

The Royal Road

Arcanum 10: Wheel of Fate

The Royal Road by George Fatham.
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Arcanum 10: Wheel of Fate.

Arcanum 10 pictures a wheel with eight snake-infested spokes, and two genie called Hermanubis and Typhon.

Two columns support the wheel, only one of which shows.

A sphinx balances itself on a circular platform posed on top.

In its right hand, it holds an arrow.

Two serpents rear their heads at the base of the two columns.

Below the black bar, a winged globe rises in flight.

Symbolism and Philosophy:

Hermanubis, man's spirit of good intentions, is pictured riding the Wheel of Fate to the top of its orbit.

Typhon, his spirit of evil intentions, is pictured as a counterbalance.

Typhon will be fully explained in Arcanum 15.

Suffice it to say here that he represents the self-centered drive in man's spirit that often pulls him from the height of good intentions and constructive actions and cast him into the valley of destruction.

Arcanum 10 portrays the ceaseless battle going on within all of us between the forces of good and evil in our own nature.

The struggle for supremacy between love and hate, light and darkness, humility and rebellion, God's will and self-will.

This mystic battle of Armageddon continues until Father Time cuts the silver cord at the great change miscalled death.

That too is an illusion, for the ancient mysteries tell us that the warfare goes on beyond that change into the after World.

In fact, it never ceases until the fires of our rebellion die out.

The eight snakes infesting the wheel remind us of the lessons of Arcanum 8, where we saw our animal soul reigning from the throne of false justice, so typical of human life.

There we realized that our iron-willed thinking powers, symbolized by the coronet of four laces, tipped the scales in favor of the sword of Mars with which we ward off the Spirit of God.

The eight snakes further emphasize why death and hell rule triumphant in this world.

Not because of the various conflicting economic and governmental systems typified by Arcanum 8, but because of the very nature of men's conflicting ambitions.

The two columns in the tarot cards always tell the same story what Hindu scriptures called the plane of opposites, good and evil, light and dark, positive and negative, male and female, etc.

This makes the third time we have met up with them, first in Arcanum 2, then in Arcanum five, and now in Arcanum 10.

In Arcanum 2, they signified the mystic pillars of Jachin and Boaz, between which sits the Virgin guarding the entrance to the Temple of Truth.

There we learn to discover the unity behind apparent duality by penetrating the veil of the opposites and intuitively perceiving God's wisdom stored in the divine soul.

In Arcanum 5, we learn to rely on the power of our Great High Priest to help us in this quest.

We learn that in our own strength, we are powerless to rule our lodge of life.

For when we try to reign and self-will, the brethren (our thoughts and feelings) riot and create pandemonium.

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In Arcanum 10, we find two serpents between the two columns.



The two serpents symbolize the power of human desire fed by the five senses.

They typify the fourfold realm whose boundaries are time, space, matter and motion.

In this mortal prison, the immortal spirit finds itself bound until reunion with God breaks its shackles.

Human desire spins us around the dizzy turns of the Wheel of Fate.

Chance and circumstance, like a giant ferris wheel, alternately raise us to the heights of joy and lower us to the depths of despair.

Arcanum 10 dramatizes the mystery of time.

Joseph Sadony puts it well when he says: "The sin that accompanied the fall of man was not the birth of a child, but the birth of a clock, the consciousness and concept of time whereby he lost eternity."

We think that time can solve timeless problems, but it can't.

As Reinhold Niebuhr says, "Man has reached the dubious conclusion that history will emancipate him from all evil."

The theory of evolution says that man steadily improves on his journey through history, but the principle of redemption contradicts this theory.

The two serpents at the base of Arcanum 10 symbolize the hypnotic influence that time has upon the mind.

It creates the illusion that "time heals everything," but it doesn't.

We mistakenly think that if only we wait long enough, something will turn up, "things will change for the better," "this year we will put the Republicans in power," but when we put them in, life's problems continue to multiply as much as when the Democrats were in.

It is we who must change, not circumstances.

The sickness that sin causes lies in our spirit.

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When the Great Change that effects a permanent cure takes place, it acts independently of fickle changes in the realm of time.

In our inner life, chance and circumstance can then no longer fling us to the heights of one moment and to the depths the next.

We remain constant, with a fixed goal and purpose that no change in fortune can deflect.

The symbolism of the two serpents tell us that self-centered human desire creates a gnawing void in our lives.

The only way that void can be filled is for our desire to be repolarized to God and away from self.

Only in this way can we soar to the realm of spiritual power and wisdom typified by the winged globe submerged beneath the black bar, from which the two serpents reared their bodies.

The black bar symbolizes the plane of the horizon in the world of time.

It appears in all the other Arcana from here on, and signifies that the action represented takes place more in the interior realm of our thoughts and feelings than outwardly on the physical plane.

Hermanubis, man's spirit of good intentions, is pictured writing the Wheel of Fate.

On his back we see the wings of a bat, the same as we see on Typhon, the spirit of evil intentions.

Wings symbolize thought, and a bat is a creature of darkness.

This tells us that as long as we live in a time-bound consciousness, no matter how good our intentions, we cannot see clearly the purpose of our life.

Ultimately, however, we reach up to grasp the arrow of light held in the lion's paw grip of the ever patient Sphinx.

This arrow, when it penetrates the darkness of our minds, hits us like a bolt of lightning and knocks us off the Wheel, figuratively speaking.

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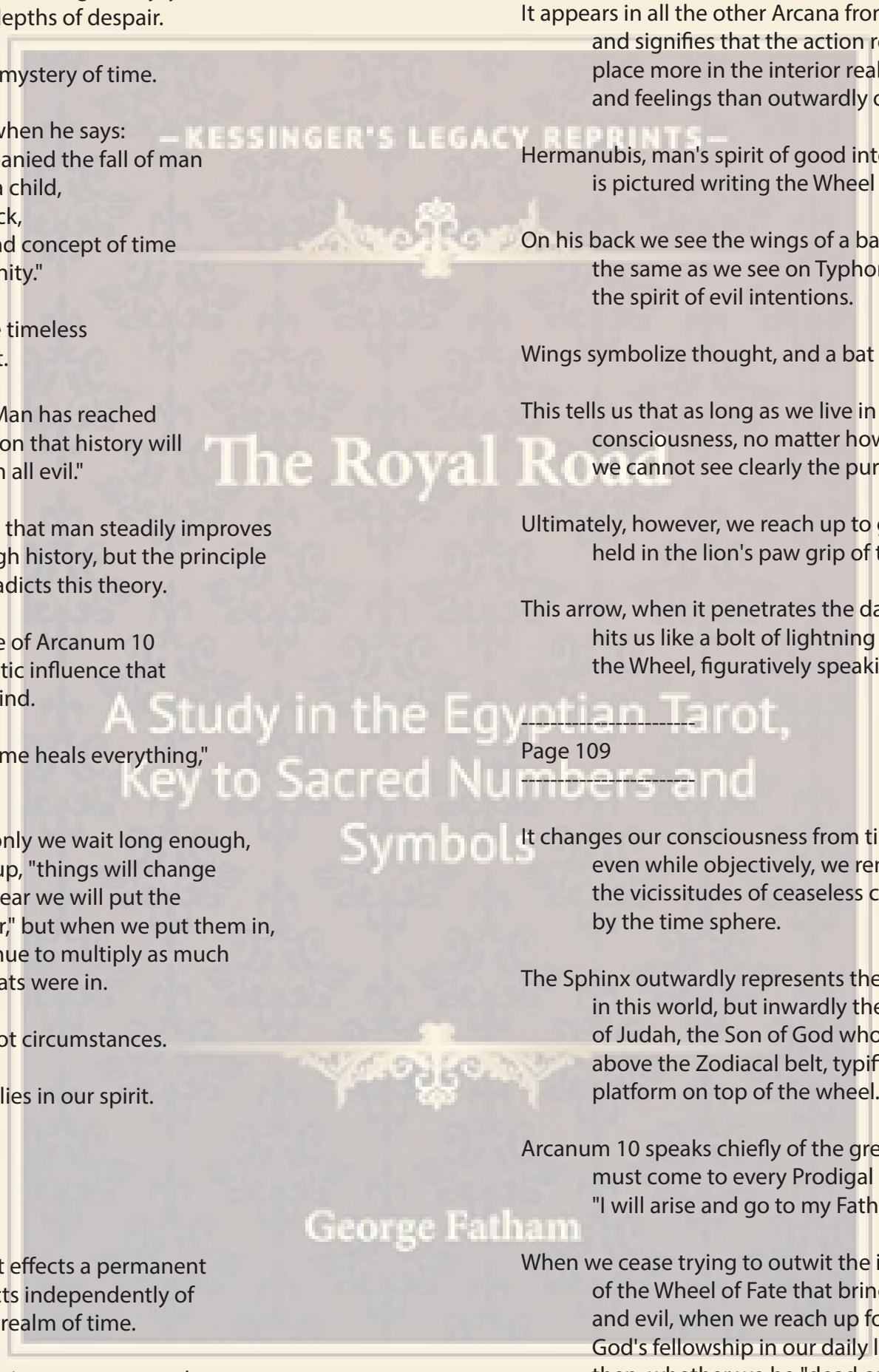
It changes our consciousness from time to eternity, even while objectively, we remain subject to the vicissitudes of ceaseless change imposed by the time sphere.

The Sphinx outwardly represents the passage of time in this world, but inwardly the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Son of God who sits perfectly posed above the Zodiacal belt, typified by the circular platform on top of the wheel.

Arcanum 10 speaks chiefly of the greatest change that must come to every Prodigal Son when he says, "I will arise and go to my Father."

When we cease trying to outwit the inevitable turns of the Wheel of Fate that brings us both good and evil, when we reach up for the handclasp of God's fellowship in our daily life, then and only then, whether we be "dead or alive", will we know that inner peace that passes all understanding.

Then and only then, will we rise above the world of time and live consciously now in the world of eternity.



No matter how violent the turnings of the Wheel of Fate,
nothing can then shake our inward pose,
balance and equilibrium.

For we have taken hold of him who "changeth not"
who remains "the same yesterday, today And forever."

Astrology:

Arcanum 10 corresponds to the planet Uranus,
ruler of the sign Aquarius.

It signifies knowledge, sudden mental penetration,
rather than intuitive insight,
particularly knowledge of human nature,
individuality, eccentricity, revolution.

It indicates sudden changes, the almost instantaneous
cutting away of old conditions.

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Human Anatomy:

Arcanum 10 has no anatomical correspondence,
as it deals almost entirely with subjective
mental processes.

It indicates the astral energy that carries impressions
from the outer world to our inner consciousness.

Masonic Ritual:

Arcanum 10 corresponds to the
Super-Excellent Master degree.

The ceremony centers around one Zedekiah,
the last king of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar had captured the country
from Zedekiah's uncle Jehoiachin.

He then changed the name of Jehoiachin's nephew
from Mattaniah to Zedekiah,
and appointed him puppet-king.

Nebuchadnezzar typifies the earthly forces that turn
the Wheel of Fate in the realm of time.

Even though he brought about the change of
Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah, that did not
change Zedekiah inner nature.

Eventually, the vicissitudes of life caused him
to rebel and commit perjury.

In order to escape Nebuchadnezzar wrath, he fled
from his throne through a passage between
two walls and his garden.

However, the Babylonians overtook him and captured
him on the plains of Jericho.

There, Nebuchadnezzar forced Zedekiah to witness
the execution of his own sons.

Then he cut off Zedekiah's thumbs and blinded his eyes.

Binding him in fetters of brass,
he carried him away into captivity.

This story allegorizes the movement of the Sun
toward the winter solstice between the walls
of the northern and southern constellations.

As the days grow shorter, the sun figuratively leaves

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his throne (in the sign of Leo)
to go into Virgo (the garden).

From there, he rapidly descends by way of the autumnal
equinox into the plains of Jericho (winter signs).

Here he loses his heat (executive power),
symbolized by the amputation of Zedekiah
thumbs, typical of willpower.

Like Zedekiah, the sun in winter loses his eyes, or light,
and is carried away into the wintery sign
of Capricorn, or Babylon.

The chains of brass by which Nebuchadnezzar bound
his puppet king correspond to Libra (copper)
and Sagittarius (tin).

These metals, when combined, make brass.

Thus the symbolic language of the ancient ritual tells
us of the imprisonment of the physical sun
each year in the signs of winter.

This annual starry drama, in turn, portrays the
imprisonment of the Sun of the human spirit,
bound by the copper of animal lust and the tin
of cheap pleasures to his prison house of flesh
in the realm of time.

There he toils on the Wheel of Fate until he grasps the
five points of fellowship and the Lion's paw grip
that raise him again to an eternal consciousness,
even while he is still bound to the realm of time.

The Bible:

The Book of Ecclesiastes, supposedly written by
King Solomon, gives a detailed account of the
philosophy of Arcanum 10.

A careful study of this remarkable book will
richly repay the student.

We can point out here but a few of its significant highlights.

"There is nothing new under the sun"
is the theme of the preacher's discourse.

"Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new?
It hath been already of old, time which
was before us. (verses 9,10)



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Chapter 3:1-8 gives the keynote of Arcanum 10:
ceaseless change in the realm of time.
"To everything there is a season and a time
to every purpose under the heaven,
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to pluck up
that which is planted, etc."

Verses 18-21 provide the key to understanding the mystery
of Fate in the time sphere.

Chance and circumstance affect only our human nature,
our true being remains eternal, steadfast and
unmovable, above the Wheel of Fate.

"Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward,
and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward
to the earth?"

Chapter 12:6,7 further describes this idea in beautiful,
poetic language that enshrines a wealth of truth:
"Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden
bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the
fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,
then shall the dust return to the earth as it was,
and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

When the will of earth-centered life breaks its hold
over us at the cistern or well of physical
existence, it releases its death grip upon
our spirit, which eventually soars back to
its home in the realm of light.

The first chapter of Ezekiel describes the
symbolism of the will in Arcanum 10.

The prophet talks about the fixed cross or will of Zodiac:
the bull (Taurus), The Lion (Leo),
the eagle (Scorpio) and the man (Aquarius).

Then, in verse 16 he mentions a wheel within the wheel,
probably a garbled reference to the platform
above the wheel.

Isaiah 40:22 depicts the Sphinx above the
circular platform over the wheel in Arcanum 10:
"It is he who sitteth upon the circle of the

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Earth, or the Earth's circuit,"
(through the Zodiac as Fenton translates it).

The sphinx typifying the lion of the Tribe of Judah,
or Son of God, Isaiah 55:8-9 further describes
in these words: "For my thoughts are not your
thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith
the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the
earth, so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

The Bible refers to the message of Arcanum 10 when it
speaks of the Great Change that comes to every
man when he turns from darkness to light,
from self to God, when he allows the old Adam
to die that the new man in Christ may be born.

As John 3:3 puts it: "Jesus answered and said unto him,
verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born
again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The phrase "born again" is better rendered "born from above."

It does not mean re-embodiment in flesh, but a mystic birth
that takes place in the heart, that comes from him
who figuratively dwells "above."

It is this birth from above that brings about the Great Change
of our likeness from this carnal nature
to the image of Christ.

It is our passport that permits us to leave the kingdom
of darkness "below" and re-enter the kingdom
of light "above."

Aphorism:

"Remember then, son of Earth, that of your own free will you
left your Father's home, by exercising that same will,
you may re-enter it.

Cooperate with Him if you wish
to rise above the turns of the Wheel of Fate,
you yourself must make the choice.

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Keywords and Correspondences

Arcanum 10: Wheel of Fate.

Sound: J, EE, IH.

Keywords: change of fortune, reversal.

Human Experience: Fate.

Bible: 10 plagues of Egypt; Ezekiel 1:15-21.

Astrology: Planet Uranus, ruler of sign Aquarius.
The individualistic urge.

Physical: revolution.

Emotional: inventive, eccentric.

Spiritual: search for light.

Mythology: Uranus, husband of Gaea (Earth),
father of Chronos (Time).

Alchemy: abandonment.

Symbol: Wheel of Fate.

Ritual: Super-Excellent Master degree.

Anatomy: none, nerve force.

Metal: radium.

Color: dazzling white.



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