

CYCLOPEDIA OF CARD MEANINGS

suggests the seeking of glory for material or superficial reasons rather than spiritual, whereas Judgement is not about the process of seeking, but rather about the state or condition of attainment. Likewise, the Four of Swords is about the power of prayer, whereas Judgement denotes the aftermath of prayer (or lack thereof).



Fulfillment
Completion
Masterpiece
Consummation



REV:
Hiatus
Agnosticism
Skeptic
Chagrin
Unfulfilled

A woman bearing two wands is floating in the skies. The wreath of victory encircles her. Guarding her are the lion, the water bearer, the eagle, and the bull, representative of the four suits of the tarot deck: Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. These, in turn, represent the balance of the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. It has also been said that the four figures represent the Four Evangelists of the Christian tradition: the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

KEY 21—THE WORLD

The theme of Key 21: The World card is fulfillment, completion, and triumph in all undertakings. It is considered the best card in the tarot deck because it represents the Seeker's oneness with his or her greater calling. The World card represents the final state of cosmic consciousness, the

HOLISTIC TAROT

supreme balance between good and evil, a complete reconciliation of the universe's dichotomy and duality, which was a persistent theme throughout the earlier cards of the Major Arcana.⁶⁸ The World is about the command of growth energy, emotions, ambitions, and material goals—in other words, all four elemental suits. It is the card of synthesis. In a reading, the card indicates that the Seeker has the potential for great triumph and attainment of the highest level of cosmic consciousness. It suggests the Seeker's importance in the greater cosmic landscape. Rewards and greatness are to come for the Seeker.

The card can also be symbolic of the Gaia Hypothesis,⁶⁹ the notion that the world itself is a living, evolving organism and that for a Seeker to fulfill his or her ultimate purpose, he or she must embrace the spiritual dimension of the Seeker's relationship with his or her environment. If the card appears in the Seeker's past, it suggests the state that is predetermined or outlined for the Seeker, though whether the Seeker will walk the path of manifesting that full potential is to be determined by present conditions and choices. If the card appears in the Seeker's present, it indicates contentment with the present. If the card appears in the Seeker's future, then it forebodes great success and glory to come. Something of great significance will happen to the Seeker.

The figures at the four corners of the card, as depicted on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, have been said to be a reference to the Book of Revelation 4:7, describing the throne of God: "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second like an ox, and the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like an eagle in flight."⁷⁰ There is also an astrological reference. The four figures represent the four fixed signs in Western astrology:⁷¹ the lion symbolizes Leo, the fixed sign associated with Fire; the eagle symbolizes Scorpio, the fixed sign associated with Water; the man symbolizes Aquarius, the fixed sign associated with Air; and the bull symbolizes Taurus, the fixed sign associated with Earth.

The element of Earth governs this card; attributions associated with Earth will represent the external forces at play in the Seeker's situation. Yin energy is dominant. Key 21: The World represents the attainment of the Higher and Divine Genius, per Golden Dawn tenets.⁷² Many also

speculate that the woman depicted on the card was inspired by the likeness of Florence Farr (1860–1917), an English actress, member of the Golden Dawn, and friend to Pamela Colman Smith, the illustrator of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck.⁷³

Reversed Meaning

Triumph and supreme greatness will come, but are delayed. To ensure that they come, the Seeker must tread carefully and make the correct decisions going forward. To determine what the correct decisions are, look to the other cards in the spread. The card could also indicate that there was a major change presented in the Seeker's life that could have been great for the Seeker's future, but the Seeker is afraid of change and is hesitating to take the necessary actions. The World appearing reversed in a spread could also indicate that the Seeker is consciously and knowingly in denial. The Seeker is denying the truth or significance of what is going on in his or her life and instead is remaining willfully ignorant. It could also suggest agnosticism, or the Seeker's uncertainty of the truth, or ultimate knowledge; prevalence of skepticism or doubt. Oftentimes The World card appears in reverse to the Great Skeptic, that Seeker who could potentially attain the complete spiritual fulfillment represented in The World card, but the Seeker's unusually high intelligence and curiosity causes him or her to question all, and doubt all. Key 21: The World card in reverse can indicate philosophical skepticism. Unlike the Seeker who embodies The World card upright, the Seeker who embodies The World card in reverse thrives in ambiguity and in fact finds his or her spiritual fulfillment in that existential ambiguity.