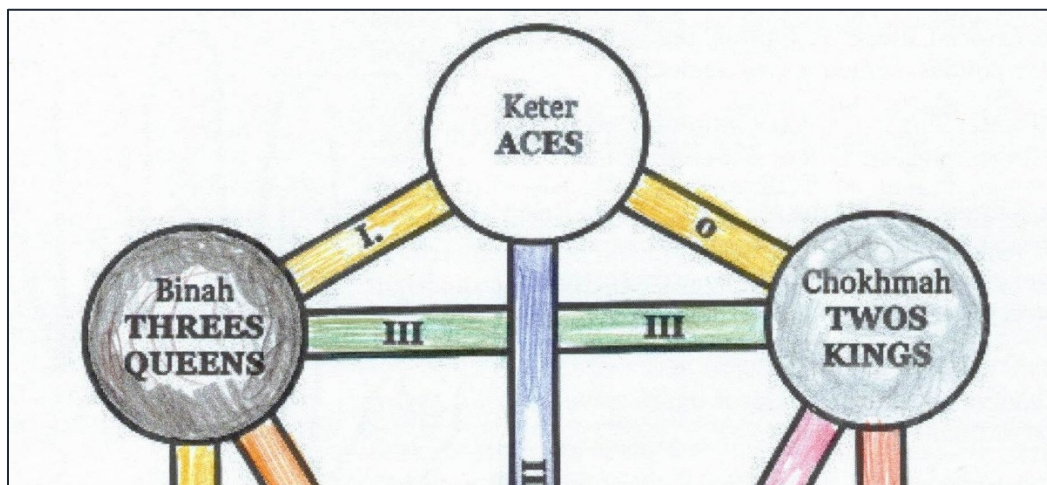


# Learn Tarot Card by Card

## *A Video Lecture Series*

### **Part III: The Threes**

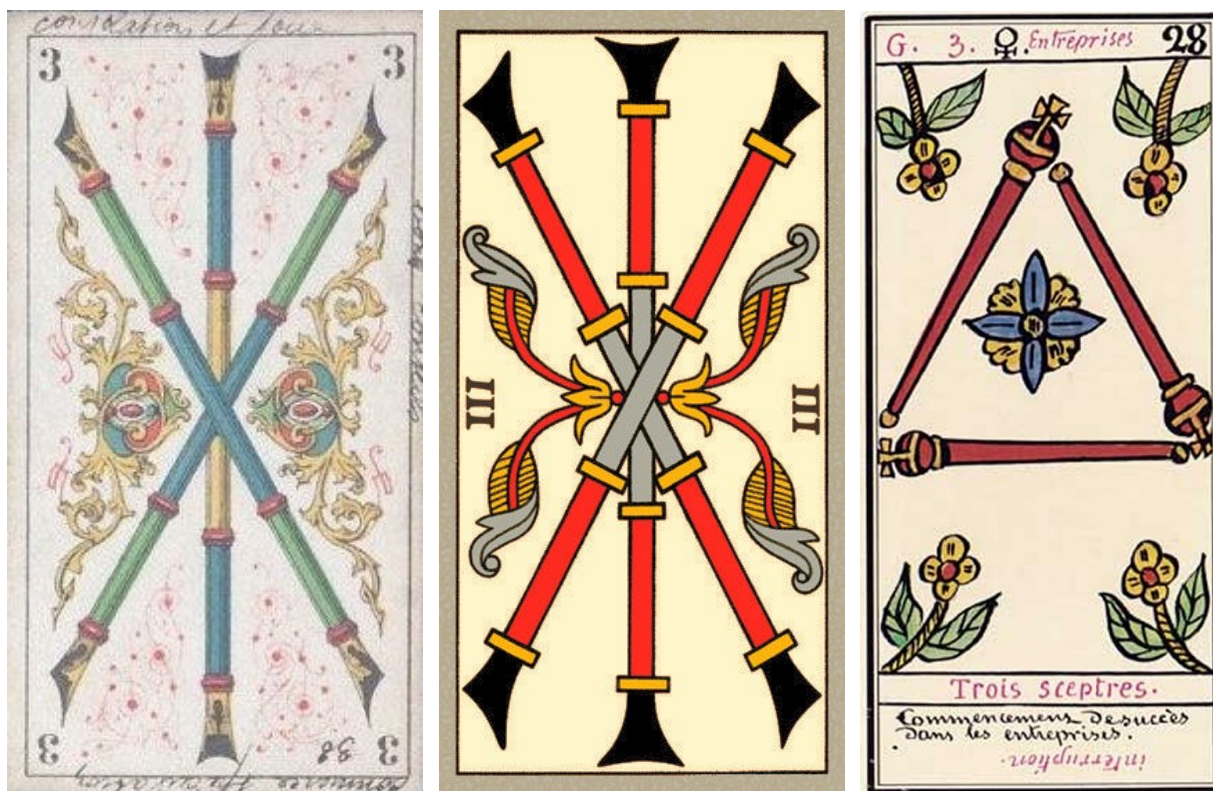
You are watching Video 3 in a series called Tarot Card Meanings with Benebell in which you will learn three traditions of interpretation: the Tarot de Marseilles, circa 1400s, Rider-Waite-Smith from the early 1900s, and the Thoth Tarot, created in the 1940s, alongside the deck I designed and illustrated, the Spirit Keeper's Tarot.



This video lecture is on the Threes in the Minor Arcana. On the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, the Threes correspond with the sephira Binah. This is intuitive understanding and deductive reasoning. Your Mother Consciousness is what empowers. Crowley describes the Threes as “the fertilization of ideas.”

Where Chokmah would be knowledge received, corresponding with the Twos in tarot, Binah is knowledge you've developed, built upon previous knowledge attained. In that sense it is the development and fruition of knowledge. It is the womb in which understanding is formed.

Let's start by recalling the Two of Wands from our previous video. In the Tarot de Marseilles, the Two of Batons was a sign of fortune, although it also implied opposition, obstacles that you'll first need to overcome, and tensions. The Three of Batons is a sign of enterprise and here, progress is assured. Your course of action will go as planned. The Marseilles Three of Wands represents an undertaking, a commercial engagement, trade and commerce in motion.

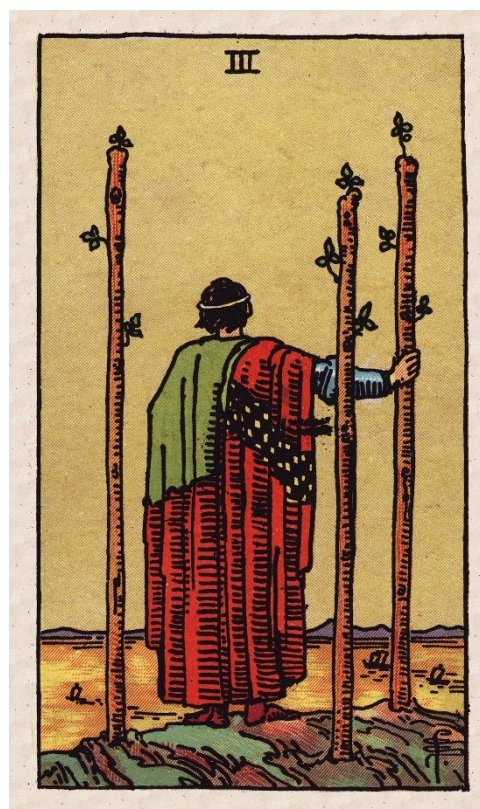


When the card appears in reverse, you'll need to look at adjacent or neighboring cards in your reading spread, because reversed, it's about hoping, desiring, or attempting something, and that something will be denoted in the neighboring cards.

In the Rider-Waite-Smith, where the Two of Wands denoted artistic or scientific developments, the Three of Wands denotes commercial development, industry, trade, exchange, and the nurturing of business dealings or merchantry. Where the Two of Wands was about beginning and about to undertake a venture, the Three of Wands is about the work having been done already and now you're waiting for your past labors to bear fruit.

Reversed, there may have been a miscalculation or you counted all your chickens before they hatched— but, good news—here's the thing, if things were going badly before, then the Three of Wands reversed means things will turn up and go well, that this is the end of your troubles, toil, and disappointment.

So, basically, there's an inversion of luck here. If things were good, the Three of Wands reversed indicates there may be problems ahead. If things were bad or



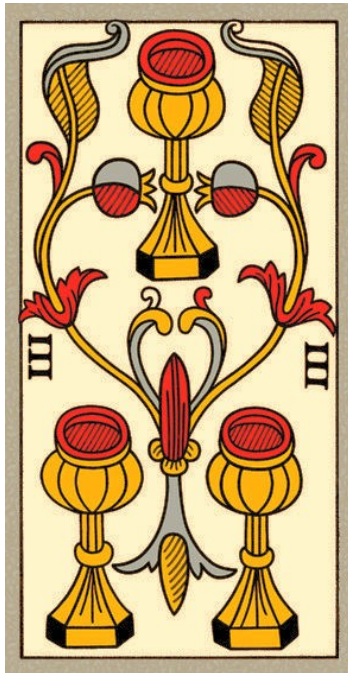
disappointing, then the Three of Wands reversed indicates that the end of your troubles and physical pains has come. Smooth sailing ahead.

In the Thoth, both the Two of Wands and the Three are indicative of dominion, though there is a more assertive, domineering force driving the Two, whereas in the Three of Wands, will and dominion are virtuous. This is the card of moral excellence, righteousness, and the Three Graces of theological virtue: Faith, Hope, and Charity.



In the Three of Scepters of the deck I created, the Politic is what you do, how you negotiate within your Dominion. This is politics, when what you do impacts others and so personal matters become of public interest. If The Two of Scepters was about discernment, then the Three of Scepters is about the policies, actions, and influence or impact that comes after or from your discernment.

In reverse, we see political power or social networking used in a manipulative or destructive way, where there may be bad faith at play. If you're a tarot nerd watching this and taking notes, then pause here and do what you need to do. And here are the card indications in reverse.



Where the Two of Cups in Marseilles indicated love, friendship, and amity, the Three of Cups is about an emotionally fulfilling triumph. When the Three of Cups shows up, it's an all-around all-purpose positive omen: there will be an outcome in your favor. Things are looking good for you. This is divine assurance that pursuit of relationships and happiness yield fruition.

Moving from the Two of Cups in the Rider-Waite-Smith to the Three of Cups, here we see maidens in a garden with cups lifted above their heads, as if pledging to one another, Waite tells us. This is a great card that signifies healing, happiness, victory, and gives comfort and consolation after you've experienced misfortune or sorrow. To me, this card signifies a joyous social occasion among those loyal to each other. It is also about celebration and success that fills one's emotional needs.

The Thoth Three of Cups is titled the Lord of Abundance. This is love that fulfills and yields fruition. Note here symbolic imagery of the Three Graces. Together, the three Graces of Greco-Roman mythology are known as the Three Chárites: Aglaea or Splendor, Euphrosyne or Good Cheer, and Thalia or Festivity. I would even say you see the Three Graces, Splendor, Good Cheer, and Festivity personified in the RWS and the SKT Three of Cups. The Three Chárites are also connected to the river Cephissus, near Delphi. With the astrological correspondence Mercury in Cancer here, we also see healing, emotional wellness restored, and the gift of prophecy, given the reference to Delphi.

In Spirit Keeper's Tarot, three priestesses stand by the waters. They're scrying in to their chalices and symbolize the maiden, mother, and crone. This is a card of fellowship, strong and loyal bonds within a tribe or clan, and an omen of jubilee, celebration, and occasion for rejoicing.

And here is the write-up of the card indications for those of you taking notes and chances are that's exactly what you're doing or thinking of doing, because if you're watching this kind of video lecture on the Internet, come on who are we kidding, you're a glorified nerd. Pause here if you need more time. Reversals to come in the next frame.

And here are the card indications in reversed. If you don't read with reversals, these reversed or ill-dignified indications of the Three of Cups can still come up in your reading if the neighboring cards seem to be weakening or thwarting the forces of the Three of Cups. Heavy Fire cards, because Fire and Water are in opposition, such as the Seven, Nine, or Ten of Wands can trigger the ill-dignified or reversed meanings of the Three of Cups, even when reversals aren't physically observed. Pause the video here if you need more time to finish up your notes and resume when ready.

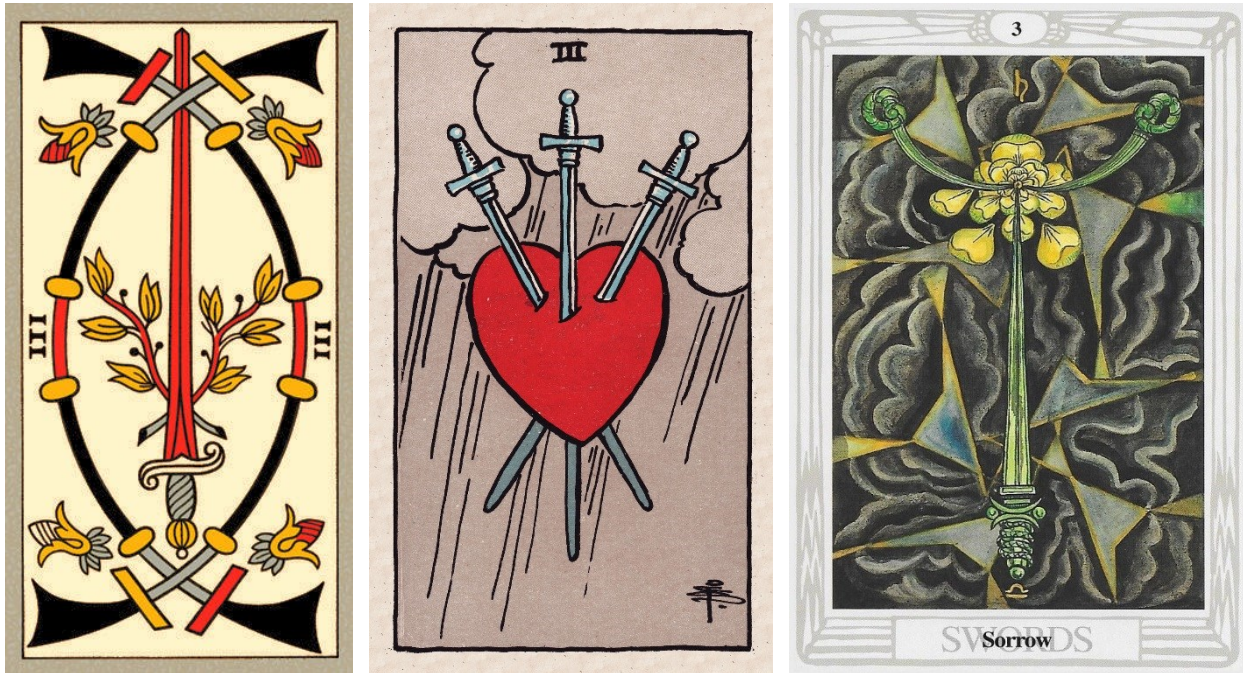
I want to re-emphasize the Thoth Three of Wands corresponding with the Three Virtues in comparative analysis with the Three of Cups corresponding with the Three Chárites.

The Three Virtues are theological based from Catholicism: Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are the three facets of you, yes, we all have these three facets inside of us, that are Divine, that make you Divine, and represent the virtuous exercise of willpower and dominion. This is about how you choose to act, how you choose to respond to events and circumstances. This is the Lord of Virtue because observance of the Three Virtues leads to virtuous living.

The Three Graces are personifications of facets of charisma. While who the three Graces are vary depending on story, let's work with this popular listing: Aglaea, Euphrosyne, and Thalia. Or: Splendor, Good Cheer, and Festivity. The Graces represent the divine pleasures of life, what makes

life beautiful and worth experiencing. This is the Lord of Abundance because experiencing the Three Graces are what convey to us a sense of abundance.

There's a clear philosophical interrelation between the Three of Wands and Three of Cups here, which I hope comes through in the Spirit Keeper's Tarot deck.



Now on to the suit of Swords. Pictured on screen for now is a pictorial review of the Twos. Turn your attention to the Tarot de Marseilles. In the Two, the center ornamentation is an eight-petal flower surrounded by eight stems and eight leaves, further framed and guarded by four flower buds. Flower: happy, positive symbolism, right? So simplistically speaking, our interpretation of the Two of Swords in the Marseilles was happy and positive. In the Three of Swords, the center ornamentation changes into a rather large sword that extends vertically across the length of the card. Here, the suggestion is conflict, quarrel or argument, and a sign that something is about to break or burst. There is a breach of peaceful relations, meaning what had been good is now being disrupted or corrupted.

In the RWS Three of Swords, we see the iconic three swords piercing a red heart, beset with rain and cloudy gray skies. Waite's indications for this card stay rather true to MacGregor Mathers and echoes what we said for the Tarot de Marseilles. In Pictorial Key, Waite tells us, um, duh, the imagery here is so self-explanatory, there's no reason for me to write more about this card meaning. Isn't it obvious what this card means? So. There you have it.

Moving on to the Thoth deck, study that Two of Swords, let the colors make an impression on you, and appreciate the sacred geometric symmetry here. Now take a look at the Three of Swords and compare this card with what you just saw in the Two. Asymmetrical lines, a darkening of the green and golds to black and gray, and three petals falling from the pierced flower blossom. Take a close look at the hilt of the primary sword and you'll see a serpent coiled around the handle, reminiscent

of the Orphic Egg. The symbology prophesies the birth of a Messiah or one who will bring about salvation. This reinforces what Crowley writes in the Book of Thoth about this card: this is the Mourning of Isis, which is what you'll see depicted in the SKT Three of Swords. The spirit residing in this card is the Lord of Sorrow, and Crowley describes it as indicating Weltschmerz, a German term meaning to be world weary, to feel that this physical reality is disappointing the ideals of your mind. It's being weary, melancholic, and sad about how much evil and suffering there is in this world and feeling helpless to it. This is the sorrow lamenting the human condition often felt by the highly intellectual, the curse of knowing too much.

In the SKT deck, we recall how the beloved husband of Isis, Osiris, was murdered by his brother Set. Osiris is the symbol of order, while Set is the symbol of chaos. Chaos dismantles order. Isis goes on a quest to re-assemble her husband, to restore order, and only through a magical healing spell she learns from the god Thoth is she able to resurrect part of her husband, just enough of him to conceive and give birth to Horus, a messianic figure. What that story means to you is going to be what the Three of Swords means to you.

And here's a written review of what we covered about the attributions and meanings for the Three of Swords. Pause here if you need a little more time to jot down your notes.

And here are the card indications in reversed. When the frames of card reversals appear on screen, you may want to pause the video and take some time to study the imagery of the cards reversed and really explore how seeing the cards in reverse make you feel, how you connect or don't connect intuitively, perhaps even psychically, with reversed imagery.

Before moving on, I'd like to direct your attention to the Rider-Waite-Smith Three of Swords. In addition to the attributions appearing on screen, I want to add that in my readings, I've found that the reversed Three of Swords can also indicate a temporary Three of Swords state, meaning the forces of loss, heartbreak, and pain in your life is weakening, subsiding, coming to its end. Surrounding cards will therefore indicate what helps to facilitate closure and ending the pain or reconciling the loss.

In the Thoth, note how the reversal of the imagery means the Orphic Egg on the handle of the sword is now at the top and the three petals are not falling, but rather, are floating. Think about how that colors your interpretation and impression of the Three of Swords reversed. For me, I actually incorporate a lot of these Thoth Three of Swords reversed attributions to how I would even interpret a reversed Three of Swords in the RWS deck.



Remember these were the Twos we covered in the previous video. The Two of Coins in the Marseilles give rise to the third coin that hovers above the two, which now rotate 90 degrees from a vertical alignment to a horizontal one. We also see the expanding growth of the vines and flower buds. The Three of Coins denotes a promotion or rise in socioeconomic ranking. This portends an elevation of power and dignity.



In the Rider-Waite-Smith, a sculptor standing atop a work bench is at work in a monastery, and so the two individuals pictured to the right are a friar and a nun in a distinct red or reddish habit. The sculptor has completed the archway with the design that you see depicted in the plans that the nun is holding. In Pictorial Key, Waite wants us to compare the Three of Pentacles with the Eight of Pentacles. The apprentice in the Eight of Pentacles is the same figure depicted in the Three, now the master sculptor. The monastery pictured here in the Three is presumably one of the buildings from the town behind the apprentice in the Eight, in the background.

In the Thoth Three of Disks, we meet the Lord of Works, though that may be interchangeable with its singular form, Lord of Work, as that's how this card is referred to in the Book of Thoth. When the Three of Disks appears in a reading, this is a divine acknowledgement that a certain Work has been completed. This is crystallization of forces into something that's finally tangible and earthly. It's the materialization of work product, something you can touch.

Note the imagery here in the Thoth. We see three twelve-spoke dharmachakras bringing a fusion between the Western astrological theme of the 12-house horoscope wheel and the dharmachakra, or dharma wheel representing the path to enlightenment. In other words, this key represents completion of something very important that is a testament of your personal destiny and beautiful work product to show for yourself.



I loved that idea so much, I worked it in to the meaning of the Three of Orbs, residence for the spirit titled The Mason. This is a significant card in the SKT deck, because itself, this is the key that represents my completion of a hand-illustrated tarot deck. I really hope you'll take some time to explore every detail in The Mason, as this is one of my most favorite and most personal cards illustrated in the SKT deck. Even the number of visible bricks above the archway, albeit some counted are partial, was significant: total number 33. The number of steps you must walk to get to the archway: 5. Number of masonry tools shown in the foreground: 3. The Seal of the Great Work and the magical implications. Hey: Mars in Capricorn, right? If Mars in Capricorn is nothing else, it's intense. This is "Type A" level accomplishment.

To supplement what we just covered about the Three of Coins, Pentacles, Disks, or Orbs, here are some additional insights for your notes.

What might be immediately apparent is how the SKT Three of Orbs changes the formation of the three orbs from the Marseilles, RWS, and Thoth. The three traditions arrange the trinity in the same exact way, but I inverted it. Instead, the alchemical symbol of the Squared Circle is aligned with the formation of the coins, pentacles, and disks from the preceding three deck styles. The orbs themselves in the SKT represent the Divine Womb.

At this time, pause the video for a quick personal study of these four cards and resume when ready.



And here are the card indications in reverse. Note that in the Marseilles tradition, the reversed Three of Coins denotes something quite different from what Rider-Waite-Smith readers are going to be used to. Reversed, this card indicates children, very youthful energy and the presence of youth. It also means some sort of financial, business, or professional undertaking is being realized. There is a sense of birthing here, whether the birthing of children or the birthing of work product.

Interestingly, what Waite has to say about the Three of Pentacles reversed somewhat echoes the Marseilles indications for the Three of Coins reversed with regard to children or a child-like energy at play. I also read the Three of Pentacles reversed as falling short of your own greatness, not completing a certain work to the best of your ability, so it's mediocre work, for you. You didn't cross all your T's and dot all your I's.

Interpreting the Thoth reversed Three of Disks will rely more on the astrological correspondence. I read the reversal as activating retrograde implications of Mars as it would be influenced when in the zodiac sign Capricorn.

For reading the SKT deck, you're going to incorporate all the reversed Three of Pentacles and Disks from Waite and Crowley into how you read the reversed Three of Orbs. The Mason reversed, if you're asking me, is the Asian Tiger Mom crossing her arms at you, shaking her head and clicking her teeth, letting you know that you failed to meet expectations. You didn't put in your all and now the work product you have to show for yourself is mediocre at best. You could have done way better, Little One. That's, in a nutshell, the Three of Orbs reversed.

Of course, there is so much that is not covered in these videos. To supplement these brief discussions with further reading, here are a few book recommendations.

For the Tarot de Marseilles deck, I like Jodorowsky's *The Way of the Tarot* or *The Marseille Tarot Revealed* by Dr. Yoav Ben-Dov.

For the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, I'm definitely going to be biased and self-interested here, and recommend my own book, *Holistic Tarot* published by North Atlantic Books.

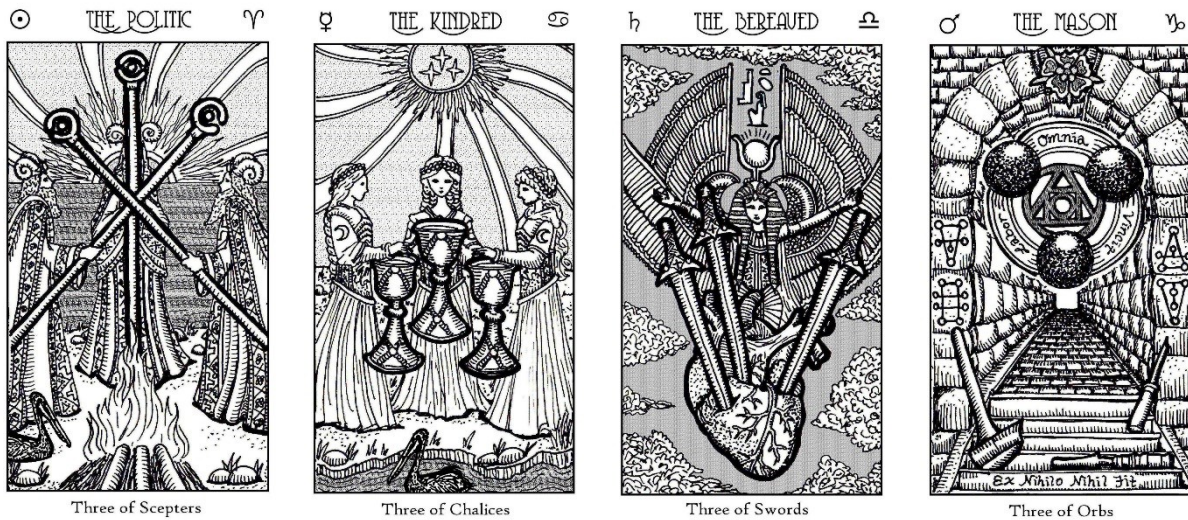
For the Thoth Tarot by Aleister Crowley and Lady Freida Harris, check out *The Crowley Tarot* by Hajo Banzhaf. Or go directly to *The Book of Thoth* by Crowley himself.

Affiliate links to purchase any of these books are provided in the video description box.

For my deck, the Spirit Keeper's Tarot, the Little White Book that comes tucked inside the box of your SKT Vitruvian deck is intended to offer a basic foundation on the card meanings. You can also download the free Medium White Book or order a print paperback copy of it for the card meanings. To deep-dive into the esoteric subtext check out *The Book of Maps*.

This concludes our video lecture on the tarot Threes from the Minor Arcana. At this time, pause the video so you can study the spread of Threes from the four deck styles, compare, contrast, find the similarities, and arrive at your own impressions of the Threes.

And now take some time to document and note your personal impressions of the Threes when they appear in reverse. How do you connect or don't connect with the reversals of cards. Pause the video if you need more time and resume when ready.



To help reinforce what we've covered so far, study the imagery of the Aces again. In consideration or maybe also in rejection of what we've discussed, how do you interpret these Aces?

Now let's take a look at the Twos. Can you intuit distinct characters from the four deck styles pictured here? Which deck tradition are you starting to feel would be more suitable to you for what reading purposes? How do the insights provided so far compare to what you know about and have experienced with the cards?

And the Threes. How would you express the narrative of the progression from the Aces to the Twos, and to the Threes?