

VISIO



DIVINA

*The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision*

**THE HIGH PREISTESS**

*CARD TWO OF THE TAROT*

Wisdom has built her house. She presides as priest and caretaker of the house in which her children will be born and live. This is the cosmic Temple of Wisdom at the center of creation in which she serves as the High Priest(ess). On earth she was known from before the earliest of biblical times. Later the great Temple was built for her by Solomon.

In his exploration of this theme in **Meditations on the Tarot**, Valentin Tomberg says that she invites us into her Temple where we begin to have direct access through mystical experience into the mysteries. She is the keeper of the mysteries and gives us a taste of it by feasting us in her cosmic Temple.

She is therefore both nurturer and Wisdom bearer. As the mother who presides over direct, mystical experience, she feeds us solid food when we are able. These are the symbols and metaphors which accompany this ancient set of symbols found on this Tarot card. These symbolic meanings arrive from across the ages when we need it most—when the community of human beings is most disturbed by chaos and disorder. We need now to listen to her guidance.

The Magician dares to act in a world where illusion reigns. The High Priestess knows how to act because she brings the wisdom from above into the world below where it is most needed. Thomberg says:

*The essence of pure gnosis (direct knowledge) is reflected mysticism. Gnosis signifies that that which takes place in mysticism when it has become higher knowledge. That is, gnosis is*

*mysticism which has become conscious of itself. It is mystical experience transformed into higher knowledge (p. 41).*

The teaching from early Hermeticism describes how she makes this feast of wisdom available to the world. As mediator between heaven and earth, she first brings it down from above where it reaches through symbol and metaphor. Wisdom must first be put into symbolic form so it can begin to be taken in. Next it must be held within human consciousness as symbolic truth where it can be integrated into the structure of human being and consciousness. Finally it needs to be communicated in practical terms into the world (p. 41).

This is the ladder of descent where mystical experience brings the higher knowledge of revelation and cosmic wisdom down from Above making it available to affect the world. Through the praxis of contemplation, wisdom moves through all levels to become real food that can be received by the ordinary person also symbolically. Hermetical tradition speaks of this descent from the revelation of higher mystical experience to the plane of direct interior knowledge, and then out into the world where it is turned through the power of spiritual magic to become symbolic food sustaining the world. This is the descent of wisdom made available by the High Priestess from her Temple of Wisdom into the depths of a human being. This is how she serves as priest.

## Reflections on Image and Text:

1. Have you ever considered the symbolic figure of Wisdom to be actually alive in the cosmos and perhaps even present to you and to the earth?
2. In some traditions, wisdom is sometimes called the divine Mother. She is described similarly in the Hebrew Bible as *Hokhmah* the way it is used in Proverbs 8 and 9.
3. Wisdom is said to have served in the first Temple of Solomon as a central figure. We have lost many of these aspects of her in later Middle Eastern tradition where she has been replaced by patriarchy. Aspects of the divine feminine tradition are coming back into contemporary focus. How do these ancient images and ideas strike you? How comfortable are you with this understanding of the divine feminine?
4. Look at the illuminations. What do you notice that might help you to understand her better in the contemporary world? How have these ancient and modern ideas about her been combined in the images?
5. Hermetic teachings through the centuries are complex. What do you hear in them that interests you? What seems difficult to understand? Describe both as best you can in your journal.
6. There is a four-fold descent from Wisdom described in perennial wisdom. Put your understanding of that into your own words as best you can.
7. Notice that the teachings about the Magician come before this second card in the series of the Major Arcana of the Tarot. How do these two images work together? You might need to revisit the first card of the Tarot, The Magician, in the June 2019 collection.
8. Has Wisdom herself ever appeared to you in the midst of your daily life? If so, describe how you have experienced her.

## A Place for Notes and for Journaling your Answers:

*There are Twenty-two cards or images called the Major Arcana in the deck of Tarot cards. Valentin Tomberg uses each one of these to illustrate and illuminate the teachings of the ancient wisdom of Hermeticism. Both the Tarot and the Hermetic teaching are not part of mainstream religious traditions as we understand them today, though they have played roles in the transmission of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in the past. Valentin Tomberg, a Russian teacher from the Christian Orthodox and Catholic traditions, met with a group of scholars, teachers and wisdom seekers in the last century who helped bring this teaching forward and reinterpret it for us. **Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism** (197—) was the collected treasury of their work together.*

*This reflection, text and its illumination have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means for contemplative prayer and spiritual vision.*  
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# LECTIO DIVINA

*The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text*

*W*isdom has built you her house;  
she has hewn her seven pillars.

*She has prepared a feast, spiced her  
wine, and spread her table.*

*At the highest points of the town  
she has sent her maidens  
to proclaim:*

*“Come, eat my bread and drink my  
spiced wine. Abandon immaturity  
and live. Walk in the way of  
insight.”*

*Proverbs 9:1-4  
—translated by L. Bauman*

*Contemplating*  
**THE ILLUMINATIONS**



The High Priestess

