

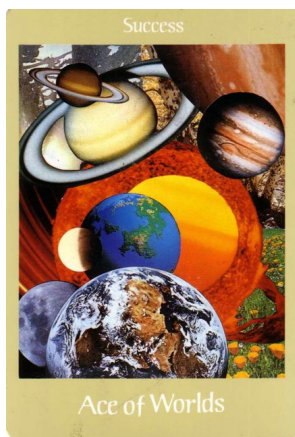
BE YOUR OWN ORACLE

San Francisco Bay Area Tarot Symposium

April 15, 2006

James Wanless, PhD

As I walked into the impressive First Unitarian Universalist Centre in San Francisco, California to attend the **Bay Area Tarot Symposium (BATS)**, I was struck by the meeting of church and the occult. How odd that "witches" called the **Daughters of Divination** www.daughtersofdivination.com and the ecumenical Christian church are finally and harmoniously united.



In the 1970's media guru, Marshall McLuhan declared "the medium is the message." (This was the same period in which I discovered the Tarot.) Looking around at the church and the witches, the message I got was that both mediums of the sacred are reformed and, indeed, renewed.

So, how has the medieval random picking of the cards for fortune-telling evolved in our 21st century? We still see gypsy readers on the streets of San Francisco predicting the inevitable "inheritance from a relative" (which would have been most welcomed as this was tax day, April 15). What's new about the ancient Tarot? Plenty!

As I roamed the BATS meeting hall, I was almost overwhelmed by the vast array of Tarot decks! On four tables were laid out decks by a virtual Tarot store called **The Tarot Garden** www.tarotgarden.com, which carries 1600 decks for sale. What's the message? That anyone and everyone can find a unique Tarot deck that suits them. This is the revolution of Tarot... *choice*, not the determinism associated with the old Tarot. Not only can you find decks at most book stores, even at Barnes & Noble, but they abound for purchase on the Internet. Again, choices and possibilities that was foreign to the mindset of the old world.

Another booth at the symposium was called **The Magician's Table** www.magician's-table.com takes the Tarot out of the scary, dark, musty metaphysical closet. Featured there was classic Tarot cards set in stunning jewelry and placed into adorable, unthreatening "spell boxes." Tarot can be a user friendly as an accessory that anyone can appreciate.

This is what the "new" Tarot is all about. Anything is possible, nothing is certain, and we can choose. Each individual is his or her own oracle, and not dependent upon some "fortune teller." That is the message expounded throughout the day by the plethora of self-help card decks, Tarot book authors who also lecture here, and by all the participants with their preferred decks. Tarot has transformed from a simplistic giving over of power to some all-seeing "sage," to an empowering tool of self-determination.

It seems obvious to me that the first act of self-empowerment is selecting your own Tarot deck as your oracle. An oracle is a medium for self-discovery, not prediction. Inscribed in the doorway of the most ancient and grandest of oracles in the ancient world, the Temple of Delphi in Greece, it says, "Know Thyself."

The deck you choose is a symbolic mirror reflecting through the cards who you are and/or want to become. From the Christian-Judaic classic decks, you can find your philosophical roots and the many Celtic Tarots decks help you reclaim your Anglo-Saxon Druid inheritance. Wanting to explore other dimensions of yourself? If you are curious about your dolphin-like essence, then you might choose the *Dolphin Daze Tarot*. Maybe you are seeking your inner belly dancer. Then the *Tarot of the Belly Dancer* would be a deck of choice. Yearning to develop your connection to the forest, you may want to explore the *Tarot of the Secret Forest* deck. If the Renaissance is intriguing to you, you might choose the *DaVinci Enigma Tarot*. The range of decks goes on and on, from the adorable *Hello Tarot* "the cutest Tarot deck you will ever own", to the *Ships of Fool Tarot*, to *gay world Tarot Gay*, to the underworld *Tarot of the Underworld*. Truly, there is a Deck for everyone!



The choice of deck you make is all telling... it speaks directly of who you are. And it foretells who you tend to become as you subconsciously take on the qualities of the deck.

One of the most life-transformative processes you can engage in is the making of your own oracle and deck. At BATS there were several creators of published decks. Each author discovered who they are in the process. Artist, **Sasha St. John**, received a series of insights and synchronistic signs that compelled her to create *Gentle Wisdom of the Faerie Realms*, an inspirational deck that has moved her to embrace the light, radiant, feminine energy within herself... and it's changed her life!

Want to connect with Nordic and heroic quality in you? Try this new deck by another presenter, **Allegra Printz**, who has claimed the Valkyrie in her through the new Tarot she has developed, *A Wagner's Ring Tarot*. Wow, does she look and play the part, epic and mythic.

And then there was me, creator of *Voyager Tarot* and an exhibitor/lecturer at the Symposium. My deck is for those who desire discover the whole and complete archetypal universe within. You will want to check out Voyager's multi-cultural, transpersonal, cross-ethnic and inter-species symbology. It has helped me identify and express myself as

a rich and diverse set of archetypal sub-personalities... from the indigenous shaman to the corporate coach.

Once you have found yourself through your oracle of choice, how do you use it? One of the presenters, **Rob van Leeuwen**, a Dutch-Australian creator of the *The New Complete Tarot*, suggests using the Tarot as a map. He says to let the Tarot show you how to reach your goals and objectives. Rather than ask what's going to happen in the future, explore the cards for the way create and achieve your visions and dreams. I call this method "fortune creation," not fortune telling. It's about using the Tarot as a guiding and inspiring medium. Of course, maps get you nowhere. We have to take action to follow the map. This is a huge shift in the use of Tarot as an oracle. No longer passive prediction (which is shaky guesswork to begin with) the new use of the system of Tarot is to enact and embody the map and cards. In other words, be your own oracle and fulfill your own prophecy.

Should you go to a Reader (which can be most inspiring and insightful) you would do well to follow the advice of BATS presenter **Mary Greer**, author of *Women of the Golden Dawn* and many best-selling Tarot books. Calling it "RITE," an anagram for a Reading that is Interactive, Transformational, and Empowering, Mary maintains that a Reading is thus an interactive dialogue between the Reader and client, in which both converse with each other using the cards imagery to stimulate ideas. The Reading itself is a direct process of change for clarifying and attaining the goals of the "readee."



I asked Mary what she felt her clients receive from a consultation. She answered, "Acceptance." I agree with her as this is also my way of working with Tarot. This means that a person is better able to recognize and understand their life situation, thus boosting a sense of self-confidence about their present and their ability to navigate the future.

This new interactive style of Tarot invites the client to have input into the Reading, and to help the client read the cards. Being supported by the Reader gives a person more self-trust and belief in themselves. In our culture of negativity and criticism along with change and uncertainty, perhaps the best thing a consultant can do is bolster their client's own wisdom and know-how for doing the right thing.

The interactive kind of Reading is mostly about the present and the person and not focused upon the future and upon people and subjects outside of them. Most of Tarot is, in fact, geared towards the inner qualities of the questioner. "Success is an inside job" is the mantra of Tarot.

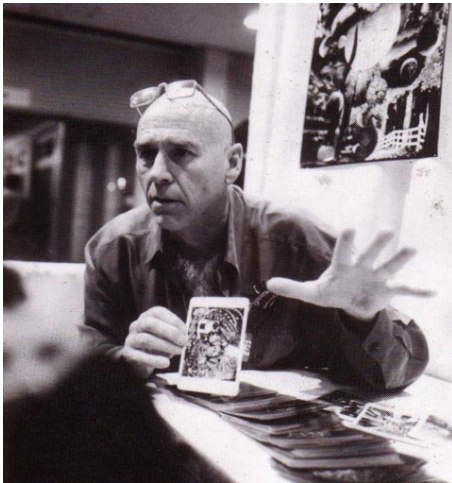
In my way of thinking, Tarot is a kind of psychology, a "folk therapy" that is meant to do the following: transform negative thinking into positive attitude; motivate a person to move through stagnation; find options for overcoming personal obstacles; see one's many

and diverse qualities and sub-personalities from the Hermit to the Lover; think and live holistically by integrating mind, heart, body and spirit; utilize emotional states such as anger as a resource; encourage a person to break through fears; expose how setbacks are strategic retreats for new opportunities; that intuition can be trusted; help to let go of disappointments; find passion; and reclaim magic.

Wow. All that said why would anyone not want to have a Reading? Most likely because Tarot has been associated with dubious fortune telling, but the modern Tarot is about "fortune creation." This is accomplished by using the Tarot as a practical and doable map for achieving visions and goals, and by potentiating an individual through the power and synchronicity of the symbolic imagery and cards that arise. And, unlike most counseling, this is sweet medicine that's fun!

We always learn the best and are at our most creative when we are at play. The mystery and magic of how the "right" cards appear is a fascinating truth that always piques our curiosity. I call it "edutainment" a way of educating and entertaining. Yes, fun, and we know that it works! This is why cards, Tarot, and readings have increased in popularity over the last decade. This "kitchen table" counseling and conversation fills an ever-growing need for those folks who don't want to visit a psychiatrist or psychic. That could be you. Give it a try.

James Wanless, PhD is the Creator of *Voyager Tarot* and author of three books *Intuition at Work*, *Way of the Great Oracle*, and *Strategic Intuition for the 21st Century*. He teaches, speaks and consults throughout the world.



James' Readings are perceptive, creative, and intuitive. You are left with insights, power tools and a map for creating your future. An experience with him is guaranteed to be motivating, as well as, entertaining, as you journey into your inner Universe through the archetypal worlds of Voyager Tarot.

You may reach James through his web site at www.voyagerTarot.com