

# The Royal Road

## Arcanum 6: The Two Paths

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Arcanum 6: The Two Paths.

Arcanum 6 pictures a man standing at the crossroads  
with his arms folded across his chest.

He wears a triangular apron with one ruffle on each side,  
weighted down with a rectangle.

A completely dressed woman with one hand  
on his right shoulder points down  
the right hand path.

She wears a circlet of gold on her head.

A scantily clad woman with one hand on his left  
shoulder points down the left hand path.

She has on her head a wreath made of vines.

In an aureole of light above the man appears  
a genie with a cat's face crowned with a flame.

In the midst of the twelve-flamed crown rays,  
(only six of which show in our card)  
the genie aims an arrow at the woman  
on the man's left.

Symbolism and Philosophy:

The medieval version of this card shows  
a man and a woman adoring each other.

It is titled "The Lovers."

We believe the Egyptian version, however,  
comes closer to the real crux of the  
idea of temptation, the main keyword of Arcanum 6.

It shows man standing at the crossroads of life  
with his hands folded, signifying an  
attitude of hesitation, restraint and indecision  
as to which road to take.

The two women typify the two aspects of his soul.

The soul is often spoken as a singular,  
but our experience confirms the ancient mysteries,  
which tells us our soul expresses as a duality  
instead of a unity.

That part of our feeling nature which responds to God,  
the sages of old called the "divine soul."

It forms the second portion of our immortal Trinity,  
composed of spirit, divine soul and  
spiritual body (or mind).

That which responds only to the promptings of Earth life  
and is the fountainhead of our fourfold mortal nature  
they called the "animal soul."

The divine soul lives by law of love.

The animal soul by that of claw and fang.

The two are mutually antagonistic until our rebirth.

When the Great High Priest takes over the  
direction of our life, he re-channels the drives  
and energies of the animal soul into the  
constructive purpose of building the Temple of Truth.

He brings about a reconciliation between  
apparent irreconcilables.

Man's animal soul, or "carnal nature,"  
as it is sometimes called,  
is much like a wild, untamed horse.

After a wild horse is broken, you can put  
a saddle on it and ride it.

You can domesticate it and put it to work for you.

So with man's animal soul.

After it is tamed by the Spirit of God,  
it can function as a useful tool  
of the human spirit and its  
journey Godward.

For ages, certain religious sects have advised killing  
out the animal nature to cultivate "spirituality."

But why kill a horse?

You can ride on it much farther than you can walk  
on foot, after it's tamed.

And the animal soul can be tamed and made  
obedient and useful to the Spirit.

The two women of Arcanum 6 thus represent the  
two aspects of our emotional nature.



The chastity dressed woman on the right  
typifies our divine soul.

The seductively garbed woman on the left  
typifies our animal soul.

Before the rebirth, the woman on the left urges  
us to walk the path of

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least resistance, human desire.

The one on the right urges us to travel the more  
difficult path of God's will, the Royal Road.

This tug of war in our own inner life  
pulls us in opposite directions.

Some Tarot students think this card represents the choice  
everyone must make between good and evil,  
virtue and vice.

In a limited sense, that is true.

There is, however, a deeper and more significant  
meaning to its symbolism.

The wreath of vines crowning the head of the woman  
on the left, and the suggestiveness of her  
garb indicate sensuality.

This, of course, is a barrier that many have  
to overcome in their lives.

But there is a factor of far more serious import  
than sensuality that prevents man  
from taking God into partnership.

This is the insidious temptation to place comfort  
above every other value.

The desire to minister to our physical needs,  
to protect the body from heat and cold,  
to clothe it properly, to house it comfortably,  
to feed it well, is fundamental.

It's a perfectly natural instinct,  
but when that absorbs our whole effort,  
we miss the real meaning of life.

There are times when duty and responsibility demand  
that we overlook our physical comforts  
and make a real struggle to do something worthwhile,  
which calls for self-sacrifice.

Then we have to heed the voice of the woman on the right,  
who represents our conscience,  
the voice of God speaking in our soul,  
telling us what we ought to do.

Our real tug of war begins when we are sorely tempted  
to ignore what we know we ought to do  
in order to do what we want to do.

The whisper of intuition tells us that what  
we should do may involve personal  
discomforts and personal sacrifices.

It makes us feel uncomfortable.

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We begin to rationalize our way out of the situation  
with thousand excuses that pass for reasons.

We heed the voice of desire on our left that pulls  
us away from the path we know we should walk.

An outstanding example comes to mind, Albert Schweitzer.

At the height of his fame as scholar, musician,  
historian and teacher, an inner voice spoke to him.

It urged him to go to Africa as a medical missionary.

Schweitzer toyed with the idea for some time,  
weighing and balancing the arguments of friends  
who tried to dissuade him from such a "stupid undertaking."

But Schweitzer felt the call of duty so strongly,  
that he brushed aside all the flimsy excuses  
and made his decision.

He gave up all the comforts that went with fame, prestige and  
money to embrace a pioneering life of rugged character,  
even physical danger.

The result has been an inspiration to thousands who might  
never have known of him had he not obeyed  
his inner prompting and gone to Africa.

Few of us, of course, are called upon to face such a  
dramatic situation as that of Schweitzer.

But in God's sight there is no great or lowly.

We all have an opportunity to "give a cup of water  
to the least of these in His name."

The opportunity to serve God by serving our brother  
man comes in countless ways.

A word of encouragement and cheer, a friendly gesture,  
a helping hand over a rough spot, sometimes just a prayer.

The man in Arcanum 6 wears the familiar apron.

This time it has two ruffles, reminding us of our dual nature,  
part mortal, part immortal.

It calls our attention to Arcanum 2,  
on the one hand Mother Nature, the earth sign Virgo,  
that clothe our spirit in a garment of flesh.

On the other it reminds us that we must look beyond

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Mother Nature, to the Virgin of the skies,  
the divine soul who conceives for us the  
man-child of God-consciousness.

We must look to Eternity, not time,  
for the chart that guides us safely  
along the Royal Road.



The man in Arcanum 6 stands with his hands folded in the form of a cross over his solar plexus, chest and heart.

These organs come under the dominion of Cancer (feelings), Gemini (reason) and Leo (will).

The symbolism of the hands in this position tells us that we must offer up our feelings, our thoughts and our will to be used according to the will of God.

The voice of intuition from the divine soul points the way if we will but listen carefully.

But to know and to do are vastly different.

To tune in on the power needed for action, we must forever call on the Spirit of God for help, personified by the genie in the aureole of light.

For that spirit, like the cat, sees through the darkness of our inner life and shoots the arrow of spiritual illumination into our self-willed desire nature.

The flame on the genie's head typifies the fire of God's Spirit, which generates the steam to carry us up the mountainous path we must travel.

The twelve flame-crowned rays surrounding the aureole indicates that the eternal power of light is available for all those born under the twelve signs of the zodiac.

We all have equal access to that light, for God is no respecter of persons.

Astrology:

Arcanum 6 corresponds to the planet Venus, ruler of the signs Taurus and Libra.

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Venus indicates sensuousness, beauty, affection, desire for ease, comfort and luxury, the social urge.

Human Anatomy:

Arcanum 6 indicates the sympathetic nervous system and the ganglia associated with it.

It also has rule over the thyroid gland, and through it, the skin, hair and nails.

Masonic ritual:

Arcanum 6 corresponds to the Most Excellent Master degree.

Tradition tells us that when the Temple of Solomon was finished, those who had proved themselves worthy by their virtue (Arcanum 1), skill (Arcanum 2) and fidelity (Arcanum 3) were installed as most Excellent Masters.

The Masters who built this edifice were Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff, the Widow's Son.

The Bible:

Temptation first enters the Bible picture in the 3rd chapter of Genesis.

There we meet the tempting serpent of self-will that bruises the heel (understanding) of the "seed of the woman" (our own mystic Christ child).

But when we win the battle of Temptation, we in turn bruise the serpent's head (consciousness).

The story of Sarah and Hagar, Abram's two wives (Genesis 16) symbolize the divine and animal souls.

Paul tells us in (Galatians 4:22-24) that this is an allegory.

Sarah's offspring, Isaac, represents the child of promise, him who "rules the nations with a rod of iron."

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Hager's offspring, Ishmael, is a "wild man," and typifies the natural fruitage of the animal soul that keeps the human spirit in bondage until the rebirth.

Genesis 22 tells the story of temptation associated with Arcanum 6.

The text says God tempted Abraham (type of the Prodigal) to kill his son Isaac.

The name Isaac means happiness and joy, and typifies the Christ child born of God's Spirit in our divine soul.

After the rebirth (Arcanum 4), every traveler along the Royal Road faces the temptation to sacrifice his newly born God-consciousness to the dictates of his own self-will.

The wording of the Genesis allegory is garbled.

It is not God who tempts.

The apostle James tells us where temptation comes from: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away from his own lust and enticed."

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:13-15).

The Bible pictures Arcanum 6 as two types of women, personifying the divine and animal soul, such as Sarah and Hagar already mentioned, Mary and Jezebel, Mary and Martha, the Virgin and the Harlot of Revelation.



We will take one more example from the New Testament, that of Mary and Martha, which graphically portrays the difference between the two souls:

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he (Jesus) entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

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But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me? And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:38-42).

When we respond only to the promptings of the animal soul (the woman on the left) we concern ourselves solely with the cares of physical life, food, clothing, shelter, amusements.

We ignore the opportunity to feast on the bread of spiritual life so freely offered by the Son of God.

We become so concerned with providing ourselves with the creature comforts that we fail to lay hold on those eternal values that cannot be taken from us at death (typified by the woman on the man's right).

(Matthew 7:13,14) describes the Crossroads shown in Arcanum 6:

"Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it." (Psalm 1).

The Greek word for "destruction" means "spiritual loss or ruin."

Jesus therefore tells us that the broad, easy way of self-centeredness leads to spiritual bankruptcy.

The narrow way of love, brotherhood and self-sacrifice that leads onward and upward to reunion with God is a lonely one, not because there be so few who can find it, but because there are so few who care to take it.

(Luke 4:1-13) tells about the devil tempting Jesus

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for forty days in the wilderness.

When we read this in the light of ourselves playing the role of Jesus, we see that what happened to Him also happens to us.

"And in those days he did eat nothing, and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."

The devil of self-will tempts every man, and during that time, we eat no bread of spiritual life and truly hunger for the heavenly manna.

"And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and the devil said unto him, all this power will I give thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will I give it, if thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

This is the supreme temptation that constantly faces many a Prodigal, the lure of power.

The drive to rule others with a rod of iron probably causes the downfall of more people than all other urges combined.

Arcanum 6 pictures, by the figures of two women, this struggle and all of us between self-will and God's will.

And the decision we must make over and over again is the answer Jesus gave to the devil:

"Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."

Aphorism:

Remember then, son of Earth, that you who have been born of the light must decide whether the wise or the foolish virgins shall be your companions.

Choose your path deliberately, for the choice is yours alone.

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Keywords and Correspondences:

Arcanum 6: The Two Paths.

Sound: UH, V, W, OO, F.

Keywords: temptation, indecision.

Human Experience: vacillation, pleasure.

Bible: Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:8; Matthew 7:13,14.

Astrology: Planet Venus, ruler of signs Taurus and Libra, the social urge.

Physical: culture.

Emotional: gracious, sensuous.

Spiritual: forgiveness, affection.

Mythology: Venus, goddess of love.

Alchemy: testing.

Symbol: Book of Life.

Ritual: Most Excellent Master degree.

Anatomy: thyroid, sympathetic nerves, skin.

Metal: copper.

Color: yellow.



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