

The Royal Road

Arcanum Zero-22: The Blind Fool

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The interpretation of Arcanum Zero-22 and its proper placement in the order of the cards, has created more headaches than all the others Arcana combined.

It is sometimes called the "unnumbered card," and it is literally the Joker in the deck.

Some writers feel it should come at the end, after 21; some think it belongs between 19 and 20; others between 20 and 21; while many believe it should be the first card.

Some consider it the key to the mystery, and that the reading of the Tarot symbolism depends entirely upon the discovery of its proper position in the deck.

Our view is that it forms both the opening and closing of the Major Tarot pack, summing up in itself the lessons of all the other cards.

Its meaning fully unfolds all through the use of the great key of the Prodigal Son parable.

We recommend a careful study of this parable (Luke 15) before proceeding with the symbolism of Arcanum Zero-22.

Our grasp of the Tarot message depends much upon understanding the Biblical allegory as it relates to each one of us, personally.

Jesus did not apply the parable to only one man some 2000 years ago.

He meant it for every man and every woman in every age.

Our true origin is with God in heaven, not our parents on earth.

In essence, we are spirit, a spark of the eternal flame, not just an aggregate of flesh, blood and bones.

The ancient mysteries tell us that we continue to live on when death dismantles our tent of clay, but in another and more finely woven garment

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suitable to our change of residence.

Our full life is symbolized by the circle (Arcanum Zero), of which our worldly sojourn of seventy odd years is merely a short intermission.

We will one day see life as a whole, made up of its various parts, not just the single span of the arch we build during the brief time we spend on this earth.

Joshua Loth Liebman puts it well in his book, "Peace of Mind":

"The whole human story, with all its tragedy and its triumph, is like a page torn from the middle of a book without beginning or end, an undecipherable page when cut out of its context. The context of man is the power greater than man. The human adventure is part of a universal sonnet, one line and a deathless poem. Without faith that our human intelligence and haunting human conscience are a reflection of a greater intelligence and a vaster creative power, the key to the cipher is lost and the episode of mankind on earth becomes a hidden code, a meaningless jumble of vowels and constants."

The Tarot is the true hidden code. By stringing together the vowels and constants of its stellar alphabet, we can spell out the words, phrases and sentences that recall for us the meaning of life buried deep in our consciousness.

The Blind Fool:

Arcanum Zero-22 pictures, A blindfolded man walking down the road of life into the open jaws of a crocodile.

Over his left shoulder, he carries a heavy bag. With his right hand, he leans on a black staff, entwined with two serpents.

Behind him the moon eclipses Over the sun. A broken column covered with hieroglyphics lies by his left side.

On his chest

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he wears the Glyph of the planet Pluto. Below his feet are pictured the horns and head of Taurus, the Bull.

Symbolism and Philosophy:

The blindfolded man represents the Prodigal who asked his heavenly Father for his goods (spiritual faculties), which he figuratively encased in the bag over his left shoulder.



Left in symbolism indicates away from;
it is the sinister side of life,
from the Latin sinistra, meaning left.

When he departs from the realm of light,
he can only go towards darkness.

The Prodigals birth into the world marks the final
eclipse of his spiritual vision,
causing him to stumble along the road of life
in semi-darkness.

The black staff on which the Prodigal
leans forms a Tau Cross.

The Cross has always served as a symbol of the Spirit
crucified (or "crossified") on the pale of flesh.

The staff therefore tells us of the human spirit's incarnation.

From God's viewpoint, incarnation represents the Spirit's
burial in matter, where it loses the powers it
originally enjoyed in the ethereal realm.

This loss of power the ancient sages portrayed as
a swooning or fallen asleep (a blinding process);
hence, the man in Arcanum Zero-22
has a blindfold over his eyes.

The Prodigal's desire to leave the realm of light
caused him to journey to a "far country."

This is not necessarily infer the earth as opposed
to "heaven," but means any place in the universe
where the spirit may be, separated from God.

It implies more a state of consciousness
than a geographical location.

Divorced from the

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source of his origin, he eats of "the tree of knowledge
of good and evil," and in the day that he eats
thereof, "dying he shall surely die."
This dying leads to spiritual, not physical death.

When our spirit turns from God to self, it figuratively dies.

When our self-centeredness fades, our spirit is "reborn"
into newness of life, and restored
from self to God-centeredness.

The black color of the staff in Arcanum Zero-22
symbolizes our mental self sufficiency.

The two serpents of the Caduceus (ancient symbol of Mercury,
ruler of the mind), typify the means by which
we gain worldly knowledge: the five senses.

The mind uses them chiefly in a self-centered way.

Thus from birth until we turned our minds to spiritual ideas,
our thoughts are almost always on
self centered (serpentine) interests.

For most people, that covers the greater part of their lives.
For many, the spirit never awakens during this earth life.

Note that the circle, symbol of the spirit does not appear
at the top of the staff, denoting the Blind Fool's cry,
"There is no God."

As the Prodigal walks down the road with his
spiritual vision darkened, he ignores the falling column
by his side, covered with hieroglyphics warning him
of the dangers besetting him on his path.

Instead, he stumbles headlong into the open mouth
of the crocodile.

Dragons and crocodiles represent man's animal desires.

A crocodile, an amphibious creature, functions
equally well on land or in the water.

Land symbolizes materialism, and water, emotions.
These two factors of life literally swallow up our spirit
until the great work of redemption sets us free.

The space between the bottom horizontal bar
and the picture proper of Arcanum Zero-22

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portrays the action as occurring initially
on the spiritual plane.

The horns and head of the bull and our drawing call
attention to the sign Taurus,
indicating the nth degree of materialism.

This emblem of the design shows the final station of the
Prodigal's journey from the realm of Spirit
to that of matter.

Zero-22 is the only Arcanum that has a double number value.

Zero, written as a circle, symbolizes the mystic womb
of the Prodigal's divine soul, still barren because
not yet fertilized by God's Spirit.

It speaks of man as a potential Son of his Heavenly Father.

The circle has always served as a symbol of God,
the source of our origin, whom we have forgotten.

Hence, we wonder about victims of spiritual amnesia.

22 portrays man as a sleep-walker who bypasses the Royal Road.

The total result of this spirit's blackout adds up
to failure, folly and mistake.

When the somnambulist hears and heeds the voice
of the Spirit of God, he awakens and begins
his mystic journey back to his Father's house.

Note an important point in the parable of the Prodigal:
his heavenly Father did not send him,
he left on his own free will.

The glyph for the planet Pluto on the Prodigal's
chest refers us to mythology.
Pluto rules the "underworld."



Theologians have struggled in vain to place this region. They usually classify it as a hazy realm underneath the earth.

The Egyptian authors of the remarkable document called "The Book of the Dead" describes this earth itself as the underworld, the home of what we call the living.

They considered it the region of the dead, the living dead. They held that the Spirit's heavenly home was life; his earthly tabernacle

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they called the grave, the coffin, the pit.

The symbols of the Pluto glyph are interesting. The circle represents pure spirit; the half moon directly underneath, the soul; and the cross on the bottom, the physical body.

In this form, it signifies the urges of the body and the desires of the soul under the dominance of the Spirit's will.

The glyphs shown in an upside down position on the chest, tells us that the Prodigal spirit deliberately crucifies God's Will by elevating his own will on the throne of reason.

Placed on the chest, the glyph calls our attention to the sign Gemini, ruler of the lungs and the lower mind.

The mental processes of the average man focus in material interest exclusively. His carnally minded drives submerged the gentle promptings of God. Selfishness conquers love.

Count Tolstoj, unwittingly, perhaps, described the dual interpretation of this glyph when he writes: "Our life, ever since we became conscious of it, is a pendulum like motion between two limits. One limit is, an absolute unconcern for the life of the infinite universe, an energy directed only toward the gratification of one's own personality. The other limit is a complete renunciation of that personality, the greatest concern with the life of the infinite universe, in full accord with it, the transfer of all our desires and good will from oneself to that infinite universe and all the creatures outside of us."

Truly the blindfold walks upside down in this world, as far as God is concerned, and here he finds himself a stumbling stranger.

Eventually, when repentance removes the blindfold from his

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eyes, he returns in consciousness to the source of his true power.

But the other Arcana tell that story, and many adventures befall him before that great day.

Astrology:

Arcanum Zero-22 corresponds to the planet Pluto, ruler of the "realm of the dead," the kingdom of darkness.

It signifies the end, finality, ultimate determination; also the death urge.

Human Anatomy:

Arcanum Zero-22 indicates failure of function of any organ or bodily process.

Masonic Ritual:

Arcanum Zero-22 corresponds to the degree called sublime Knights Elected.

This ritual deals with the results of misusing creative energy to advance selfish ends.

That inclination of man is portrayed by the letter T.

It is a symbol of the physical plane, with the ray of spiritual light buried beneath its surface.

The initiate is warned that the abuse of generative powers of selfish pleasure, emotional powers for self exaltation and mental powers for undue material advancement inevitably leads to failure, folly and mistake.

The Bible:

Whenever we find mention in the Bible of fools, blind fools, blindness in general, darkness and death, it refers to Arcanum Zero-22.

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Psalms 14:1 makes this especially clear: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

"Dead in the trespass of sin" is another Scriptural phrase denoting this Arcanum.

It refers to the swooning sleeping sickness that overtakes the spirit of man when he figuratively "dies" to God and finally "buries" himself in the world of flesh and blood.

The terrific denunciation Jesus hurled at the scribes of Pharisees, recorded in Matthew 23:13-33, paints a vivid picture of the effect of Arcanum Zero-22 in the lives of men.

Note the repetition of the phrase, "ye blind guides," and "ye fools and blind."

The prophecy of Zacharias with respect to Jesus contains a pointed reference to Arcanum Zero-22 when it refers to the mission of the Lord:

"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:79)



And then in his own words Jesus gives this prophecy emphasis:

"I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

The apostle Paul evidently knew the symbolism and philosophy of the Tarot.

He portrays the picture of Arcanum Zero-22 in these words:

"Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (Ephesians 5:14,15)

A careful check of the symbolism of Arcanum Zero-22 referred to in the following Bible passages will also be helpful:

Genesis 1:2; 2:21; 15:12; Psalms 107:1-30; 143:1-5;
Isaiah 9:2 (cf. Matthew 4:16); 28:15; 42:5-7,16; 60:1,2;

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Luke 11:34; John 1:1-5; 3:18-21; 12:46;
Ephesians 6:12;
I John 2:9-11;
Jude 6,13;
Revelation 6:7,8.

Aphorism:

Remember then, son of Earth, that all things physical pass away.
Only the Spirit endures. While in the realm of darkness,
seek diligently for the light and lean
heavenly upon the arm of the Lord.

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Keywords and Correspondences

Arcanum Zero-22

Sound: T

Keywords: failure, folly, mistake.

Human Experience: Chaos.

Bible: Sin; Psalms 14:1, John 3:19.

Astrology: Planet Pluto, co-ruler of sign Scorpio;
ruler of Aries, the death urge.

Physical: Darkness.

Emotional: Absent-minded, callous.

Spiritual: Unmanifest Spirit.

Mythology: Pluto, god of the dead and the underworld.

Alchemy: Failure to transmute.

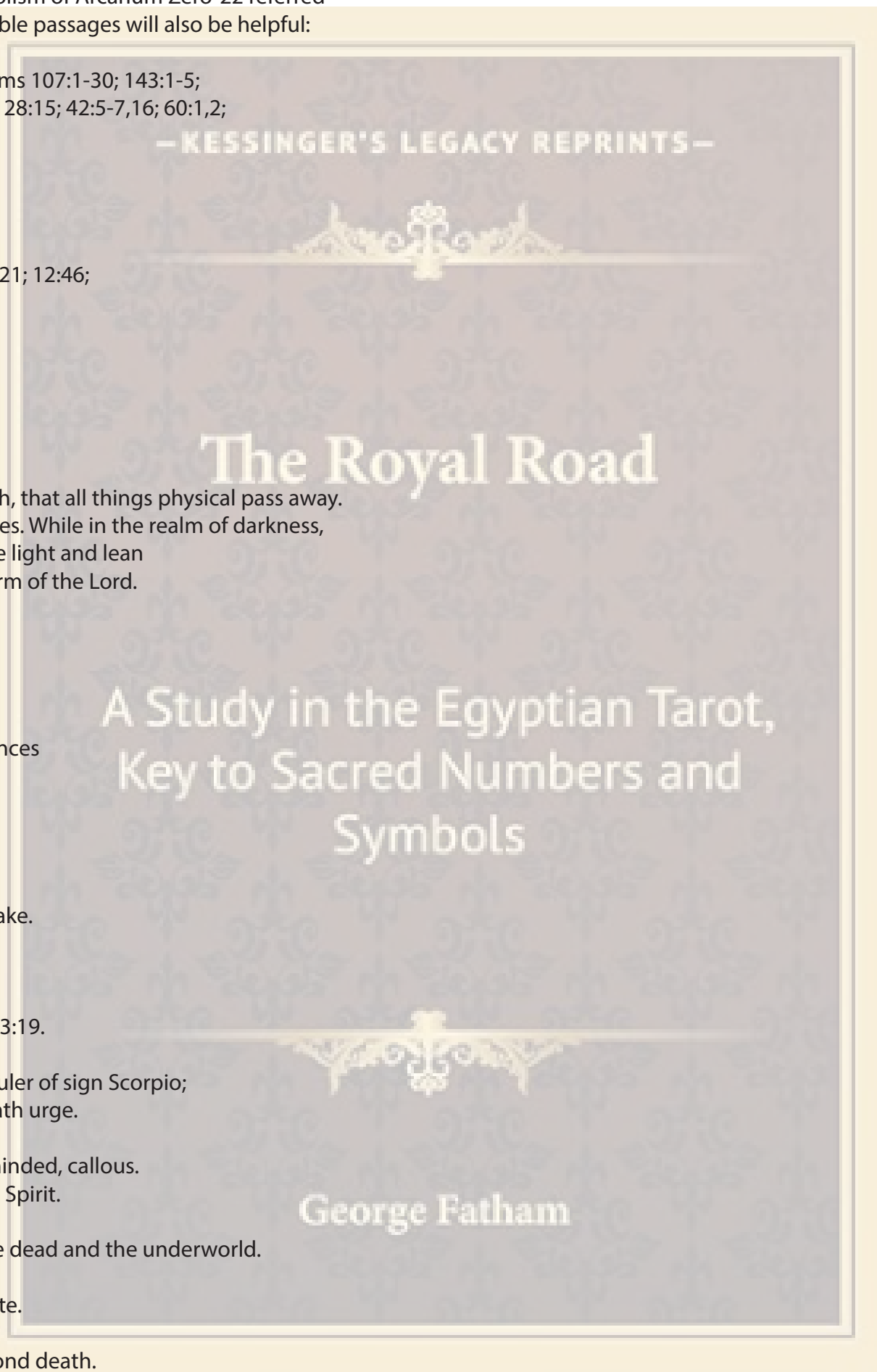
Symbol: Bottomless pit; second death.

Ritual: Sublime Knight Elected.

Anatomy: Failure of function.

Metal: None (Clay).

Color: Black.



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