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The Hermetic Tarot



Synopsis

U.S. Games Systems has proudly reissued the Hermetic Tarot deck in recognition of its historical and artistic importance. The details and symbols in each card reveal many of the esoteric workings of the Secret Order of the Golden Dawn, which flourished around the turn of the century. Godfrey Dowson's subtle black and white designs emphasize the Golden Dawn's astrological attributes with further sephirotic, angelic, geomantic, numerical, and kabbalistic elements. All 78 cards feature an exquisite level of detail that highlights the powerful symbolism. The 70-page instruction booklet includes an introduction by Stuart R. Kaplan and card meaning written by Godfrey Dowson and Stuart R. Kaplan. The booklet also gives instructions for the classic ten-card Celtic Cross layout and presents a chart of the elemental and astrological symbols, and a diagram of the ten spheres and 22 Hebrew Letters of the 22 Paths of the Tree of Life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An extraordinary Tarot deck! I first acquired this deck back in the 1960's. Its full value was revealed to me when I purchased the book "The Qabalistic Tarot" by Robert Wang, which has become my foremost Tarot and Qabala reference work. I was one of many who petitioned U. S. Games Systems to reissue this wonderful deck. My original deck is still in pristine condition, so I was tardy in purchasing the new edition. What spurred my to purchase it now was the review I read (from 2006) that panned this new edition, criticizing the quality of the graphics. I was disturbed by this possibility, so I just purchased a fresh copy of the deck to evaluate it myself. To my scrutiny, I find the cards in the new edition to be larger than the original. Also, borders used in the original edition have been removed, allowing the size of the images to become noticeably larger. I can detect little,

if any, deterioration in image quality. Perhaps the "white" in the black-and-white artwork is slightly brighter than the "white" of the original deck, but I do not consider this a defect. It could probably be attributed to aging. I love this deck, and I am critical only of Godfrey Dowson's decision to brand the three "mother" cards of the Major Arcana Trumps (XX: The Last Judgment, XII: The Hanged Man, and 0: The Fool), with symbols representing the three "planets" (Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, respectively) that were unknown in the ancient world from which the cosmology of Qabala arose. This error in judgement has proven a further embarrassment since Pluto was demoted from its standing as a planet. Qabala and Tarot are both deeply rooted in numerology and astrology. The seven "planets" of astrology (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) are significant in constructing the Sacred Geometry of Hermeticism, as well as giving us the constituents of our seven-day week! The 22 Tarot Trumps are equated with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The 12 "Single-Letters" of Hebrew are matched with the 12 signs of the Zodiac. The 7 "Double Letters" of Hebrew are paired with the 7 planets of ancient astrology. The remaining three "Mother-Letters" (Shin, Mem and Aleph) do not have an astrological association, but rather represent three of the four elements of Tarot and Qabala (Fire, Water and Air, respectively). These four elements are also equated with the Tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters (Yod-He-Vau-He) which spell the sacred name of God. (Note: Since ancient Judaism prohibited using the name of God in vain, the final "He" was often omitted in ancient Hebrew literature.) I strongly advise all students of occult mysticism to arm themselves with Godfrey Dowson's "Hermetic Tarot" deck and Robert Wang's "Qabalistic Tarot" volume, and prepare to delve into a lifetime study of esoteric ancient wisdom.

This is a good deck; the stock could be a bit thicker, but is okay. The cards/images look good. The King of Cups is noted as Fire of Water, but I drew in a horizontal line to make it Air of Water as it should be. Notes: In this deck the Knight replaces the King, and the King replaces the Prince. So the order for this deck's court cards are: Knight, Queen, King, Princess. Perhaps this is due to some confusion regarding the court cards in several Golden Dawn books, all of which contradict themselves when mentioning the Knight and King court cards (as found in Israel Regardie's book and therefore also in Cicero's book). I emailed US Games about this, and although they say to have a 2-business-day response time, they have yet to get back to me. However, even though the names are misleading, it's grown on me in the few days I've been studying them. Another thing I didn't like is how the illustrator's sign for Leo is actually the sign for Caput Draconis, but since there is no mention of Caput Draconis in the deck it's not confusing- just a personal gripe. Also, adding the 'new' planetary signs on the three elemental trump cards was a bad idea (Fool, Hanged Man,

Judgment). And the Little White Book is repetitious with some cards' meanings, get yourself some Golden Dawn books to study meanings. I don't like how the US Games logo appears on every card, but it's not too big to really make me an unhappy buyer; when focusing on the cards/reading, the logo is not noticeable. All in all I'm happy I bought the deck, and maybe I can come up with illustrations of my own- correcting the "flaws" in mass produced decks who's manufacturing companies feel it's necessary to brand every single separate item, thus degrading the item itself. It's said that decks are to be created by the Reader anyway, but this deck is a good jumping off point for students of Golden Dawn teachings. ALL HAIL MR. WHISKERS, LORD OF THE UNIVERSE!

This is an intriguing deck based on the Golden Dawn system. The drawings are quite impressive and intricate. I wish the cards were a bit larger because there is so much fine detail, it is sometimes hard to appreciate without a magnifying glass. The LWB by Dowson does an excellent job explaining what the deck is about. I don't particularly like the addition of the modern planets (Uranus, Neptune Pluto) since these were not part of the original system. Personally, I would not assign Pluto to the Fool (0) or Uranus to the Judgment card. In addition, he uses the glyph for the Moon's North Node to represent Leo. I find this misuse of the symbol distracting. There is also an error on one of the cards. Kings (Princes) are of the element Air but the King of Cups is incorrectly attributed to the element Fire on the top left of the card (Fire goes with the Knights). I can probably fix it with a fine-tip black marker. That said, I am really enjoying this deck and would recommend it to anyone interested in the old Golden Dawn system.

These are the most detailed, thorough and absolutely beautiful tarot cards I've ever seen. I've owned the RW deck before, and liked them. I didn't really know how I'd react to black and white cards, as it seemed like the cards themselves may be losing something, but these have so much detail and information included in their grayscale form, I can't imagine being anything but overwhelmed by these in color. They're absolutely perfect. These are **my** cards now, this is **my** deck.

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