

TAROT AS A PERSONAL GROWTH TOOL

By Karl Belser

16 April 2013

PURPOSE OF A TAROT READING

Much of each person is his or her unconscious mind. Hence, personal problem solving is best done with co-operation between the person's conscious and subconscious.

The ***Jahari Window*** in Figure 1 shows diagrammatically how a person can learn about his or her subconscious by moving the vertical line to the right, which makes visible more of himself or herself to another person. If the other person tells what he or she sees it moves the horizontal line upward allowing the person to learn more about himself or herself.

The TAROT is a structured way to promote this communication with the help of another person who can summarize the general meaning of how the person interprets the card (i.e. active listening). The other person should be as neutral as possible – i.e. they neither read nor interpret the cards.

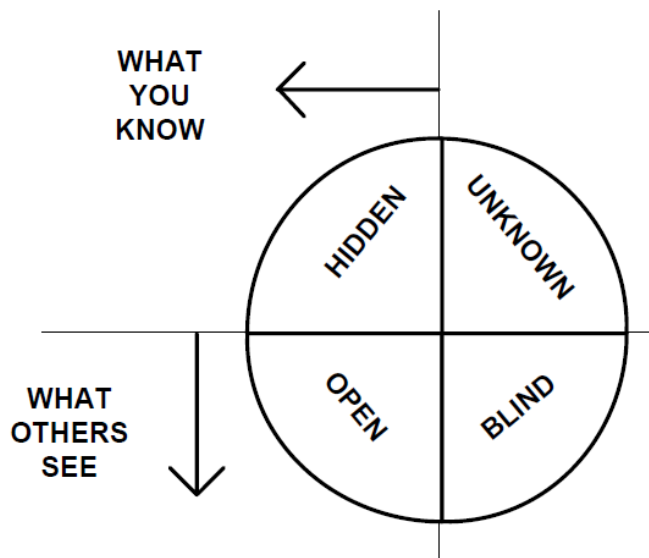


FIGURE 1. THE JAHARI WINDOW
THE TAROT READING

The individual for which the Tarot reading is being done should first state an issue (problem) to which he or she would like some insight. The individual then draws Tarot cards one at a time from a shuffled deck. Each card drawn is associated with a position in a “spread” like the one in Figure 2.

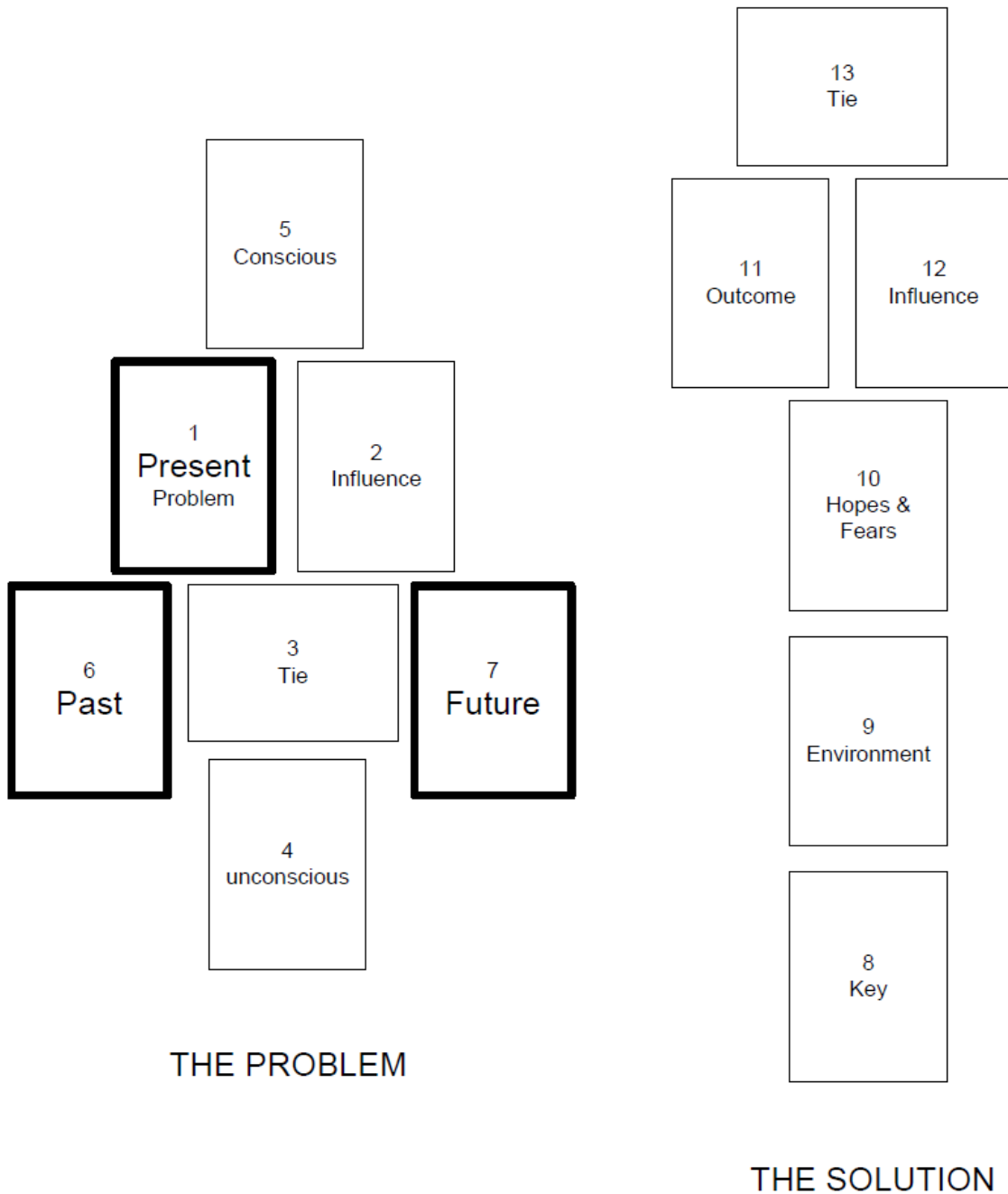


FIGURE 2. THE FULL TAROT SPREAD

Figure 2 shows one type of full problem exploration spread. However, the Open-Ended (No Problem Statement) spread shown in **BOLD** is appropriate for a short reading like at a party. There are many possible spreads depending on individual preference.

Each card is supposed to give an insight (an association from the subconscious mind) based on the position in the spread. The individual states out loud (or writes down) his or her associated meaning.

The difficulty with an effective Tarot reading is the question: "What does the current card mean?" It is usual to ask a Tarot reader to give an overview of the meaning of each card, to which meaning the individual should make an association. However, the taro interpreter might project his or her own ideas into the reading, which would be inappropriate and distort the effectiveness of the reading.

A way around this situation is to show an underlying structure for the Tarot cards. The overall structure that I like is called the "Tree of Life" from the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). The Tree of Life is shown in Figure 3 as Doug Green¹ described it to me in 1982. I am repeating here some of what Doug taught me. I have found that this model has helped me understand and manage my life experience for the past more than 30 years.

First observe that the Tarot deck comprises 22 Major Arcana cards and 4 Minor Arcana Suits.

The 4 Minor Arcana suits are PENTICLES, SWORD, RODS, and CUPS and roughly correspond to the 5 SENSES, MASCULINE PRINCIPLE, INTUITION, and FEMININE PRINCIPLE respectively. Each suit has 14 cards showing pictorially some aspect of the corresponding principle. The individual should interpret the picture without help from another person. Note that only the aces should be used in a short reading, and in this case only the principle needs to be considered. Also note that the minor Arcana suits are similar to the Jungian Arch-Types used in the Myers-Briggs Personality Test.

The Major Arcana in the Tree of Life shown in Figure 3 are the 22 lines like HANGED MAN, DEVIL, DEATH, and WHEEL OF FORTUNE. The Circles like SEVERITY, MERCEY, UNDERSTANDING and WISDOM are just descriptive nodes of the Tree of Life.

¹ Please read my autobiography "Karl Belser's Memoirs, A Late 20th Century Engineer" at <http://www.karl-belser.com/History/MemoirRev6.pdf> to learn more about Doug Green.

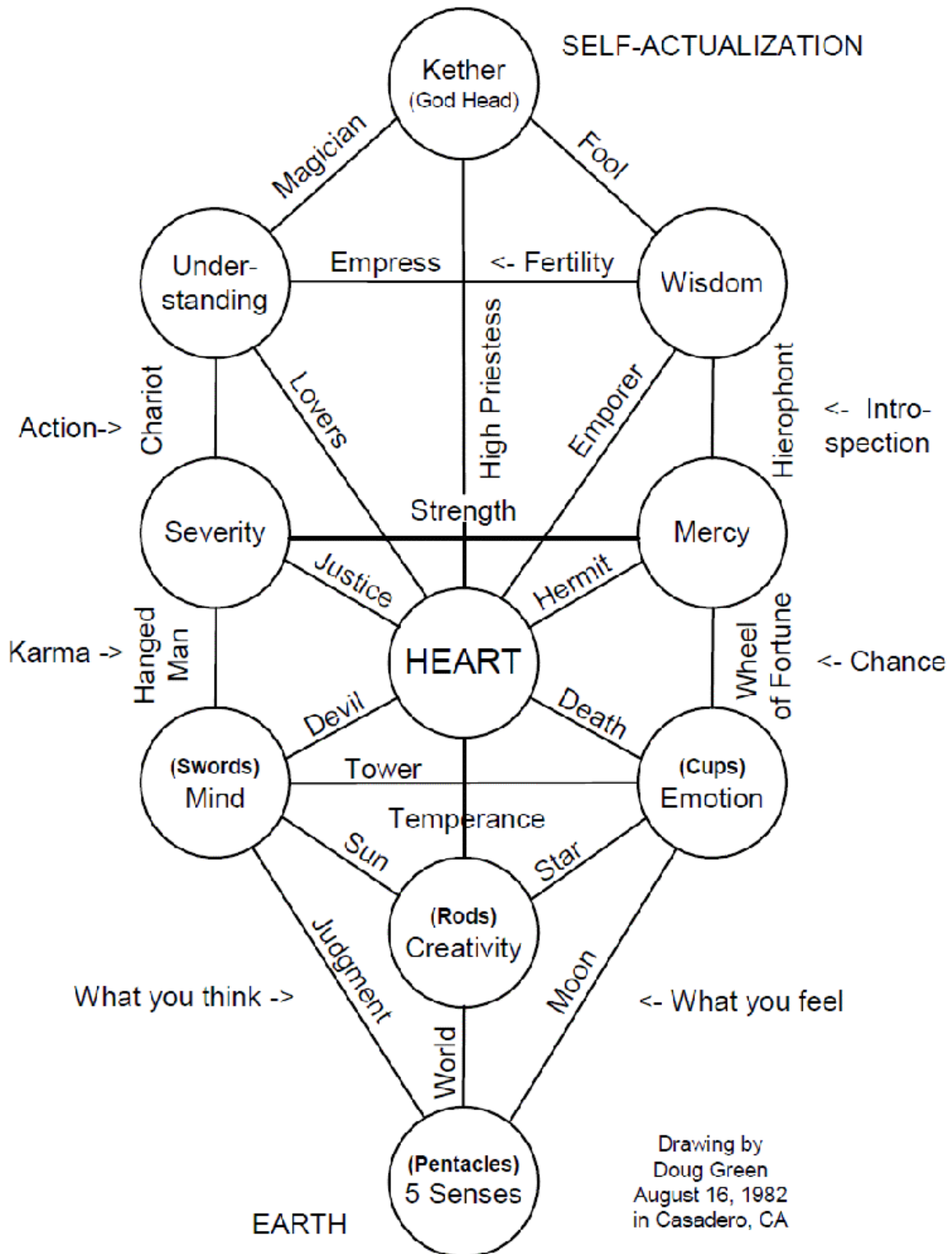


FIGURE 3. THE TREE OF LIFE (KABBALAH)

I will briefly describe why I think that Figure 3 is a good model. However, I don't have a reference that I am satisfied with. These are my views and my views alone.

I observe that the Tree of Life is divided into two parts, cause and effect on the left and luck or random accident on the right. Carl Jung called the luck aspect synchronicity. Religious leaders, including my Lutheran minister great grandfather called this aspect divine providence.

Many people today think that synchronicity and providence are baloney. I think that this politically correct view is based on the dramatic success of science, which cause and effect explanations lie on the left hand side of the Tree of Life.

However, I know by my experience as an inventor that luck is when opportunity meets a prepared mind. Further I know for Göedel's incompleteness theorem that it is impossible to have a total understanding of reality. There are just going to be things that are real and true that I can neither perceive nor understand with my limited senses and brain capacity.

Let's first go up the left hand side of the Tree of Life. We have 5 SENSES and given this input we can make a logical JUDGEMENT bringing us to MIND (The masculine SWORDS). Then we can pursue cause-and-effect through the HANGED MAN to achieve SEVERITY. Of course if the action is right one gets results. The CHARIOT says just charge ahead doing the same thing to get more results. This is UNDERSTANDING. The MAGICIAN represents this path to self-actualization (the KETHER or GOD HEAD).

Next let's go up the right hand side of the Tree of Life, the airy-fairy side. We have 5 SENSES and given this input we can develop a feeling about the situation. This brings us to an EMOTION (The feminine CUPS). Note that the TOWER card with lightning striking it represents the dissonance between the masculine and feminine. We now can take advantage of random chance (WHEEL OF FORTUNE) to get to MERCEY. In other words, have pity regarding an accidental happening. Note that STRENGTH comes from the integration of both MERCEY and SEVERITY. A mature person understands both aspects. The introspection of the HEIROPHANT ultimately results in WISDOM. Note that the feminine EMPRESS integrates both WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING. The lucky FOOL achieves actualization by chance.

The central path up the Tree of Life has been more difficult for me to comprehend, maybe because it appears to describe a truly adjusted and effective person. The 5 SENSES describe the WORLD in neutral terms and result in CREATIVITY (the integrating RODS). The SUN (YIN) integrates the masculine viewpoint (SWORDS) and the STARS (YANG) the feminize viewpoint

(CUPS). The result is TEMPERANCE that goes to the HEART of the matter. The HEART integrates the DEVIL from the masculine principle, the risk of DEATH from the feminine principle, the JUSTICE implied by cause-and-effect (SEVERITY), total withdrawal from life (the HERMIT) as the result of MERCEY, the LOVERS that come through understanding, and the EMPEROR who speaks wisdom. This integration of all aspects, both right and left sides is the HEART and goes directly to actualization (KETHER) via the HIGH PRIESTESS.

One really needs to personally understand the Tree of Life to effectively read his own TAROT. The Tree of Life is a useful roadmap for navigating ones thoughts and behavior. It is also helpful in man-woman relationships because the man may be biased to the left side and the woman to the right to the point the neither man nor woman can see the other's point of view as shown in Figure 4. The key to partnership is **Mutual Positive Regard** because either party might not be able to understand the other's point of view.

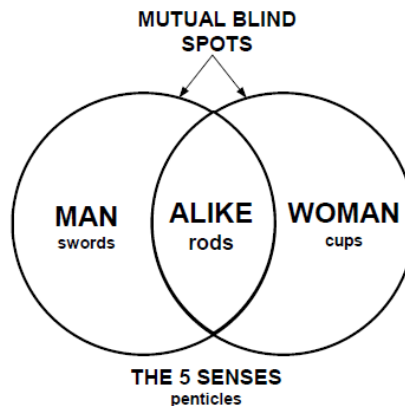


FIGURE 4. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

Interestingly, the human brain seems to be divided into two halves. I think that it is possible that the left and right halves focus on the left and right half aspects respectively of the tree of life. Hence the middle path, the well-adjusted path, may have to be learned by human beings. And maybe effectiveness requires a man-woman relationship with good communications to form a really effective couple.

I believe that these insights along with My Seven Steps to Personal Growth <http://www.karl-belser.com/SevenSteps.html> are keys to human success.

