. Greer's words, "Tarot helps you meet what ever comes in the best possible way" (this is to be found in the heading of her blog). In moments when we feel stuck, the cards help us build bridges and find feasible

The first Tarot cards appeared between 1425 and 1460 in northern Italy, somewhat later in southern France. At the time, playing cards had already been in use for hundreds of years,

but Tarot cards—the combination of a set of cards in four suits and additional pictorial cards (the trumps)—were only invented during the Renaissance.

Four cards from the Visconti-Sforza deck: Ace of Cups, The Hermit, The Fool, and The Magician. This deck was made for the noble houses of Milan around 1442.



ARTHUR E. WAITE, THE TAROT, AND HIS WAY OF ASCENT

Robert A. Gilbert

Arthur E. Waite is today best known as the co-creator of the Tarot deck that bears his name, but he was a man of many parts, and his involvement with the Tarot and his approach to interpreting the symbolism of the cards cannot be understood without placing them in the context of his life and work as a whole.



After leaving the college he was employed as a clerk at a railway company, but the sudden death of his sister in 1874 led him to drift slowly away from Christian orthodoxy and to turn increasingly inward for spiritual understanding, while still retaining his love of the rich symbolism and ceremonialism of the Roman liturgy. As a youth he had been fascinated by medieval Romance literature, especially Arthurian legends and the Lancelot Grail Cycle, and he now began to extend this enthusiasm to other forms of "alternative spirituality."

Early Enthusiasm for Symbolism and the Ceremonial

Arthur Edward Waite was born on October 2, 1857, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Charles Frederick Waite, an American sea captain, and Emma Lovell, the daughter of a wealthy English merchant. Captain Waite died at sea in 1858, before the birth of a daughter, Frederica. For reasons that remain unclear, neither family approved of Charles and Emma's marriage, and when Emma Waite brought her children to England in 1859, her family disowned her, leaving mother and children to live in genteel poverty in the northern suburbs of London.

Emma found solace in the Roman Catholic Church, to which she converted, and the young Arthur was profoundly influenced by its sacramentalism. His schooling was erratic; the only record is of his attendance at St. Charles's College in West London in 1872-73, but he became proficient in both French and Latin and showed a remarkable aptitude for writing both verse and prose.

First Studies in Magic, Alchemy, and the Rosicrucians
Waite turned first to spiritualism, but he was skeptical and found no spiritual consolation within it, although his interest in psychic phenomena remained. Next came the Theosophical Society, which also failed him because he hated the anti-Christian bias of Helena Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877)—but the book did lead him to Eliphas Lévi and thus to the whole range of Western esotericism. Waite had now found his true métier.

By the early 1880s, Waite had become a regular contributor to minor literary journals, but he realized that he would never become a successful writer with his poetry and fiction, so he turned to studies of the "occult sciences" and translations of magical, alchemical, and

Around 1900, much attention was devoted in Europe and North America to research into unknown and hidden realms of consciousness. Topics like Emanuel Swedenborg's version of theosophy, the Celtic Otherworld, old myths, and new ideas of fantasy fascinated people at the time. By way of response, Arthur E. Waite

issued a small magazine called *The Unknown World* in 1894/95 that covered topics such as alchemy, magic, seerism, Rosicrucianism, witchcraft, astrology, and mysticism.

The Unknown World, cover, London, 1894/95

Arthur Edward Waite, portrait by Alvin Langdon Coburn, London, January 1901