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JORGENSEN, DANNY LYNN
TAROT DIVINATION IN THE VALLEY OF THE SUN:
AN EXISTENTIAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE ESOTERIC AND
OCCULT.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1979
TAROT DIVINATION IN THE VALLEY OF THE SUN:
AN EXISTENTIAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE
ESOTERIC AND OCCULT
DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Danny Lynn Jorgensen, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1979

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This dissertation is dedicated to

Julie, Greta, Adrean, and Eric
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

TOWARD AN EXISTENTIAL SOCIOLOGY OF

THE ESOTERIC AND OCCULT

Introduction

The most basic and recurrently problematic issue confronting people everywhere throughout all ages is the meaning of existence in the world.* Personal adjustments to this problem may be handled individually, but the fundamental solutions to the problem of meaning are collectively created, acquired, enacted, and enforced by reference to a more or less standardized cultural paradigm. "Culture," in other words, provides the basic solutions to recurrently problematic conditions of everyday life existence in the world. It is a collective paradigm for interpreting subjective experience, generating conduct, interacting with fellow beings, discovering identity, and justifying existence. For the vast majority of individuals, however, these collective solutions and meanings are routinely acquired through social interaction and merely taken for granted. Except under exceptional circumstances, or in the case of social elites (such as religious, political, or intellectual leaders) who make big business out of the problem of meaning,

*NOTE: The footnotes to this chapter, like all subsequent chapters, are located at the end of the chapter.
individuals take for granted their ability to routinely solve the ba-
sic problems of everyday life.

In the history of Western culture the problem of meaning commonly has been resolved by reference to the all encompassing designs of Christian religion and/or scientific rationality. Yet it is a mistake to assume—as sociologists commonly have—that these socially dominant worldviews were adhered to by all but a few "deviants," or that there was little seepage between socially dominant paradigms and certain undercurrents of Western culture. Culture and especially its enactment always have been more fluid and situationally specific than sociologists would allow.

Whereas the problem of meaning is not unique to modern existence, it has acquired a particular significance in the present. Since the Renaissance, Western culture has been shaped by an ongoing series of interrelated crises. The Protestant Reformation seriously disrupted the Catholic monopoly on official definitions of reality, leaving the way clear for all sorts of rival claims to truth and conceptions of reality. The Enlightenment and foundation of the sciences of the natural world provided the basis for still further challenges to religious conceptions of reality. With the French Revolution the Western world witnessed a climax of these events, and a further break with absolute authority, paving the way for mass society. Closely related to these major sociohistorical events, the industrialization and urbanization of Western life finalized the near total destruction of traditional society and its basic institutions. Life in urban-industrial societies increasingly has become fragmented, segmented, and restricted
to the sphere of the individual. Especially in American society the individual increasingly has been liberated from the demands of work—as a central activity—and acquired the leisure time and economic prosperity to engage in nonwork activities and particularized meanings. It is within this context of large scale alternations in Western culture and societies that the meaning of existence has become increasingly problematic.

This work explores recent public interest in the esoteric and occult: doctrines and practices heretofore thought to be the relics of some premodern period in the development of Western culture. The word "esoteric" is used as a gloss for bodies of knowledge and practice held to be secret, hidden, mysterious, or concealed from the uninitiated. Esoteric doctrines and practices are related to both religion and science, yet they historically lack socially defined and sanctioned legitimacy in Western culture. The term "occult" is a more specific reference to a particular set of esoteric beliefs and practices. The occult includes alchemy, astrology, numerology, palmistry, magic, divination, the tarot, as well as other teachings and techniques associated with the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition.

This work takes the position that these beliefs and practices represent a collective response to providing meaningful solutions to the basic problems of existence in the modern world. It does not attempt to judge directly the correctness, truth, or feasibility of these beliefs and practices as actual solutions to the problems of everyday life. Rather, it describes and analyzes the manner in which the esoteric and occult are socially organized and organizing in concrete
everyday life situations and settings. Only on this basis is it possible to make suggestions about whether or not the esoteric and occult actually offer viable solutions to contemporary social life.

The esoteric and occult are described and analyzed here on the basis of an "existential sociology." This theoretical-methodological perspective derives from the studies of Douglas, Johnson, their students, and their associates. In the words of Douglas and Johnson (1977:vii), "existential sociology" is descriptively defined as:

... the study of human experience in-the-world (or existence) in all of its forms. The fundamental, but not exclusive, method of existential sociology is direct personal experience, including that of our own daily lives and that gained through more formal and explicitly defined research practice. The goal is to construct practical theoretical truths about that experience, to understand how we live, how we feel, think, act. Underlying this abstractly defined goal is a passion to understand the wellsprings of our actions and their consequences; where we come from and where we are going. And intertwined with this passion is a gut-level faith in the ultimate utility of such understanding to guide us toward realistic solutions to the social problems we confront in our daily lives.

The key features of existential sociology, as it is adapted here, include (1) an abiding preoccupation with the totality of human existence from the perspective of members, and (2) a critical distrust for research practices not directly grounded in the personal experience of self and others. In this regard, existential sociology is a critical reaction to the absolutist conceptions and practices of classical sociology, especially as it has been interpretatively implemented within the conventionalized wisdoms of American sociology. Based on a concrete, experiential investigation of the esoteric and occult, this report presents a sociological interpretation and understanding of these phenomena in America today.
The rest of this chapter is devoted to raising specific issues to be addressed here and outlining the basic strategy whereby concrete data were collected. I proceed with a critical review of pertinent sociological literature. On this basis specific theoretical and methodological issues are raised. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethnographic (or participant-observational) strategy employed to investigate the esoteric and occult.

Sociological Perspectives

The perception of an esoteric or occult revival in the Western world today has resulted in a host of different interpretations and explanations. A review of pertinent literature reveals that sociologists alone have forwarded a perplexing array of explanatory hypotheses. The esoteric or occult have been viewed as: a fad, pop religion, and a feature of popular culture (Truzzi, 1972a; 1974; 1975); a reflection of crisis in bourgeois society (Defrance et al., 1971; Fischler, 1974); instances of deviant behavior, religion, or science (Truzzi, 1972a; 1978); a middle class establishment involving the de-mystification of the demonic (Marty, 1970); a consequence of social disorganization resulting in psychosocial stress and strain, socio-economic and psychological deprivation, alienation, and the like, thereby leading to involvement with marginal social movements or cults (Staude, 1970; Shepherd, 1972; Quarantelli and Wenger, 1973; Prince, 1974); a "neo-sacral" movement running counter to predictions of the secularization of Western life (Greeley, 1974; 1975; Greeley and McCready, 1974); a portion of a youth counter- or sub-culture (Staude,
1970; Truzzi, 1975); a rejection of traditional knowledge claims (Whitehead, 1974); and, the harbinger of some new cultural paradigm (Tiryakian, 1974).

Many of these interpretations of the esoteric or occult are insightful and provide useful information. Nevertheless, they lack grounding in the concrete reality of everyday life from the members' perspective. Because these studies interpret the esoteric or occult without first describing and analyzing their subjective meaningfulness, these reports amount to little more than commonsense responses to a world of meaning whose objective facticity is taken for granted. In other words, there is no warrant for regarding these studies as anything but essentially lay conceptions. While there is nothing the matter with this, it fails to address the basic issues of sociology; that is, the meanings constructed by members.

In spite of diversity and disagreement within the sociological literature three basic explanatory or interpretative approaches to the esoteric or occult may be identified. One perspective is dominated by a positivistic preoccupation with the validity of occult claims to knowledge and conceptions of reality. A second perspective involves a functionalistic concern for the conditions under which marginal social movements arise, the reasons why people join marginal movements, and the types and development of marginal movements. The third sociological perspective involves a humanistic concern for members' conceptions of reality and the manner in which esoteric and occult knowledge serves as a meaningful foundation for daily life.
The Positivistic Perspective

This view of the esoteric and occult derives from an essentially positivistic preoccupation with the supposed canons of "science" and related claims about the nature of "reality" (see Truzzi, 1972a). Advocates of the positivistic view take as a central "sociological" question the validity of occult claims to knowledge and the actual existence of psychic phenomena, secret knowledge, mysterious forces, and the like. In this view occult conceptions of "reality" and claims to "knowledge" are seen as illegitimate or deviant when measured and evaluated against socially established and legitimated bodies of knowledge, especially traditional religion and science.

Truzzi's (1972a) interesting discussion of "the definitions and dimensions of the occult" illustrate this point of view. Speaking from the perspective of a sociology of science, Truzzi maintains that occultism represents claims to knowledge of anomalous objects and processes which are inexplicable from the established perspectives of religion and science. "And once such a knowledge claim gains acceptance within established science or religion, it loses its status as an occultism" (Truzzi, 1972a:637).

Truzzi goes on to specify that anomalies—the common denominator of occultisms—are of different orders and types. "Anomalous objects" refer to things or events, like abominable snowmen or giant sea serpents, which defy ordinary beliefs. "Anomalous processes" refer to ordinary things or events in conjunction with extraordinary ones, like the belief that planets exert influence on the development of personality (astrology). "Isolated anomalies" refer to things like UFO's,
while "integrated anomalies" involve conceptual frames of reference which link otherwise isolated phenomena in what Truzzi calls an "occult system." Anomalies, moreover, may be "general," having to do with unusual events or objects (things which vanish without apparent reason), or "theoretical," in the case of things only strange to those without special knowledge (as in the case of psychic healing).

Against Marty's (1970) conception of an occult establishment (defined in terms of publishers of occult trade journals), Truzzi (1972a:639) sees an occult hierarchy. This ranking of occultisms is defined by the degree to which the particular occult belief or system has been integrated with institutionalized knowledge. Drawing on Weber's (1971) three types of authority—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal—he identifies five types of occultism. Based on a continuum from scientific to mystical proofs, the basic types include: 1) "proto-scientific" occultism, illustrated by parapsychology; 2) "quasi-scientific" occultism, exemplified by astrology; 3) "pragmatic" occultism, defined by the actual use of magic and the claim that it works; 4) "shared mystical" occultism, experience which may be individually validated by members as in the case of Transcendental Meditation; and, 5) "private mystical" occultism, represented by trance mediumship which is demonstrable only by its human subjects.

Truzzi's discussion is most informative, but it needlessly places occult claims in juxtaposition with conventional conceptions of scientific knowledge. It almost appears as if Truzzi believes that occultists employ the same logic as science. Yet, because occult claims have not been accepted by religious and scientific authorities, he
labels them "deviant." Whereas this view is ideologically useful for disparaging the claims of occultists, it ignores the important sociological dictum: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1928). It also assumes that (a) the rules of science, conventionally conceived, provide an absolute method for arriving at "truth," and (b) knowledge claims are "true" only if they have been socially legitimated. Furthermore, this view totally ignores the "history" of the occult in Western culture.

To approach the occult from a positivistic standpoint accomplishes little other than the degradation of occultism, and implicitly at least, confirmation of the seemingly irrefutable knowledge claims of science to truth about the real world. To define "truth" in terms of socially established bodies of knowledge reveals this perspective's inherent conservatism. To apply the label "deviant" without respect for societal reactions to the occult also ignores the empirical world, and reveals the absolutism of this perspective. At one time occult beliefs and practices certainly were regarded by societal members as deviant in some way. Whereas it is true that these beliefs and practices lack institutional legitimacy today, it is not at all clear that people generally regard them as deviant.

The Functionalistic Perspective

The most widely employed theoretical perspective on the esoteric and occult derives from an essentially functionalistic view of collective behavior and social movements. This perspective focuses on three interrelated questions: 1) the social structural conditions under
which marginal social movements arise; 2) the reasons why people join marginal groups; and 3) the types and development of marginal social groups or cults (see Heberle, 1949; Blumer, 1957; Smelser, 1963; Turner, 1969; Oberschall, 1973; Wilson, 1970; Yinger, 1970; Hine, 1974).

From this perspective social movements are viewed to arise as a consequence of certain "objective" conditions of social disorganization. As a direct consequence of social disorganization societal members are said to be socially, materially, and/or psychically deprived or relatively deprived. Social movements are viewed thereby as the product of social deprivation. Individuals, in turn, are thought to join marginal movements because they are deprived or deprived. These people are said to be maladjusted, defective, pathological, emotionally unstable, and so on.

Quarantelli and Wenger (1973), for instance, studied a college based Ouija board cult and argued that individuals turn to cultic groups because of social deprivation and dislocation. The cultic group was supposed to provide a socially supportive environment for unconventional beliefs and an outlet for these convictions.

There also is a vast body of literature linking the esoteric and occult to a youth counterculture, marginal social or religious groups, and cultic social organizational development (see Shepherd, 1972; Prince, 1974; Staude, 1970). Many of these studies, and related work on nonconventional spiritual groups, such as Hare Krisna, Meher Baba, and the broad based Jesus movement, stress "alienation" as a central factor in the rise and development of marginal groups (see Robbins,
Robbins et al. (1974), for example, maintain that nonconventional spiritual groups function to re-integrate drug users and other social drop outs into conventional society. Although they distinguish between "adaptive" and "marginal" groups, even marginal groups are seen as "functional" since they tend to reduce social structural strain or develop into adaptive social groups.

Present also within this same general body of functionalistic literature is a theoretical emphasis on the nature of cultic social organization and the development of cults into sects (see Nelson, 1968; 1969; 1972; Wilson, 1970; Jackson and Jobling, 1968; Campbell, 1972; Eister, 1972; Wallis, 1974; Richardson, 1975). Balch and Taylor (1976; 1977a; 1977b; 1978), for instance, drawing from a field study of a UFO cult, attempt to identify the basic organizational features of this group and the process by which it changes, disintegrates, remains a cult, or develops into a sect. Two basic views on the nature of this change are evident. Writers like Wallis (1974; 1975) tend to emphasize the role of charismatic leader types. On the other hand, writers like Richardson (1975) prefer to concentrate on a more structural conception of organization and changes therein.

Less directly related to this body of literature are a set of studies focused on the processes whereby individuals become converts to religious groups (see Festinger et al., 1956; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Lofland, 1966). With the functionalistic literature these studies share in common an interest in the reasons why people join marginal
social groups and the use of the label "deviant." In recent years the conversion model proposed by Lofland and Stark has been examined by Balch and Taylor (1976) and Lynch (1978). With some modification these more recent studies do tend to support this model of conversion. Yet their applicability beyond small, cultic groups seems doubtful.

Objections to the social deprivation-disorganization-defective hypotheses and the functional framework upon which they are based are almost endless (see Geertz, 1964; Hine, 1974; Marx and Holzner, 1977; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). It should be noted, however, that at least several recent detractors have endeavored essentially to salvage this perspective in some form (see Hine, 1974). Generally speaking, the functional, social movements viewpoint is inadequate on the bases that it: 1) labels (anomic, alienated, pathological, and so on) rather than explains phenomena; 2) is reductionistic (in the same sense that marginal movements are explained by individuals' motives which are never adequately related to social structural conditions); and, 3) is objectivistic (in the sense that societal members' definitions and conceptions of reality and its subjective meaningfulness is ignored in favor of a priori constructions of reality based on the subjective experiences of social researchers).

In Quarantelli and Wenger's (1973) study of a Ouija board cult, for instance, the college student members of the cult were judged to be relatively deprived as a consequence of the socially disorganized conditions of urban (college) life. In a rather circular fashion the supposedly disorganized conditions of urban life are used to explain the emergence of the cult. Members are never consulted, however, as to
their self-conceptions of the situation. The label "deprivation" is simply imposed by the researchers. This study is interesting, moreover, since the members are not the characteristically lower class people studied as part of some cultic movement. Implicitly, Quarantelli and Wenger would seem to be compelled by their own logic to consider virtually everyone who participates in urban life to be relatively deprived. If this is the case, then what kind of explanation is this?

Clearly, the most serious problem with the functionalistic perspective is the imposition of labels like deprivation (the objective bias). When social researchers seek out deprivation it should not be surprising that they usually find it. Under what conditions and in what kinds of situations might we expect to find individuals who are not deprived, even relatively so? Of course, the subjective experience of deprivation is rarely at issue, since the researcher has in mind the indicators of deprivation before inquiry begins, or else they are readily applied after the data have been collected. In either case, it is the social scientist who makes the judgement of deprivation. It is a judgement made from a certain social class position and in terms of the social scientist's worldview and self-interests.

The Humanistic Perspective

There have been several attempts to develop a sociological perspective on the esoteric and occult grounded in the actor's, member's, or subject's reality. Nelson (1975), for example, advocates a "sociology of the psychic." He adopts the symbolic realist position
suggested by Beilah (1970) for the purpose of proposing a model in which psychic experiences are viewed as natural to the human condition. Nelson explicitly opposes the inclination of "rationalists" and "positivists" to simply dismiss these phenomena as illusory. Although interesting, Nelson's model is limited to the "psychic." It is therefore difficult to employ this view with respect to other manifestations of the esoteric or occult.

Greeley (1975) has advocated a theoretical posture similar to Nelson's. Greeley argues that "extraordinary" experience should be taken seriously as a worthy topic of sociological inquiry. He observes that whether or not extraordinary experience is real (in the positivistic sense), people believe and act as if it is real. Unlike Nelson, however, Greeley suggests that intense "psychic" or "mystical" experiences are related to a human need for some ultimate belief, a system which will provide meaning in life in the face of finitude and mortality. Elsewhere Greeley (1974) has argued that certain aspects of the occult are a "neo-sacral" movement running counter to the predicted secularization of Western life. The occult also is held to exemplify the flexibility of human conceptions of the supernatural and the need for ultimate definitions of reality. While this idea is interesting, like most supposed human needs, it is difficult, if not impossible, to actually demonstrate whether or not any such need is essential to human nature. Greeley's tendency to equate occultism with the sacred also is questionable. This ignores very important sociohistorical differences between traditional religion and the occult. It is true, however, that most forms of occultism are related in some
manner to the supernatural or cosmos.

Tiryakian's (1974:257-280) preliminary formulation of "the sociology of esoteric culture," though similar to the positions of Nelson and Greeley, stands alone in providing a general, "phenomenologically informed" conception of the esoteric and occult. Tiryakian (1974:1-12) argues that these phenomena represent bodies of knowledge and practice constituting a covert, underground tradition in the movement and establishment of Western culture. "Culture," in Tiryakian's conception, refers to acquired knowledge people use to meaningfully interpret experience, generate conduct, and provide for the ongoing legitimacy of their existence (see Goodenough, 1957; Kroeber and Parsons, 1958; Spradley, 1972). Conceived in this sense, culture constitutes a cognitive map, a mental structure, quite similar to Berger and Luckman's (1966) conception of "knowledge."

Every cultural whole, Tiryakian (1974:264) observes, involves (a) a set of beliefs and doctrines providing a cognitive and moral orientation to life, (b) a set of practices designed toward empirical actions, and (c) a social organization within which action is patterned and structured. In esoteric culture each of these components are manifest in particular ways. Against the idea that culture constitutes a thoroughly integrated and unified cognitive and evaluative paradigm for thought and action (as implied at least by Parsons), Tiryakian (1974:264) suggests that there are multiple cultural paradigms or realities. "Esoteric culture" is essentially distinguished by its opposition with "exoteric culture": "The cultural paradigm which is manifest in public institutions, a set of cognitive and
evaluative orientations publicly recognized and legitimated in a net-
work of social institutions" (Tiryakian, 1974:264). Whereas esoteric
thinking has entered the mainstream of Western culture from time to
time, on the whole these beliefs and practices have been excluded from
the dominant cultural traditions. Esoteric claims to knowledge have
been treated as "heresy" by religious, scientific, and political au-
thorities.

Esoteric knowledge, according to Tiryakian (1974:264), may be de-
scribed in terms of a constellation of "religiophilosophic beliefs," a
comprehensive cognitive mapping of nature and the cosmos, the epistemo-
logical and ontological reflections of which constitute a stock of
knowledge defining ultimate conceptions of reality. Esoteric knowl-
edge is not external, objective, or detached. Rather it may be de-
scribed as subjective, internal, and participatory. In this sense it
is "irrational," based on feeling, and doing, and not immediately avail-
able to sensory experience or logical reason. In the final analysis
esoteric claims to knowledge rest on mystical and intuitive insights
into the nature of reality. Furthermore, the meanings of esoteric
knowledge require specialized training and study. Esoteric culture
thereby represents an alternative cultural paradigm, a view of reality
different from and not uncommonly opposed to the commonsense, religious,
and scientific bodies of knowledge serving as the dominant cultural
paradigm for thinking, feeling, and doing in Western societies.

Esoteric knowledge and belief, Tiryakian (1974) notices, provide
the underlying foundation for certain practices and the use of this
knowledge. The use of esoteric knowledge, he (1974:264) points out,
involves:

... intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which (a) draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos ... and (b) which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention.

The importance of the use of esoteric knowledge can not be overemphasized. Indeed, knowledge as power is at the very essence of esoteric culture.

Less pertinent is Tiryakian's (1974:266-268) discussion of secret societies. At one time, of course, secret societies were a key feature of esoteric culture. In recent years, however, the apparent revival of public interest has been accompanied by the opening up of previously secret and obscure doctrines. Whereas secrecy, in the sense of insiderish knowledge, is an important aspect of social life in general, it is not at all clear that contemporary esotericism or occultism are organized in terms of secret or semi-secret societies in the classical sense.

Theoretical-Methodological Issues

Tiryakian's preliminary formulation of the "sociology of esoteric culture" provides a thorough critique—if only implicitly—of the positivistic and functionalistic perspectives, and an alternative conceptual framework. Against the functionalistic perspective, esoteric knowledge is not grounded in any sort of deprivation. Rather it is seen within the context of socially and historically created and enacted visions of a real world. Contrary to the positivistic
perspective, the esoteric and occult are not disparaged on the basis of a priori standards of what constitutes valid knowledge. At the heart of the humanistic perspective, then, is the contention that all forms of socially defined and sanctioned knowledge represent attempts to create and enact human meaning. Whereas esoteric and occult conceptions of reality and claims to knowledge have been treated as illegitimate by religious, scientific, and political establishments, this empirical observation in no way judges the truth value of these conceptions and claims. Indeed, it provides a perspective for understanding the positivistic and functionalistic views as practical, commonsense responses by sociologists to the esoteric and occult. In other words, there is no warrant for regarding this type of theorizing as more or less valid than folk conceptions of this everyday life reality. In their failure to ground sociological theorizing in the concrete reality of the everyday life world—in the perspective of members—positivists and functionalists clearly demonstrate their thoroughly commonsensical character. This is not to say that these perspectives do not provide insights, only that they need not be taken seriously as instances of sociological—as opposed to commonsense—theorizing (see Schutz, 1973; Garfinkel, 1967).

Whereas Tiryakian's (1974) paper does provide a sociologically adequate preliminary outline of a substantive perspective on the esoteric and occult, it does not provide an empirically adequate description and analysis of esoteric beliefs, practices, activities, or the manner in which these phenomena are socially organized. Consequently, there are a number of important sociological questions left unanswered.
The most basic issue raised by Tiryakian's paper, but left unanswered, concerns the nature of multiple or alternative conceptions of reality. Since this issue is relevant to a variety of sociological problems, it is useful to briefly review related literature. The writings of the late phenomenological philosopher Alfred Schutz (1973) on "the problem of social reality" contains the classic consideration of "multiple realities." It was Schutz' (1973:230) contention that the "world of daily life" is apprehended best in terms of "... many subuniverses of reality of finite provinces of meaning upon each of which we may bestow the accent of reality." Drawing from Husserl's (1931) Ideas, he very carefully points out that: "We speak of provinces of meaning and not subuniverses because it is the meaning of our experiences and not the ontological structure of the objects which constitutes reality."

Following James, Schutz (1973:232) suggests that the worlds of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, of art, religious experience, scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, and the world of the insane all constitute finite provinces of meaning. Each of these finite provinces of meaning involves a particular cognitive style and may receive a specific accent of reality. Among all these finite provinces of meaning, Schutz (1973:232) argues, the world of everyday life, of working, of practical interests in problems at hand stand out as an ultimate or paramount reality. The particular cognitive style of the working world, according to Schutz (1973:230) involves:

1) a specific tension of consciousness, namely wide-awakeness, originating in full attention to life;
2) a specific epoche, namely suspension of doubt;
3) a prevalent form of spontaneity, namely working
(a meaningful spontaneity based upon a project and characterized by the intention of bringing about the projected state of affairs by bodily movements gearing into the outer world);
4) a specific form of experiencing one's self (the working self as the total self);
5) a specific form of sociality (the common intersubjective world of communication and social action);
6) a specific time perspective (the standard time originating in an intersection between duree and cosmic time as the universal temporal structure of the intersubjective world).

To move from this paramount reality to other finite provinces of meaning Schutz maintains that we must experience a shock, or leap in consciousness. Falling asleep, for instance, involves a shift in attention whereby we move from the cognitive style of the paramount reality into the particular style of dreaming. Although we may bestow an accent of reality on this world of dreams, it is a different order of reality, and we always return to the reality of everyday life.

Whereas Schutz' view of multiple realities serves as the starting point for subsequent inquiries, recent writers have disagreed with specific parts of this formulation. From the perspective of a structural anthropology M. Douglas (1973:13) argues that:

There is a tendency for meaning to overflow and for distinct provinces to interpenetrate. Schutz has argued that there are separable, independent, finite provinces of meaning. But this becomes implausible when one observes the same formal rules being applied from one range of experience to another.

According to Douglas, then, within every culture there exists a level of structure providing the form of expression for meanings derived from disparate realms of experience. Douglas clearly has in mind a level of structure emanating from certain a priori categories of mind as postulated by Durkheimian social determinism. Beyond a certain linguistic
structure of experience, however, what Douglas has in mind remains rather vague and obscure.

Another re-interpretation of Schutz' considerations occurs in Mehan and Wood's (1975) presentation of the "reality of ethnomethodology." They (1975:8-33) also argue that realities are more "aswarm" or fluid than Schutz would allow. Every reality, they maintain, is characterized by five specific features: incorrigibility, reflexivity, coherence, interaction, and fragility. By "incorrigibility," they mean that every reality is valid in-and-of itself. It is therefore impossible to view one reality from the perspective of another without the viewer seeing a reflection of his/her presuppositions about how reality is structured. By "coherence" they mean that every reality is consistent within the boundaries of its own terms, it is credible in-and-of itself, it holds together. The "reflexivity" of realities refers to the ambiguous, referential nature of all realities. Our knowledge of reality provides the grounds for experiencing the world in the manner in which it is conceived; the viewer and the viewed are inseparable. Every reality, according to Mehan and Wood, also depends on "interaction." They point out that meaning is created and negotiated between individuals interacting in particular situations. Meaning depends on the situation in which it is negotiated, it is indexical (of that situation). Finally, every reality is "fragile," or easily disrupted if the carrier is removed from the cultural milieu in which this vision is accepted and socially sanctioned as real. In sum, Mehan and Wood (1975:23) contend that: "Every reality depends upon (1) ceaseless reflexive use of (2) a body of knowledge in (3) interaction."
In the statement of "existential sociology" Douglas and Johnson (1977; Douglas, 1976) have criticized all these views of multiple realities. The rationalistic, structural conceptions of reality advanced by Schutz and M. Douglas, they argue, overemphasize the rational, orderly construction of the social world. The world of everyday life is even more fragmented, particularistic, and situational than the postulate of multiple realities suggests. At the same time, they argue, reality has a thoroughly practical character. Their studies have emphasized the use of radically participant-observational field research methods as a strategy for gaining direct and immediate experiential (or existential) access to the everyday life world. In contrast with previous research, their studies have drawn attention to the highly emotional, value laden, and not uncommonly irrational character of human existence in the social world.

This study, then, focuses on the nature or constitution of multiple or alternative conceptions of reality through a concrete examination of the social world of the esoteric and occult. The specific questions to be addressed in this regard include: 1) where are the esoteric and occult located with respect to the larger social world?; and, how are these conceptions of reality related or not related to other conceptions of reality?; 2) what is the reality of the esoteric or occult from the perspective of members? (what are members' conceptions of reality, and how are these conceptions organized and structured socially?); and, 3) how are esoteric and occult conceptions of reality actually implemented or accomplished in everyday life (how, for example, is tarot divination socially accomplished in everyday life settings
and situations)?

Before describing the actual procedures whereby the data for this report were collected it is necessary to briefly mention certain methodological problems with existing sociological studies. Support for the hypotheses and explanations reviewed above has been provided on the basis of public opinion surveys, information and indicators provided by the mass media, observation, and less commonly, participant-observation. With the exception of observation and participant-observation, none of these research strategies provide data on members' conceptions of reality. Public opinion surveys, for example, are conducted on the basis of investigators' preconceptions of the nature of the esoteric and occult. Since investigators rarely possess knowledge of the members' perspective before beginning, the questions they ask serve to merely reflect their own subjective conceptions of these phenomena. Media reports and other publicly available information are even worse sources of data on the members' perspective since the collection of this information and its presentation depends on the practical problems of doing news, not apprehending what members believe and do. Other techniques, like observation and participant-observation, are better if and only if the researcher skillfully attempts to apprehend the members' perspective without preconceptions of what will be found. The researcher intent on demonstrating a particular hypothesis is likely to collect data in support of this view whether or not it reflects the insiders' reality.

How then is it possible to apprehend the members' world without merely reflecting one's preconceptions of what will be found?
Obviously there is no simple answer to this very complex question. Ultimately, the collection of valid and reliable data on the members’ perspective depends on the artfulness of doing field research, that is, on actual experience within everyday life settings and situations. In recent years a growing number of experienced field workers have attempted to present and analyze the practical problems of doing field research (see Lofland, 1971; Johnson, 1975; Speier, 1973; Douglas, 1976). Whereas these accounts are extremely useful, there is no substitute for actual experience in the field. In collecting the data presented here I have attempted to follow several basic principles with various degrees of success. First and foremost, I attempted to become a natural part of the scenes to be investigated. Second, I concentrated on recording members’ accounts—as literally as possible—of their everyday life problems. Third, I checked the validity and reliability of this information by (a) seeking confirmation of experiences, events, and the like with different members and informants, and (b) examining it in my own experience. When and wherever possible I made a serious attempt to actually experience the phenomena in question. Fourth, in presenting this report I have attempted to display and analyze my actual investigative procedures within the actual social situations and settings of which they are a part. None of these rules absolutely ensure the validity and reliability of my findings. This is not, however, a failure to properly conceive and conduct inquiry—except insofar as I made numerous "mistakes" in the execution of these principles, and even these "mistakes" commonly led to important discoveries— but an irremedial feature of the complex social world in
The Setting and Conduct of Inquiry

The setting of this study is a large urban center--located in the southwestern portion of the United States--called the "Valley of the Sun." The approximately one million inhabitants of the Valley reside in six more or less major municipalities: 1) Valley City (665,000); 2) Snowbird Haven (78,000); 3) University City (84,000); 4) Mormon City (99,000); 5) Canyon City (66,000); and 6) Wrinkle City (60,000). The remainder of the population is distributed through some eighteen agricultural, resort, ethnic, and retirement communities. As is characteristic of this region of the country, most residents are not native but people who have relocated from other parts of the United States. There is perhaps some reason to think that esoteric and occult activities are more prevalent in the Valley than other regions of the country; in part this may be due to the large proportion of elderly (and/or retired) people. These folks tend to be especially interested in life after death, and they have the leisure time and money to seek enlightenment, good health, or perhaps a glimpse of the cosmos. In addition, urban culture is relatively new to the Valley. Before the Second World War an urban way of life simply did not exist. Consequently, the long standing social ties commonly found in established eastern or midwestern neighborhoods do not exist. Yet there is no reason to think that esoteric or occult activities are in any way different here from what people believe and practice in other regions of America.
The larger project from which this report derives began in December 1975. As previously noted, information was collected through an ethnographic (or participant-observational) strategy. In the beginning, this inquiry was focused on one central objective: to observe and experience the insiders' world of meaning. During the preliminary period of research (from 1975 to the Winter of 1976), I searched out practitioners, observing and participating in their activities until I gradually became familiar with this initially strange and confusing urban scene. In the course of this investigation I uncovered a diffuse constellation of esoteric and occult activities, including many relatively distinctive subworlds, and especially an "esoteric community." This phase of the project also was marked by my "discovery" of the tarot: an elaborate body of occult knowledge symbolically represented in a special pack of seventy-eight pictorial cards.

The second phase of the project (from 1976 to the Summer of 1977) consisted of working through a personal commitment to learning the arcane (secret) wisdom of the tarot. During this period of research I continued with an investigation of the "esoteric community" (largely as a "seeker"), with special emphasis on tarot card readers. Through my use of the tarot I eventually became integrated into the "esoteric community." The final phase of investigation (from the Fall of 1977 to the Fall of 1978) was highlighted by my divinatory use of the tarot as a more or less fully participating member of the "esoteric community."

This ethnographic research strategy produced many sources of data. I collected published and unpublished books, magazines,
newsletters, advertisements, and other printed materials. My field observations and subjective experiences were recorded in the form of field notes and preliminary drafts of the present document. Participant-observational involvement with the esoteric and occult was supplemented by formal interviews with all of the tarot card readers in the "esoteric community" who were willing and able to participate, and other individuals who use the tarot for divination. All of these conversations were tape recorded, and selected portions were translated to illustrate the text. Finally, information was collected on over one hundred groups in the Valley whose activities pertain to the esoteric and/or the occult.

In spite of my commitment to empathetically appreciate modern esotericism and occultism, to become the phenomenon of interest, I did not undergo a radical conversion experience. Through my use of the tarot and immersion in esoteric affairs I came to understand these phenomena in ways not unlike members. Yet, my commitment to sociological research as a primary activity precluded a total and unreserved commitment to esotericism and occultism. Were it otherwise the present report never would have been written.

It must be emphasized that this investigation of the esoteric and occult was conducted as an exploratory study. There were no preconceived hypotheses to be verified. In the beginning I had no special knowledge of the esoteric and occult (beyond popular cultural stereotypes); in fact, I had only the vaguest notion as to what exactly commonly used labels like "occult," "esoteric," "mystical," "magical," "metaphysical," "psychic," and the like referred. I more or less
happened onto the esoteric scene in the Valley and thereby uncovered the "esoteric community." My focus on the tarot also was a chance discovery. Put simply, the findings of this study emerged in retrospect, that is, in the process of organizing, analyzing, presenting, and accounting for findings.
NOTES

1 My focus on this problem and related issues is indebted to the writings of Peter L. Berger, and his associates (see Berger, 1961; 1967; 1974; Berger and Luckmann, 1963; 1966; Berger and Kellner, 1975).

2 There is a growing body of literature that might be included under the general label "existential sociology." Specific studies and people include: Johnson (1975; 1978); Johnson and Altheide (1978); Altheide (1976); Douglas (1976); Douglas and Rasmussen (1977); Fontana (1977); Kotarba (1975); Warren (1974); and Lyman and Scott (1970) among others.

3 Scholars from a variety of disciplines have investigated the esoteric and occult, largely in response to the so-called "occult revival." Psychiatrists have suggested that the occult contains archetypical symbols involving a process of self-realization linked to the development of personality (see Jung, 1968). Philosophers have pondered the significance of occultism and occult-like beliefs for dealing with problems of the contemporary human condition (Needleman, 1970; 1975). Psychological interest in the esoteric and occult is related to the emergence of spiritualism in Great Britain during the late eighteenth century and its subsequent revival after both World Wars. Early psychological and quasi-psychological interest in extrasensory perception, ghosts, spirits, and communication with the dead was directed toward the exposure of fraud, and providing "scientific" support for the claims of psychics. Psychic (or psychical) research led to the emergence of parapsychology in the United States. Within the positivistic climate of American social and behavioral science, psychological interest in these phenomena is divided into polar camps: researchers supporting versus those opposing the claims of psychics and the existence of "psi" phenomena (see Tecther, 1972).

Within sociocultural anthropology there is a long-standing interest in the religious and magical practices of non-industrial peoples (see, for example, E. B. Tylor, 1871; Frazer, 1900; Malinowski, 1948). But the pervasive social evolutionary climate of early anthropology precluded serious scholarly interest in the magical practices of urban-industrial peoples. Later thinking descended from Durkheim (1915) and Mauss (1915) to contemporaries, such as M. Douglas (1970) and Levi-Strauss (1963) involve a general theoretical perspective on the structure of human thought. These studies are relevant to contemporary sociological interest in the problem of "multiple realities," although they are subject to criticism due to a rationalistic bias.

The historical literature on the esoteric and occult in Western culture is useful for understanding the antecedents of contemporary
beliefs. Early historical studies provide useful information about occult traditions (see Thorndike, 1905; 1923-1958; Tavenner, 1916; Butterfield, 1948). More recent studies of science, religion, and magic (and their interconnections) in Western thought are especially useful for understanding the historical location of contemporary beliefs (see Kuhn, 1962; Yates, 1964; Russel, 1972; Kearney, 1971).

Many other "scientific" and "sociological" studies share Truzzi's positivistic perspective on the esoteric and occult. I have used Truzzi's discussion to illustrate this position for several reasons. One, it is an insightful and well-informed discussion, even though I disagree with his approach and interpretation. Two, it is a concrete case, not a "straw man."

What if the tables were turned for a moment? From a mystical or esoteric viewpoint it is conceivable that people attracted to social scientific beliefs come to this way of thinking and seeing because they are or have been relatively deprived of the richness of religious or extraordinary experience. In this sense, the social scientific community (or movement) offers a socially supportive environment for people who lack vision and experience of the world beyond the severely limited confines of logical reason and sensory experience. Social scientists may not be economically or socially deprived (although even this may be questionable today), but what could be more depriving, if not depraving, than to live in a world bereft of the extraordinary, mysterious, awesome, or enchanting? What is more, this deprivation is apparently so severe that social scientists somehow feel compelled to account for people who do experience an enchanted world by arguing that they are deprived. From this standpoint, then, the deprivation hypotheses appear to be nothing more or less than an ideological justification for a particular social position of power and privilege.

Douglas, in particular, has engaged, also, in a lengthy polemic with Mehan and Wood's basic conception of the nature of social reality (see 1976). In large measure this argument concerns the possibility of doing social science, which Douglas seems to believe Mehan and Wood's more radical version of ethnomethodology denies. Although I understand some of the "reasons" behind this disagreement, I also find considerable similarity in their respective positions. In the long run it seems to me that these differences hinge on outlining a social epistemology consistent with both these highly relativistic and situational conceptions of the nature of social reality.

Any resemblance between real and non-real people, places, cults, cities, and the rest and the names assigned to these phenomena is accidental. All of the people who participated in this project, unless otherwise stated, were told that this information was confidential. Under no circumstances will this promise be broken.

The possible exception to this may be Mexican-Americans, Amerindians, or other ethnic practitioners. But, similar phenomena are characteristic in form at least, of other regions of the country, although the specific content may vary.

This research began in a large midwestern city. I moved to the Valley in August of 1976. Some of my early research was conducted in this city, but the largest portion of these data was collected in the Valley. It must also be noted that almost from the beginning the larger project upon which this study is based was a joint effort. From the beginning of the study in the Valley, Lin—my wife—worked along with me in collecting the data. It was Lin who originally became interested in the tarot and learned to read the cards for divinatory purposes. I observed her activity with interest, but originally felt that as a topic of investigation the tarot was ill suited for detailed sociological analysis. Part of this initial evaluation derived from a conventional expectation that an ethnographic study would focus on a "group" of people. Another portion concerned my reservations about making the profound commitment in time, energy, and interest necessary to learn the arcane wisdom of the tarot and its divinatory practice. Several months of observing Lin's activity and readings of the tarot convinced me, however that (1) a great deal of occult activity in America today does not occur within cults or other primary groups—in this way knowledge of the tarot and its use is quite representative of occult activity in general—and (2) a personal commitment to learning the wisdom of the tarot would provide a great deal of insight into the insiders' world of meaning, insight that might be overlooked without such involvement.

Lin also collected the bulk of the formal interviews with tarot card readers; selected and transcribed much of the illustrative material; and otherwise participated fully in the project. By the time we were into reading the cards "professionally" it was impossible to distinguish between private and public life, her ideas and mine, and in many cases occultism from sociology. For a considerable period of 1977 and 1978 the tarot became an all encompassing way of life for both of us. Time and writing eventually enabled me to place much of this experience in perspective, but the lived experience involved an almost total commitment. It also should be noted that although the analysis of our experiences was a mutual endeavor, I am the one who wrote the present report and take full responsibility for it.

During the time of this project, approximately 50 "professional" tarot card readers in the esoteric community were identified. By "professional" I mean people who accepted money in exchange for this service. At some time or another most of these people were contacted and interviewed at least informally. Formal interviews were conducted with 20 tarot card readers. Part of the formal interview schedule was also completed by three others. Since the reporting of these findings is not based on sampling and/or probability logic the actual number of people is largely irrelevant. What is important is that the intensive information which was collected is valid and reliable. In field research the criteria for judging the validity and reliability of data
revolve around the issue of having established trusting relations with informants and other participants in the research. I have concentrated on reporting information of which I am reasonably certain, unless otherwise indicated. I do not think that any amount of conceptualization will resolve the problems inherent in collecting trustworthy data. Field research, like most human activities, is an artful process and unless we are willing to risk a total distortion of our humanity this situation must be faced head on.

The interview schedule used in collecting formal data from tarot card readers is contained in the Appendix. This schedule served as a very loose guide to extensive and intensive discussions. All of the formal interviews were recorded on audiotape and many of these run more than four hours. The data collected informally were recorded in notes, rough drafts, and other written documents produced during the course of the investigation. In important ways data collected as a matter of practical accomplishment of tarot card reading were more important for providing a comprehensive picture and feeling of the scene than the formal information.

The recording form for this information is contained in the Appendix. This form was later modified to collect information about the formal-legal status of these groups, although this information is not systematically presented here. Informants were also used extensively in developing a sense of the structure and organization of the esoteric community.

The practical relevancies of doing the occult and sociology are radically different. The occult is generally substantively and epistemologically irrelevant sociologically, and the reverse. Were I committed to doing the occult the production of a sociology of the occult would be irrelevant. During this project my commitment to doing sociology actually intensified. This became especially problematic in doing activities like tarot divination. I deal with this problem under the label of "authenticity" in the chapter on reading the tarot.
CHAPTER II

THE ESOTERIC SCENE IN AMERICA TODAY

In recent years the esoteric and occult have become increasingly visible features of Western culture. The perception of a revival or explosion has been sustained on the basis of a number of indicators. Greeley (1975) reports on the basis of a national sample of Americans that between 24 and 59 percent of the population claim to have had "psychic" experiences ranging from deja vu to clairvoyance, 35 percent claim to have had "mystical" experiences, and 27 percent claim some feeling of contact with the dead. On the basis of another recent national survey, Gallup (1978) maintains that 57 percent of the people aware of UFO's believe in their existence; 54 percent believe in angels; 51 percent believe in ESP; 39 percent believe in devils; 29 percent believe in astrology; 11 percent believe in ghosts; and 10 percent believe in witches. These researchers maintain that their findings support the conclusion that beliefs of this sort are common among the well educated and religious.

Fischler (1974)—on the basis of a French national sample—reports that 30 percent of the population believes in astrology, and 12.5 percent have consulted at least one fortune-teller, seer, or someone who predicts the future. In still another recent survey, Nelson (1975) reports that 10 percent of the population of English towns claim some experience of "psychic" phenomena. Furthermore, Gallup (1978) claims
that 27 percent of his British sample believe in flying saucers, 20 percent believe in ghosts, and 7 percent claim to have seen a ghost!

It also has been reported that five million Americans plan their lives according to astrological predictions; about 1,200 of some 1,750 daily newspapers in America publish horoscope columns; the zodiac business is a $200-million-a-year enterprise involving an estimated forty million Americans (Freeland, 1972; Heenan, 1973); and, the combined population of the so-called "new religions" (Indian and Eastern religions, native cults, and "avant-garde" Christianity) was about 2.5 million Americans in 1970 (Rowley, 1970). Still other commonly cited indicators of an esoteric or occult revival in America today include: popular books, magazines, television programs, movies, and songs on mysterious creatures from outer space, lost continents, astrology, divination, magic, Eastern religions, psychic healing, hypnotic regression, spirit communication, demonology, witchcraft, psychic powers, and a host of related topics too diverse to list in detail; college courses on meditation, yoga, Eastern religions and thought, psychic phenomena, and the occult arts and sciences; and, paraphernalia ranging from toys, games, oils, and cards to posters, jewelry, incense, and even bank checks (see Marty, 1970; Staude, 1970; Shepherd, 1972; Truzzi, 1972a; 1972b; 1974; 1975; Heenan, 1973; Quarantelli and Wenger, 1973; Tiryakian, 1974; Stupple, 1975). Finally, in some regions of the country it is now possible to telephone for a daily or weekly astrological reading. In short, there appears to be an esoteric or occult revival of rather massive proportions in the Western world today.
Whereas there is little doubt about the appearance of massive public interest in the esoteric and occult, the exact nature of this phenomenon remains problematic. The indicators cited above provide no basis for distinguishing among activities, different levels of public interest, participation, or commitment; nor do they provide sufficient information to apprehend the manner in which these phenomena are socially structured and organized within some larger sociocultural context. Yet careful sociological distinctions of this sort are necessary for an adequate understanding of this modern revival of the esoteric and occult.

This chapter describes and analyzes the esoteric and occult with respect to the larger context of American society. My description and analysis is based on the notion of a "social scene" (see Irwin, 1977). With related sociological concepts, such as "social world" or "subculture," the idea of social scenes shares in common an emphasis on the symbolic or cultural dimensions of experience and existence. Actually, the notion of scenes derives originally from folk usage. It is useful here precisely because the notion derives from and is related to members' experience of the world. In this sense it also is consistent with my emphasis on an existential sociology.

The idea of a "social scene" is used with reference to some diffuse constellation of seemingly related phenomena organized around a central theme or activity. Running, boating, fishing, dancing, doing drugs, painting, playing or enjoying music, getting religion, doing science, and even working may be described and analyzed as social scenes. A social scene involves beliefs, practices, activities, and
some means whereby the experiences, beliefs, practices, and activities of members are structured and organized socially. Scenes draw on culturally available knowledge and information, and they emerge and become more or less publicly visible as a consequence of particular sociohistorical conditions. Viewed generally, scenes are a socially meaningful response to existence in the everyday life world. Some scenes, such as doing law, medicine, or sociology, modify or supplement socially established conceptions of reality. Other scenes, such as doing drugs, crime, homosexuality, protesting, and the esoteric or occult, more radically question officially established wisdoms. In this sense, scenes provide for social identity and a collective basis for meaningfully interpreting, negotiating, and enacting a particular vision of reality within the context of the problems of everyday life existence.

Irwin (1977:22-37), more specifically, identifies several distinctive features of social scenes. Scenes are expressive, public, and oriented to action. Scenes are expressive in that they are oriented toward immediate gratification and enjoyment. These activities are more or less open to a general public. And scenes are oriented toward doing things. With respect to the dimension of action, scenes provide (a) a basis for collective involvement and participation, (b) an opportunity for making personal contacts and developing intimate relations, (c) a source of physical, sensual, and/or intellectual stimulation, and (d) an element of physical or reputational risk. Understood in this sense, scenes have arisen within a sociohistorical context in which there is increased leisure time and money among the
general American public, and a lack of an over-riding sense of na­
tional or societal purpose. Furthermore, Irwin correctly observes that social scenes provide a sort of solution to anonymity or the modular nature of urban life.

In attempting to provide a general theoretical framework for the analysis of social scenes Irwin outlines a "natural history" of "grand scenes." What he had in mind is certain basic processes or stages through which highly visible and popular social scenes move. The first stage is a period of formation characterized by the development of a core of participants around a central activity, like surfing, skiing, or dancing. During the second phase this basic scene is expanded to include more and more participants. Expansion is facilitated by the mass media and increased visibility of the activity. A third stage involves the corruption of the scene by mass involvement, and especially its re-interpretation by new members. The final stage, called stagnation, is characterized by loss of spontaneous excitement and a taken for granted orientation to the scene. Whereas I am unable to find any compelling reasons for this natural history of a scene, the first two stages can be applied rather successfully to the esoteric and occult.3

Esotericism in Western Culture

Since the history of the esoteric and occult rarely has been recognized officially, it is useful as a preface to analyzing this contemporary scene to briefly outline these beliefs and practices in Western culture. The word "esoteric," according to the Oxford English...
Dictionary, derives from Greek. It first occurs in Lucian (c. 160 A.D.) who attributed to Aristotle a classification of his works into "esoteric" and "exoteric." The label was used by later writers with reference to secret doctrines taught by Pythagoras to a few select disciples. It thereby came to refer to "philosophical doctrines, treatises, modes of speech, etc.," communicated by a master to a few chosen students.

Modern use of "esoteric" more directly derives from the Renaissance Humanists' view of the Ancients as the possessors of the most true, pure, and sacred knowledge of all humanity. This knowledge was believed to be contained in the form of secret and mysterious writings (see Yates, 1964). To move from the "exoteric" to the "esoteric" was to be transformed by the progression from ignorance, vulgarity, and the profane to enlightenment, purity, and the sacred.

It is important to note that this conception of esoteric knowledge predates the modern distinction between sacred (theology and religion) and secular (philosophy and science) knowledge and truth. In certain ways the revitalization of esoteric knowledge denies this modern distinction in favor of the unity of true and sacred knowledge. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that within the sociohistorical contexts in which the esoteric arose, knowledge by definition was restricted to the few. Consequently, all knowledge—not just esoteric knowledge—was a source of personal and social power.

Whereas the "esoteric" and "occult" commonly are employed interchangeably, there are important differences between these terms and the phenomena to which they refer. With respect to the sociohistorical
usage and meaning of "occult," Eliade (1976:48) observes:

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "occult" was first used in 1545, meaning that which is not apprehended, or apprehensible, by mind; beyond the range of understanding or of ordinary knowledge." Almost a century later, in 1633, the word received a supplementary significance, namely, "the subject of those reputed sciences, held to involve the knowledge or use of agencies of secret and mysterious nature (as magic, alchemy, astrology, theosophy)."

Conventionally defined, then, the "occult" refers to bodies of knowledge and practice held to be secret, mysterious, hidden, or concealed from the uninitiated; outside the domain of ordinary knowledge and understanding; beyond apprehension by mind alone; the subject of reputed arts and sciences, such as alchemy, astrology, magic, theosophy, divination, and so on (see Truzzi, 1972a).

There are important differences among esoteric doctrines, but all of these phenomena more or less share in common a certain lack of socially defined and sanctioned legitimacy in Western culture. Esoteric beliefs and practices are identifiable less by substance than by sociohistorical exclusion from those conceptions of reality and claims to knowledge, such as traditional religion or science, which serve as the basis for a dominant paradigm in Western culture (see Tiryakian, 1974). It is not possible to list in detail here all of the ideas, beliefs, practices, and the like commonly mentioned with respect to the esoteric and/or occult. Yet modern day beliefs and practices derive in part from the Essenes, Gnosticism, Nestorianism, Catharism, Kabalistic mysticism, among other groups or beliefs which either broke with or were severed from the Western mainstream (see Smart, 1976). Other sources of ideas derive from Greek and Roman mythologies and
philosophies, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian religions—like Zorastrianism—and Eastern religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and the like. In Europe after the Norman Conquest, these ideas were intermingled with Celtic, Norse, and Arthurian elements, especially the stories of the Holy Grail—among other folk beliefs.

Before the foundation and establishment of more or less delimited intellectual traditions in Western culture there were a host of folk and sometimes pagan beliefs and practices that might be labeled "esoteric." Medieval Europe, for instance, was ripe with folk remedies for social and physical ills. Many of these beliefs and practices were marginal, if not heretical, from the standpoint of Catholic dogma. With the Renaissance translation of Eastern documents and Greek philosophies, however, European scholars forged ancient and folk teachings into elaborate philosophical or theological systems. It was during this period that a collection of principally Gnostic writings from about the second or third century A.D. were translated and came to form the basis of the Hermetic (occult) tradition (see Yates, 1964). It also is important to note that beliefs and practices described as "esoteric" in a contemporary context co-existed from time to time with institutionally established religion. Astrology before the seventeenth century, for instance, was periodically tolerated by the Church. Yet, the relationship between the all powerful Church and beliefs and practices perceived as "heresy" was uneasy. Although leading Church authorities, such as Augustine, St. Thomas, and other lesser known figures were sometimes used to support esoteric
and/or occult philosophies, they also were used against magic, astrology, divination, and of course, many of the ideas that would later serve as the basis for sciences like astronomy. Witchcraft, perhaps the most publicly obvious occultism, is clearly a product of heresy. "Witchcraft" no doubt existed throughout Europe in the form of folk and sometimes pagan practices; but, the "witch" phenomenon was created by the Catholic response to heretics, like Reformists, Catharists, Amalricians, and other individuals and collectivities (see Russel, 1974). In this regard the Protestant Reformation provided a socio-intellectual context in which both Catholics (with the Counter-Reformation and its Inquisition) and Protestants sought to purge beliefs and practices thought to be superstitious, magical, heretical, and so on.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, doctrines and practices like astrology, numerology, palmistry, alchemy, telepathy, clairvoyance, divination, magic, demons, spirits, gods, and the rest were perceived as an offense to both the Church and the newfound spirit of scientific rationality—the Enlightenment. In this regard Fischler (1974:284) comments: "Stripped of legitimacy, astrology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (along with alchemy, palmistry, clairvoyance, and telepathy) encountered both legal and socio-cultural repression." In short, then, by the Enlightenment period what came to be known as esotericism, especially the occult arts and sciences, was forged into an underground current of Western culture through the systematic exclusion of adherents and practitioners from both religious and scientific claims to knowledge.
It must be noted also that although the interrelationship between the esoteric and occult and the emergent sciences of the natural world are only now being uncovered, it has been assumed—incorrectly—that the occult disciplines represent the origins and primitive beginnings of science. Alchemy, for example, has been regarded as the predecessor of modern chemistry. Some of the men who were to become leaders of science also practiced the occult arts and sciences (see Kearney, 1971). Nevertheless, as Eglin (1974:331) correctly observes: "When chemical phenomena ceased to be regarded alchemically, it was because a new intellectual/scientific ethos had appeared and banished its predecessor, not that, for example, Newton and Boyle had succeeded in their attempts to transform Alchemy into chemistry." This view of the occult as protoscientific is the product of scientists' attempts to present an account of some cumulative evolutionary development of science. Such a history is largely a scientific fantasy, far removed from actual happenings (see Kuhn, 1970).

From the eighteenth century to the present, matters excluded from the domains of socially legitimate religion and science have been regarded as esoteric and occult. During this period ancient beliefs and practices were preserved in secret and semi-secret societies and cults. From time to time they have re-emerged and been revitalized, as in France during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Britain during the early twentieth century. During these revivals new sources of esoteric thought were added, and old traditions combined and synthesized into new systems. It is from these largely underground traditions and periodic revivals that modern-day beliefs and practices
have reappeared on the contemporary scene.

Formation and Expansion of the Esoteric Scene

Previous reports on the esoteric and occult in America today commonly have assumed—incorrectly—that massive public interest developed from a few ancient ideas almost overnight. This view ignores the rather lengthy history of these beliefs and practices in Western culture, and the fact that there always have been a few people actively involved in particular practices or small cultic groups. Since esoteric and occult beliefs and practices have been present in this country the proper sociological question is how did the appearance of a national scene come about?

In the first place it is necessary to point out that these beliefs and practices have been revived within a general sociocultural climate of opinion conducive to at least general public interest if not acceptance. As previously noted, the period following the Second World War witnessed increased leisure time and economic prosperity for the general public. Prior to this time Americans were bound more tightly to the demands of work and committed more completely to traditional religion. Though necessary, increased leisure time and money were not sufficient to produce an occult revival. For a variety of complex reasons—increased geographical mobility, remarkable advances in the application of scientific knowledge to technological innovations, the growing feeling of an international world, and so on—Americans after World War Two began expressing less interest in traditional religion. During the late 1950's and early 1960's,
Americans' commitment to science and its technological products was increasingly questioned. Whereas scientific technology had improved greatly the material conditions of modem life, there was a general perception of failure by the scientific-political-economic-military establishment to solve basic human problems. Within the context of economic prosperity, this attention to the quality of human existence was reflected in the civil rights movement and the emergence of a youth counter-culture. Perhaps needless to say, the unpopular war in southeast Asia provided a focus throughout the 1960's for the coalition of a diverse array of dissatisfactions with the quality of American life, in the face of economic prosperity, to be expressed. During this period, Americans, especially youths, began turning away from traditional solutions (especially science) and toward non-traditional solutions of life's basic problems. It was during this period, for example, that Americans began experimenting with mind altering drugs on a large scale, Indian and Eastern religions, and the esoteric and occult, especially in the form of astrology and magic. In short, then, the period of the late 1960's provided a sociointellectual climate of opinion in which serious belief in and practice of the esoteric and occult became plausible, like never before, to growing numbers of Americans and not just the young. Furthermore, the failure of the Great Society with the advent of a Nixon administration, and more recently Watergate, merely increased general dissatisfaction with traditional culture. Finally, recent economic problems--inflation, depression, unemployment--have resulted in a preoccupation with merely sustaining the economic affluence of
the 1960's, and a lack of attention to the quality of life and human relations.

Whereas the events of the last several decades produced a climate of opinion in which esoteric and occult beliefs and practice have been favorably received by large segments of the population, this alone is insufficient to account for the emergence and formation of a national scene. The scene itself is largely a product of massive public attention to it. During the late 1960's and early 1970's the mass media--TV, movies, radio, newspapers, newsmagazines, books--and other channels of public communication have played a crucial role in disseminating information and, indeed, creating the images people--even serious practitioners--hold about the esoteric and occult. The uncritical use of public sources of information by social scientists, however, has mistaken the formation and expansion of a popular cultural scene for actual belief and practice. While the importance of public information can not be underestimated, it must be appreciated in sociological perspective. In fact, the people who produce public imagery are constrained by the practical demands of the job--reporting, writing, advertising, investigating, entertaining, and so on--to present events in ways that commonly distort actual happenings (see Altheide, 1976; Altheide and Johnson, 1979). Through the mass media almost insignificant events may become the focus of national attention thereby sustaining the appearance of massive public interest. A concrete example of this is provided by Balch and Taylor's (1977a; 1977b) study of a UFO cult. During their investigation this cult received extensive national publicity. Although the size of the cult was
reported to be upwards of 1,500 members during its peak popularity, Balch and Taylor (1977b:25) maintain that "... there were probably never more than 250 members, and 200 is probably more realistic." Ironically, they observe, the cult was actually beginning to disintegrate at the very height of national publicity. Nevertheless, through the mass media (and the reports of social scientists) the esoteric and occult have become the subject of considerable national attention. Mere awareness of this phenomenon has stimulated public interest further, attracting new recruits, and expanding these phenomena into a national scene involving growing numbers of participants. Yet adequate sociological understanding of this scene requires careful distinctions among different levels of public interest, commitment, and involvement.

The Esoteric Scene in the Valley

The esoteric scene in the Valley of the Sun is a multidimensional phenomenon involving different beliefs, practices, and collectivities. The basic bodies of knowledge included in this scene are: 1) the occult (alchemy, astrology, numerology, palmistry, magic, divination, the tarot, and other teachings and techniques associated with the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition); 2) psychic phenomena and research (psychic, psychical, or parapsychological research, and phenomena referred to as "psi," clairvoyance, telepathy, and the like); 3) Indian and Eastern religions and practices (Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and things like meditation and yoga); 4) Spiritualism; 5) New Age Christianity; 6) folk and esoteric medical practices; 7) the beliefs and practices of ethnic groups, like Mexican-Americans and Amerindians; and 8) a host
of diffuse beliefs and practices, such as UFOology, Theosophy, the Rosicrucians, Anthrosophy, and so on.

The general parameters of this multidimensional scene are depicted in Figure 1. The area beyond the outer-most circle designated by the number "1" stands for the larger "exoteric" society. Located within the exoteric society are movies, television programs, books, media reports, and social scientific literature pertinent to the esoteric and occult. While these phenomena are important for the perception and perpetuation of this scene, they are only marginal to the action of insiders. This activity in the larger society related to the esoteric and occult is largely a form of popular entertainment—a part of mass culture.

The outer-most circle of Figure 1 (labeled "2") depicts a level of casual though sincere interest in esotericism. On the fringes of insiders' involvements in the esoteric and occult are many members of the exoteric society who are casually interested in esotericism: they read and seriously take the advice of horoscope columns, read and study esoteric literature, and may occasionally seek out someone to provide them with a "psychic reading." Although the people on this fringe are not intensively involved in esoteric and occult activity, the interface between exoteric and esoteric worlds of meaning is important for the image of the larger scene. Since very few people are socialized into the esoteric or occult as children, the exoteric culture provides what people know about these matters. Even people who eventually move deeply into the esoteric scene carry with them typifications and images created and sustained in the exoteric society.
Figure 1.—The Esoteric Scene in the Valley of the Sun
Key to Figure 1.—The Esoteric Scene in the Valley of the Sun

1. Exoteric Society
   a. the mass media
   b. social scientific literature
   c. popular entertainment (movies, TV, etc.)

2. Interface between Esoteric Scene and Exoteric Society
   d. clients-students
   e. seekers

3. Ethnic Practitioners

4. Secret Societies

5. Gypsies

6. Black Spiritualists

7. New Age Christians

8. Eastern Groups

9. National Businesses

10. Study Groups/Cults

11. Business Enterprises

12. White Spiritualists

13. Professional Practitioners
Furthermore, it is within the exoteric context that people begin to share ideas and try out alternative conceptions of reality.

The core of the esoteric scene is composed of an extremely diverse array of beliefs, practices, and activities. Members derive from virtually every conceivable social background and location. Their interest in esoteric and occult doctrines and practices ranges from pure entertainment to absolute dedication. Although spheres of activity may be identified in terms of particular beliefs and/or practices, in daily life these beliefs and practices are intermingled and interrelated by adherents in complex ways. Beyond esoteric beliefs and practices these people share little in common as a totality. Identifiable beliefs, practices, and activities associated with particular collections of practitioners or collectivities are represented by numbers enclosed by circles.

The term "gypsies" is used to describe "fortune-tellers" who are thought to use practices, like card reading, in an insincere fashion to earn a living. Ethnic practitioners, like Mexican-Americans, are included here to indicate that they are perceived to be part of this larger esoteric scene. This scene also includes secret and semi-secret societies, but they are no longer a central feature of esoteric activity. Members of secret cults may participate in public activities, but these groups by definition are closed and almost invisible to everyone except members and a few people intensively involved in the esoteric scene. Gypsies, ethnic practitioners, and secret societies all provide the bases for different and relatively autonomous subworlds of meaning and action.
A number of other beliefs, practices, and activities also serve as the basis for relatively distinctive subworlds included in this larger scene. Included here are six New Age Christian congregations, fourteen Eastern thought and religious groups, and twenty or more Black Spiritualist churches. Also, during the last several years, national businesses selling esoteric beliefs and practices have appeared periodically as part of the esoteric scene in the Valley. Eastern groups tend to be exclusive entities unto themselves, and even among Eastern groups there is relatively little interaction between group members. New Age Christians are organized on the basis of separate churches. Except for esoteric interpretations of Christian literature and ritual these groups very much resemble traditional Christian denominations and sects. Unlike Eastern groups, the New Age Churches are linked by membership in a local New Thought Alliance composed of ministerial representatives from the individual congregations. In addition, most of the Churches belong to national and/or international alliances. Beyond this local organization of ministers, however, there is little interaction between congregations. Although there are at least twenty Black (as opposed to White) Spiritualist churches in the Valley, only two of these are essentially part of the esoteric scene. National organizations marketing esoteric beliefs and practices are included as part of the scene since members of local groups occasionally participate in these activities, and since they are highly visible from the outside. The sponsors of national campaigns commonly manifest an awareness of the extent and foci of esoteric activity in this region of the country. Although these
activities are part of the scene, they are not a central part of the action.

The hard core of the esoteric scene in the Valley is composed of a diverse collection of cults, individuals, and the "esoteric community." This "cultic milieu" includes people who move from group to group in search of "... enlightenment, friends, good health, or any number of equally elusive goals" (Balch and Taylor, 1977a:31); private practitioners who occasionally meet with groups, perform demonstrations, or do readings; small cultic study groups; business enterprises (clinics, book and supply stores, publishers, educational and therapeutic institutes); quasi-religious (spiritual) groups; and, various associations of psychic practitioners, astrologers, researchers, and the like. Within this cultic milieu groups and individuals are loosely connected and interrelated. Interaction among and between groups is most likely to occur in terms of segments sharing in common beliefs, practices, values, motives, and the like. For most of these people esotericism is either a full-time activity or an abiding preoccupation. In either case it is a way of life.
1 Unlike related sociological notions, the idea of social scenes derives from the use of members. Because it is originally a folk concept, scenes capture essential aspects of the contemporary social world. The notion of subculture, for example, is really only useful for describing relatively unified subworlds of meaning. The idea of social worlds is also connected to more or less established groups of practitioners. In contrast, the idea of scenes makes explicit recognition of the multidimensional character of subworlds of meaning and action, and the multiplicity of urban scenes.

2 Irwin tends to emphasize the leisure dimension of urban scenes. This emphasis on leisure activities overlooks the fact that Americans commonly are able to choose the kind of activities they engage in for the purpose of making money. Insofar as middle and upper class persons are able to choose among a range of possible occupations, work also may be analyzed as a scene.

3 Irwin's notion of a natural history of urban scenes is apparently drawn from the collective behavior/social movements literature in sociology. I find this notion rather distasteful since it ultimately requires the assumption—I am unwilling to make—that natural laws of society may be uncovered as moving forces. I do not disagree that many scenes may be fruitfully described and analyzed in terms of this sequence. I must question, however, whether this structure is actually present, or if, more likely, we are able to organize events into this sequence. What about, for example, scenes that never really become scenes? Furthermore, do scenes really stagnate, or do they become more thoroughly integrated into the larger social fabric? Finally, what are the temporary parameters for this kind of analysis? If the esoteric and occult are described from the last two thousand years onward, then this natural history is nonsense.

4 There are a number of unusual and rarely recognized periods during the Renaissance in which Hermeticism emerged as a dominant interpretation of Catholicism. There also are a number of complex reasons why Hermetic interpretations fell from favor, but the Protestant Reformation provided a tension producing a Catholic reaction that was to sever the Church's relationship with occultism forever.

5 Tatro (1974) provides an excellent description of what members of the esoteric community call "gypsies."
For discussions of Mexican-American "curandero/a" see Macklin (1974).

There is a growing body of literature on Eastern groups (see Judah, 1974; Damrell, 1977).

New Thought and New Age, as used by these groups refer to esoteric interpretations of Christianity and a Christian interpretation of psychic phenomena (see Jackson, 1975).

Local publications--newsmagazines, flyers, bulletins, and the like--are sometimes used to advertise and promote these events. Furthermore, leaders or workers from these organizations occasionally participate in local events, such as Psychic Faires. Finally, members of local cults occasionally become intensively involved with national training programs.

Some of the cults included here may be identified by labels such as Spiritualism, Scientology, Satanism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and the like, but most groups lack this kind of national recognition.
CHAPTER III

BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE ESOTERIC COMMUNITY

In the Beginning

My interest in what I was calling "extraordinary phenomena" was restimulated by Lin—a woman who became a co-worker in the project and the person I later married. During the Summer of 1975 Lin played a tape recording for me of a "channeling session." This involved a small collection of people who met on an irregular basis to receive messages from a "spirit" (or multi-dimensional personality) through a trance medium. Through Lin I attempted to contact the informal leader of the "spirit group," a man who also chaired an academic department at the university. Although I did have an opportunity to talk with the medium (a doctoral candidate at the university) later the next summer, the session I hoped to observe never materialized.

In December of 1975 I made a commitment to begin looking into the seemingly strange and obscure world of psychic phenomena, spirit entities, mysterious forces, magical practices, and hidden wisdoms. At the time I was living in a place called "Midwestern City," a large metropolitan center in the northcentral portion of the United States, where I was attending the University. I had nearly completed the course work for a doctoral degree, and in anticipation of passing doctoral examinations that summer I was in search of a dissertation topic.
Since I was still engaged in school full-time and not yet committed to a particular dissertation topic and/or problem, the first year of inquiry went very slowly. In the beginning I had no idea about where to find individuals or collectivities involved in actual practices. An initial search of public information directories—newspapers, telephone books, magazines—revealed little useful information. I therefore proceeded to make contacts with people whom I thought might be knowledgeable. This search led to a number of interesting encounters with individuals who shared personal experiences with me, but none of these people practiced with an organized group—although several of these folks seriously devoted a substantial portion of their free time to seeking enlightenment and/or developing "psychic" powers.

Since everyone knows that sociologists study "groups" not individuals, I became intent on finding an organized group to study. Early in the Spring of 1976 I began searching more actively for a group involved in actual demonstrations of extraordinary experience. Through Lin I learned of a group of esoteric practitioners who held a weekly series of meetings called "Fireside E.S.P." A mailing of group literature revealed three different sets of activities: evening meetings, self-help (training) workshops, and a full time clinic service. It seemed exactly what I had been looking for.

During the next two months—in the midst of studying for and taking doctoral examinations—I managed to attend two evening meetings, talk with members, and collect a considerable body of literature about the group. I terminated the investigation shortly thereafter, however,
for several different reasons. First, since I was planning to move from the City, continued involvement was not possible. Second, I was disappointed that the group was not involved with anything that seemed to me, at least, particularly out of the ordinary. This included several demonstrations identified by members as "extra-sensory powers, gifts, or abilities." Only later in different situations did I come to realize that these indeed were actual demonstrations of extraordinary experience. Since they were not what I had expected, however, I was unable to see them as demonstrations of extraordinary phenomena. Still another factor leading to the decision to discontinue participation was that involvement in many of the group's activities required a considerable economic commitment. At the time I was partly unable and partly unwilling to make an investment that would have initially amounted to around one hundred dollars. Nevertheless, I did learn a great deal about the basic organization of the group. This information was summarized in a field report and filed for later reference. It was not until later, however, in an entirely different setting, that I came to recognize certain features of this group as persistent dimensions of the larger esoteric scene in America today.  

In August of 1976 I moved from the City to the Valley where I had a part-time teaching position at the University. Almost immediately I began searching the Valley for individuals and collectivities who were into what I was beginning to call esotericism and/or occultism. Following the previous strategy, since I did not know yet where else to begin, telephone books and other sources of public information were searched. I eventually learned the categories necessary to make
telephone books and other public sources of information pay off, but perhaps needless to say, this search was largely unproductive. I also began making personal contacts with Valley residents who expressed an interest in and knowledge of esotericism. This search for informants yielded several such people, including one of my students who identified herself as a "witch." Through these informants I attempted to generate some sense of esoteric activity in the Valley and identify particular groups. Although these informants were able to provide extensive information—about personal experiences and the activities of friends, associates, acquaintances, and the like—it was on the whole unreliable. Attempts to follow up leads on groups and individuals as frequently as not produced wild chases and dead ends. As this process continued I learned of the existence of esoteric and occult bookstores in the Valley.

It was the "discovery" of these specialty shops that provided the initial key to generating considerable information about the phenomena of interest. Book titles and other objects for sale, for instance, provided a basic indication of the diffuse array of topics included in this cognitive domain. In the book and supply stores I also found bulletin boards and business cards advertising meetings, gatherings, special events, and the services of esoteric and occult experts in the Valley. I began collecting this information, asking store personnel about other activities, and keeping a card index of all the people and collectivities encountered in this manner. I began to develop a sense of the nature and extent of esoteric and occult activity in the Valley. Within a relatively short period of time I
found my knowledge increased to the extent that previous informants seemed to know less than myself. Whereas I continued to consult these people, using them to verify information (and check on their own reliability as informants), it increasingly became apparent that I was able to generate more and better information on my own. Indeed, I was at a turning point in the investigation: a point of replacing previous informants with new and better ones, and becoming increasingly independent.

Discovery of the Community

The most important "discovery" in the bookstores was two slightly different directories of individuals and groups, a "spiritual" and a "psychic" directory. The "psychic" directory was especially useful since it appeared in the context of a local publication called *Psychic Magazine*. Distributed locally, this monthly publication contained: a) brief articles on topics like astrology, numerology, psychic personalities, happenings on the national and local scene, predictions about the future, and so on; b) advertisements for a wide variety of books and supplies ranging from international travel plans to places of special esoteric interest, and study groups to special healing preparations, lessons in the occult arts and sciences, and esoteric birth control devices; c) the directory to about seventy groups in the Valley—ranging from traditional religions, quasi-religious cults, and study groups to esoteric medical clinics, and an occult university; d) a list of future events and activities in the Valley; and e) a list of people offering "professional services" ranging from astrology, life, clairvoyant, psychic, and tarot readings to consciousness auditing,
dream analysis, healing, hypnosis, yoga, and the like. These directories of groups and individuals were extremely important for apprehending the esoteric and occult scene generally. Moreover, they provided easily accessible information—addresses, telephone numbers, identifying labels—by which I was able to make contacts.

Through Psychic I also learned of an up-coming "Psychic Faire." In late October of 1976 I attended the first of many Psychic Faires. It proved to be an excellent opportunity to observe a wide variety of practitioners in the Valley doing everything from metaphysical healing, astral travel, and psychic art to the reading of palms, the tarot, and tea leaves. Moreover, it was an opportunity to observe first hand and talk with actual esoteric and occult practitioners. More than anything else, this experience successfully destroyed many of the stereotypical conceptions I previously held about these people from watching movies and TV, listening to news reports of strange cults, and reading social scientific literature about socially deprived and psychically depraved members of marginal social movements.

By November of 1976 I had accumulated considerable information about collectivities in the Valley. The information previously recorded on cards was used to supplement the two directories. In this manner I was able to construct an extensive list of collectivities and individuals in the Valley involved with esotericism and occultism. These lists provided a basic frame of reference and point of departure with respect to investigating specific activities. Furthermore, in the course of assembling this information and making sense of who was involved in particular groups, what groups' activities entailed, who
the leaders were, and what the relationship was among and between
groups, I began to gain a concrete sense of what members call the
"esoteric community."

During this period of time I "discovered" the tarot. It was Lin
who originally became especially interested in the cards, obtained a
pack, and began learning the arcane wisdom. In February of 1977, how­
ever, I began to give serious consideration to following Lin's lead
and, partly by references to her experiences, made the tarot the focal
point of the study. I was hesitant, however, since to do an adequate
study of the tarot seemed to involve the almost overwhelming task of
learning its esoteric teachings and techniques for interpreting the
cards. I also was concerned about using the tarot as a focal point
since divination typically does not occur in a group setting. Vir­
tually all of the sociological studies serving as a frame of reference
to doing ethnographic research concentrated on some form of an organ­
ized group. This issue was finally resolved--though not without con­
flict--by arguing that I was confronted with a particular phenomenon of
interest; and, just because tarot activity did not conform to my ex­
pectations and tentative plan of study (to become a member of a par­
ticular cult) did not provide sufficient justification for avoiding
its investigation. In reflecting on the kinds of activities in the
Valley, I came to realize that the tarot--a particular body of occult
wisdom used for the purposes of divination, meditation, and scholarly
study--was thoroughly characteristic of the esoteric scene. The tarot,
then, became the focal point of the study.
Investigating the Community

Since the process whereby I became a tarot card reader is the topic of a later chapter it will not be discussed in detail here. It is necessary, however, to briefly mention the relevance of this commitment for my ability to collect additional information about the esoteric community. From the Winter of 1977 I began learning the arcane wisdom of the tarot. This was accomplished through study of the classic (and not so classic) literature, practice with reading the cards, and training from tarot card readers whom I also observed doing divinatory readings. Along with other activities (of an investigative nature), becoming a tarot card reader placed me in direct and intensive contact with key figures in the esoteric community. Most importantly, it provided members with a means of accounting for my presence, and an indication that I was a sincere seeker. This involvement with the tarot eventually led to my participation in Psychic Faires (reading the tarot for pay) as a more or less fully participating member of the esoteric community.

All of the research conducted up to the point of my participation in Psychic Faires occurred from the standpoint of a seeker. The "seeker" is familiar to both insiders and outsiders. To be a seeker one need only appear at esoteric gatherings, ask questions, engage in discussion, and most importantly demonstrate a serious and sincere interest in what is happening. Much like the potential convert to exoteric religion, the seeker is welcome at most esoteric events, and a variety of special activities are designed especially with the seeker in mind. Moreover, in a very real sense one never becomes a true "adept." As in the study
of any complex and elaborate body of knowledge, the more one knows, the
greater the realization of the limits of one's mastery of this knowl-
edge. Whereas certain degrees of competency and accomplishment are
evident among esoteric practitioners, very few individuals ever claim
to be more than "seekers," even if quite experienced ones. If one is
to claim adepthood, then this power must be dramatically demonstrated
or else the individual risks ridicule from other esoteric practitioners.

My playing the seeker did constitute a covert research strategy.
Yet none of the people with whom I interacted was regarded or treated
as "subjects" in any meaningful social scientific sense of this term.
I was interested in gathering information from the people with whom I
associated. Much of this information was collected in public settings
--like Psychic Faires--and all information was collected in conformity
of interactional rules established by participants. For example, I
paid for all of the tarot readings collected during this preliminary
investigation of the community. None of the people with whom I inter-
acted was manipulated beyond the sort of manipulative exchange that is
otherwise a normal feature of everyday life interaction. Indeed, many
of the fronts presented and used by members were far more deceptive
than any of the strategies I employed to penetrate these fronts. There
was never any reason to think that any possible harm might come to the
people with whom I associated as a consequence of this research. Final-
ly, I would add that unless social investigators are free to employ co-
vert research strategies at least during preliminary stages of investi-
gating relatively unfamiliar social territory, the products of such
research risk hopeless confusion between public fronts and the behind
the scenes reality of social existence. Furthermore, the admittedly ethical issues surrounding field investigations can not be resolved by bureaucratic legislation or committee work. In the interest of academic freedom and authentic existence social researchers have a moral obligation to oppose the academic and governmental bureaucrats who have elected themselves "big brother."  

With the "discovery" of the lists of groups and individuals I began making inquiries into their activities. A considerable portion of this investigation was conducted by telephone: I made an attempt to call all of the groups for which name, address, and phone number were known, and I requested a brief description of their beliefs, activities, and asked whether or not I was welcome at group functions. This information was recorded and filed along with any other information (mailings, advertisements, etc.) on the group.  

Telephone conversations are of limited value in providing in-depth information about the groups' activities, unless accompanied by previous or subsequent friendships. Yet my telephone conversations provided important information. By way of the phone I was able to determine where the group was located (if previously unknown), if the group even existed (some groups spring up and disappear almost overnight), whom the important members were, certain focal beliefs and practices, as well as other details about the group.  

Telephone conversations and interviews aside, I commonly followed up this preliminary data at Psychic Faires where I met and talked with many different people, including leaders of many of these groups. In some cases I had the opportunity to listen to formal presentations by
these people. Over the course of the field investigation I attended the activities of more than fifteen esoteric or occult groups, excluding all of the book and supply stores which I frequented regularly. This information was supplemented by second-hand reports by students, friends, and members of the esoteric community. At this point I made extensive use of key informants, most of whom were key figures in the community, such as the publisher of Psychic Magazine. The collection of relatively reliable and valid information from key informants was made possible by having previously established trusting relations with these people during the period I played the seeker. Furthermore, Lin and I had become located and identified as tarot card readers. Even after my research interests became known to key informants, we were referred to most commonly as tarot card readers, not sociological researchers. The importance of establishing a social location and identity within the natural routine of the settings and situations to be investigated can not be underestimated. I will return to a brief discussion of the issues involved here at the conclusion of this chapter.

Once I began reading the tarot for pay at Psychic Faires I gradually began telling people of my research interests. Actually this process began in the late Summer of 1977 in conjunction with formal interviewing of tarot card readers and the use of key informants. Wherever possible, however, this information (that I was a sociological researcher) was kept from people until after friendship relations had been established.
Problems of Membership

From the Fall of 1977 throughout the next year I sustained ongoing friendships with several leading members of the esoteric community. These people were frequent guests in my home. Social evenings in my home or their homes provided an excellent and relatively unobtrusive setting in which data on the esoteric community could be collected. In time friendships with some of the people became primary to data collection. Nevertheless, it was in this context that the internal dynamics of the esoteric community became subject to intense examination.

Throughout the investigation of the community Lin and I attempted to sustain friendly relations with all of the people with whom we interacted. I was able to accomplish the development of friendships by playing the seeker. A substantial portion of the data I collected involved casual contacts with people in public settings like the book and supply stores. Lin's entrance into the esoteric community was slightly different. In the beginning she also played the seeker, but early in the investigation she also made a personal commitment to the tarot. The path she followed was thereby different in important respects from mine. In her effort to learn to read the tarot she quickly became identified as a tarot card reader. In acquiring this social identity within the community Lin received the assistance of other tarot card readers. These people served as teachers, people to whom she could refer in other interactions, and ultimately sponsors of her membership in the community. In large measure my acceptance within the community was initially facilitated by Lin's identity as a tarot card
reader. Whereas my contacts were business-like and largely impersonal, in comparison, Lin's contacts were intimate, and highly personal. While people viewed me as a potential member in a variety of different settings, Lin was identified and accepted as a tarot card reader in specific interactional settings. One of the crucial issues involved in these different routes into the esoteric community is authenticity. Throughout the investigation I had the recurrent problem of convincing myself that I truly believed in what I was doing. This problem of self identity was reflected in the conversations I engaged in and the commitments I was willing to make to members. I was always caught--existentially--between a dual commitment to becoming a fully participating member of the esoteric community and doing sociological research. Whereas I learned to more or less successfully manage this tension, it was recurrently problematic. The problem of a dual commitment was much less of an existential problem for Lin. She was able to make a much more sincere commitment to learning the arcane wisdom of the tarot and reading the cards. Again, the nature of this commitment was reflected in conversation and commitments to other members of the community. A great deal of my success in gaining access to the insiders' world of meaning was due to Lin's more authentic commitment, and members' identification of us as a couple.

The importance of this issue of authentic membership for the conduct of participant-observational research can not be underestimated. The kinds of information one is able to collect necessarily depends on where one is located with respect to the phenomenon of interest, and members' identifications of the researcher as related to everyday life
involvements. In some settings the researcher may be able to gain access to the insiders' world of meaning by being identified as a social researcher. It may be possible in this location to observe and even directly experience the phenomenon of interest. In other settings, however, access to the insiders' world of meaning can not be accomplished without direct experiential access to this world. And, in these settings direct access may be denied to the researcher by self and/or others without a total commitment to membership. The latter is clearly the case with respect to the insiders' world of the esoteric and occult.

In spite of my attempts to sustain friendly relations with everyone in the esoteric community with whom I interacted, this became increasingly problematic as Lin and I became identified as tarot card readers sponsored by people located within particular segments of the community. One evening there would be a discussion of a particular constellation of groups--their beliefs, practices, activities, goals, etc.--through conversation with a leader of this particular segment of the community. Several evenings later a similar discussion would occur with the leader(s) of rival segments of the community. I further compounded the problems inherent in managing these situations by playing one source of information against another. This strategy was invaluable for checking the reliability of information and gaining a sense of different viewpoints. In doing so, however, I ran the risk of revealing my close friendships with rival factions and members. As Lin and I became more intimately located and identified with a particular segment of the community it became increasingly difficult to sustain
friendly relations with rival segments. Ultimately, we were—partly by accident—forced to choose between two rival segments of the community.

The incident forcing this issue was related to reading the tarot cards at a Psychic Faire. We were asked to read the tarot on a voluntary (as opposed to paid) basis for a mini-faire sponsored by a coalition of groups representing a particular segment of the community. At the time a paramount issue separating this segment of the community from another segment was the commercial aspects of the esoteric scene in the Valley. The segment we were asked to read for stood opposed to commercialism, believing the tarot and related practices to be tools for self enlightenment. In this view readers were held to be primarily responsible for serving the needs of others irregardless of whether or not they benefited financially from the arrangement. We agreed to read the tarot on a benefit basis and assumed the minister in charge of the faire would contact us to make final arrangements—time, place, hours, etc. The week-end of the faire there was considerable confusion in our lives, and for a variety of complicated reasons we forgot about the event until it was almost over. Talking about the problem in casual conversation Lin and I agreed that something must have come up and they did not require our services. The matter was entirely forgotten until about a week later when we received a phone call from the minister. I answered the phone and immediately sensed something was wrong. In a rather hostile manner the minister demanded to know why we had not showed up as expected at the mini-faire. I replied that we had assumed they had made other arrangements and that our services were not
required. Uncertain as exactly what the plans had been, I turned the phone over to Lin in hopes that she might be able to smooth over the difficulties. No such luck, even after an extensive explanation of the situation and our misunderstanding, the minister expressed considerable anger at what he perceived as our lack of responsibility in the matter. At the time Lin and I had a difficult time making sense out of his anger. Prior to this incident the minister had been in our home several times following a rather lengthy period of growing friendship. His behavior, even under the circumstances, seemed very much out of the ordinary. Only later did we discover that this minister was interpreting our behavior in the context of our doing Psychic Faires for pay. He had come to identify us with the rival segment in the community, and therefore assumed the reason why we had missed his faire was because we could not gain financially from it. Since this incident occurred toward the end of collecting data on the esoteric community it did not affect a great deal of the information. Nevertheless, it prevented me from collecting direct information on this segment of the community after the split. In addition, it resulted in a sense of personal failure and regret. The incident is described in considerable detail here because it further illustrates a basic problem likely to be encountered in other situations and settings where the researcher attempts to become the phenomenon of interest.

Analyzing the Data

The data presented in the next two chapters were collected during my participation in the esoteric community in the Valley. Information
from personal experiences, informal and formal interviews, telephone conversations, and printed materials have been organized for the purpose of displaying the insiders' or members' perspective. I have relied most heavily on my personal experiences with the esoteric community. The selection of inclusive materials is guided by (1) an interest in presenting a comprehensive picture that is understandable to outsiders, especially sociologists, and (2) an interest in displaying the structure and organization of the esoteric community.

It must be noted that as a sociologist I have selected materials and presented them in a way that necessarily distorts the members' experiences of the esoteric community. My sociological interest in describing and analyzing the social categories whereby members structure their world and the procedures whereby it is organized is not an interest shared by members. Their world is a practical world of day to day problems. The matters which are of special interest from a sociological perspective are known but largely taken for granted by members. Whereas there were several very good lay sociologists within the esoteric community, my knowledge of its basic structure and organization became more extensive than any particular member's.

Whenever and wherever possible I have focussed on concepts used by members to describe and organize their experiences in everyday life situations and settings. The identification of basic folk conceptions was accomplished through conversations with Lin, colleagues, and members. When forced to employ my personal experiences I have attempted to seek verification of the appropriateness of particular terms and their usage in tape recorded and printed materials. Nevertheless, at
times I have been forced to employ typifications of which I am less than certain; terms to which members might object. I do not think this is a reflection of sloppy data analysis, however, rather a reflection of the fluid and often incomplete folk conception of the everyday life world.

In describing the insiders' world of meaning I have attempted to make use of certain linguistic techniques employed by anthropologists (see, for example, Spradley, 1970). Within certain limitations these techniques have been useful for analyzing the structure and organization of the esoteric community. Nevertheless, I found the world of the esoteric community to be far more complex and less typified in terms of shared categories of meaning than that found in the research of Spradley and other anthropologists. I could have cleaned up the data and thereby presented the nice neat pictures of a shared world of meaning portrayed in recent anthropological studies. Yet this kind of cleansing of the data would be a serious disservice to the world I experienced.
NOTES

1. "Trance mediumship" is a technique whereby a person goes into hypnotic trance (of varying degrees) and permits a "spirit" to communicate messages through them. Historically, trance mediumship is found most commonly in the context of Spiritualism (see Zaretsky, 1974). More recently, it has become popular with a wide variety of esoteric practitioners. Perhaps the most popular recent accounts of trance mediumship are found in the writings of Jane Roberts (1970) who attributes several books to Seth, the spirit who communicates through her.

2. Briefly stated the group consisted of four core members and an untold number of other regular and semi-regular participants. These people were involved in three basic activities: evening meetings, a clinic, and special workshops. Two of the core members, a husband and wife team, support themselves in part at least through the revenue generated by the group. These monies include a $2 per person "love offering" at weekly meetings, $65 for a clinic treatment, and from $40 to $60 for special workshops. The predominant focus of all activities was summarized in their motto: "making the able--more able." This was manifest in terms of a bewildering variety of esoteric doctrines mainly concerning the use of "vital energies, forces, and powers" to gain control of one's person. It was not until later, in different research settings, that I came to recognize certain features of this group--love offerings, small study groups, clinic services, special workshops, and vital life forces--as persistent dimensions of the larger esoteric scene.

3. The more I learned about the esoteric scene in the Valley the more it became necessary to utilize many different informants. With only a couple of exceptions, I found the extensiveness of most informants' knowledge to be quite limited.

4. A position similar to this has been stated recently by Douglas (1978).

5. The form upon which this information was collected is listed in the Appendix.

6. During the course of investigating these groups by telephone I found it necessary to modify the questions I asked. The form presented in the Appendix is corrected to reflect these adjustments.
I attempted to frequent most of the bookstores on a once a month basis. This strategy proved valuable in making contacts and gaining access to the insiders' perspective. In certain bookstores I often simply stood around looking at materials and listening to conversations between the owners and customers. Many times I was privileged to listen in on telephone conversations pertinent to happenings in the esoteric community.
CHAPTER IV

THE ESOTERIC COMMUNITY

The "esoteric community" in the Valley of the Sun is a gloss used by members to describe a diffuse constellation of people who more or less share in common certain beliefs, practices, and activities. The purpose of the chapter is to describe and analyze the structure and organization of the esoteric community. I proceed by describing the basic features of this community. Then I describe and analyze the structure and organization of three more or less distinctive segments--esoteric, spiritual, psychic--within the community.

Basic Features

In spite of tremendous diversity--in belief, practice, membership categories, and activities--within the esoteric community, members more or less share certain values and beliefs in common. Most obviously members believe in and practice matters lacking legitimacy in the larger, exoteric society. This serves as a source of identity, solidarity, and distinction from members of the exoteric society. More precisely, these people share a disdain for the perceived dogmatism of exoteric science and religion. This disdain is interrelated with a profound interest in knowledge and a search for existential meaning. Members tend to read extensively, for example, and value both formal and informal education. Dissent from exoteric knowledge claims also is related to
an almost unbelievable toleration for an entire range of esoteric beliefs and practices. In public, members seldom speak out against claims to knowledge they do not believe. Everyone, at least in public, is granted the right to believe in and practice whatever seems best for them. In this sense esotericism is highly individualized. The refusal to acknowledge many different paths to truth and enlightenment is perceived as dogmatic, and this must be avoided. Speaking as a leader of the community, the editor of Psychic Magazine illustrates many of these features of community spirit in stating an interest in

... the areas of communication, education, and research. Every idea and theory, religious and otherwise, is considered objectively.

This is not a missionary endeavor whereby we are to convert anyone into believing anything contrary to their natural instincts.

We just happen to believe that there is much on this earth that is not dreamed of in our sciences and philosophies.

This is not to say that members totally reject exoteric science or religion. Borrowed elements, however, tend to be interpreted esoterically; that is, in terms of basic assumptions contained within particular bodies of esoteric knowledge. In this respect esotericism is no more or less reflexive than exoteric bodies of knowledge (see Mehan and Wood, 1975).

Although esoteric beliefs and practices tend to be highly individualized, this is not to say that these people are exclusively concerned with the problems of individuals. There is a sense in which this is true: esoteric practices like divination clearly focus on the individual. In important ways this reflects the larger structure and organization of urban life. At the same time, however, there is a profound
concern for the collective condition. This concern is most evident in the Spiritual segment of the community (as manifest in an essentially Christian ethic of brotherly love), but other segments also sustain a deep (almost religious) concern for the modern situation. Activities like research, counseling, and education are thought to represent positive attempts to create a better social world. This concern is reinforced by belief in the imminence of a new age. Members sincerely believe that they are on the vanguard of a "spiritual" revolution in America today. They envision a new age of human understanding and awareness through which human despair and misfortune will be radically transformed for the benefit of all humanity.¹

The official or legal status of esoteric beliefs and practices in the Valley provides members with a concrete manifestation of their differences with the exoteric society. Among the several municipalities in the Valley there are basically two positions with respect to esoteric or occult beliefs and practices. To the best of my knowledge there are no specific laws pertinent to these practices in Valley City, Wrinkle City, or most of the smaller communities at the present time. At one time there were laws regulating these matters in Valley City, but they were removed from the books at the request of the city prosecutor because of the hassle of enforcement. Members of the esoteric community maintain that the current lack of legal regulation in Valley City is the result of a conscious public relations effort on the part of members. Members who live in Valley City have attempted to establish and sustain friendly relations with the police and other agents of social control—partly by promises to police their own activities.
The legal status of occult practices is quite different, however, in University City, Snowbird Haven, and Mormon City. In each of these cities local law requires practitioners to pay a license fee. At the extreme this fee is explicitly designed to totally discourage occult practices. The Mormon City ordinance, for example, reads as follows:

Every clairvoyant, astrologer, seer, palmist, soothsayer, fortune teller, spiritualist or spirit medium charging or receiving fees, rewards or anything of value, shall pay a license fee of seven hundred fifty dollars ($750.00) per month, which monthly license fee shall be paid monthly in advance, and the license shall be obtained at least thirty (30) days prior to its effective date. Such license may be revoked at any time for cause, by the Clerk, on the demand of the Chief of Police.

Violation of this ordinance is defined as a misdemeanor, and punishable by a fine "... not to exceed $300.00 or by imprisonment in the City Jail for a period not to exceed three (3) months, or by both a fine and imprisonment" (Mormon City Ordinance Number 1017).

In University City "Every palmist, astrologer, fortune-teller, or soothsayer shall obtain a license from the finance director or his authorized representative before carrying on such activity within the City." This fee is only slightly more reasonable than the one required by Mormon City. The City code requires $150.00 non-refundable fee merely for the license application. If the application is accepted then the applicant is required to pay an additional $100.00 a year. Furthermore, should the person's location change the City requires a $50.00 transfer fee. Obviously these laws are designed to discourage esoteric or occult practices for pay.

In Snowbird Haven city ordinance also requires anyone engaged in the "magic arts" (including "palmistry, phrenology, astrology, fortune
telling, mind reading, clairvoyance, or any similar calling") for profit, to obtain a license. By comparison, the fee for this license is a mere $10.00 a quarter, or $40 a year. In general, members of the esoteric community view this license fee as reasonable. Some community members, especially those engaged in esotericism as a full-time business and those living in Snowbird Haven, even view it as an ideal situation. They reason that anyone engaged in a full-time business can easily afford (or should be able to afford) the fee. Moreover, it is their contention that this business license tends to exclude undesirables including fakes, con people, and the like, who are collectively called "gypsies." Snowbird Haven residents are fond of pointing out that in comparison with Valley City (the perceived location of most gypsies) the Haven is relatively free of these undesirables.

In spite of the laws requiring esoteric and occult practitioners who are engaged in profit-making activities to purchase a license, these laws are rarely enforced. There have been several controversies between the county assessor and people claiming tax exemption of their private homes because they also serve as religious buildings. I am unaware, however, of anyone being prosecuted for failure to buy a business license—although I know of several people who advertise and practice the esoteric and occult in University City and Mormon City without a license. Nor is it really the intention of the law to totally restrict esoteric or occult businesses. In University City and Mormon City the laws are designed to discourage these activities, and to provide for the sanction of people involved in con games. In Mormon City the law is supported by a very powerful Mormon community that
would discourage nontraditional or quasi-legitimate beliefs and practices, especially those pertinent to the supernatural. The number of groups and practitioners in both these cities indicates that the law is at least somewhat successful. There are no more than five groups publicly acknowledged as members of the esoteric community in either Mormon City or University City, and all of these are "spiritual" (Spiritualists, Eastern religions) groups identified as non-profit religious organizations, or quasi-scientific associations (astrologers, researchers). Moreover, during my field work I have heard members speak disparagingly of these cities as desirable places to live and/or work. In a couple of cases I know of people who have moved from these cities for the purpose of being able to practice the esoteric or occult for pay without the hassle of purchasing a license.

In order to avoid the laws applying to esoteric or occult businesses, many groups are defined as "non-profit religious organizations." It is commonplace for an emergent "cult" to apply for or purchase a "religious" charter from one of several national organizations established for this purpose. In addition, it is not difficult for any individual to purchase a "minister's" license from these same organizations. The fee for a minister's license varies from $5 to $25 or so depending in part on the title to be purchased. In the course of my field work, for example, I purchased a "minister's" license for $5 from a mail order address-organization in the southeastern portion of the United States. By getting two additional people to purchase a license, my original status has changed to that of "bishop." This organization demands nothing else in return, nor does it check up on its
ordained ministers so far as I am aware. It is possible, however, to receive a listing of other ordained ministers who are willing to be contacted. Clearly, the purpose of obtaining a ministerial license is to protect against legal sanctions for selling esoteric or occult services. Many of the practitioners with whom I interacted did not consider themselves particularly "religious" in any conventional sense, although some of these people do indicate a nontraditional interest in "spiritual" matters. Yet, almost without exception esoteric and occult practitioners are "ordained ministers." As ministers they do not actually charge for services. Instead, services are offered on a "donation" basis. Similarly, whereas "religious organizations" cannot charge a fee for services, there is nothing to prohibit requesting or even requiring a "donation" of $10 to $25 or more for "psychic" practices. Through this strategy of defining one's self as a "minister" or the cultic organization as a "religious" group, esoteric and occult practitioners are able to avoid local laws against selling these services. Even in Mormon City and University City, local laws clearly exempt "religious" organizations. As a consequence, many groups and individual practitioners are "religious," at least for legal purposes, even though they may not be especially inclined toward "religious" or even "spiritual" concerns.

The issue of "gypsies" also is crucial for distinguishing between insiders and outsiders. Within the community there is an absolute distinction between legitimate practitioners (us) and "gypsies" (them). Within both the psychic and spiritual segments of the community there are "codes of ethics" and lists of legitimate practitioners. It is
within the context of this code that the publisher of the Spiritual Directory explicitly addresses the issue of "gypsies."

The real question is: Who is a good reader?

The [Valley] police department has warned us that 50 to 60 "gypsy" families have moved into the city and have opened up numerous fortune-telling enterprises in the last few years.

Being of gypsy origin does not automatically make one a crook, but these "gypsies" are not legitimate nor ethical in their operations—they may not even be real gypsies! They will lie and defraud their clients, cheating them of a lifetime's savings.

The gypsy systems of fraud are too many to enumerate here, but be cautious of anyone not listed with the [Spiritual Directory].

Hence, the "gypsy" stereotype serves to absolutely distinguish from fakes and frauds the moral order of the esoteric community.

Members estimate the size of the esoteric community in the Valley at between 5,000 and 15,000 people out of the approximately one million Valley residents (depending on how members are counted). The Spiritual and Psychic directories provide the only official recognition of members. Combined, these lists provide information on over one hundred groups and approximately one hundred and fifty individuals. In actuality these population estimates seem to reflect the extent of activities in this scene generally. The actual community is composed of no more than 300 regular participants. Generally speaking participants in the esoteric community are: 1) lower-middle to upper-middle class (incomes range from $5,000 to $30,000 a year per person, and homes reflect these income levels); 2) predominantly white; 3) middle aged (ranging from 20 to 80—excepting members' children—with a majority between 35 and 55 years old); 4) about equally divided between the sexes (with more females in positions of leadership and authority than
in the exoteric society); 5) usually high school graduates (many people have college training, some have college degrees, and a few have graduate training or degrees); and, 6) moderate to liberal on political issues.

In spite of differences among community segments certain basic parameters of belief, practice, categories of membership, and activity can be identified. In general, members' activities are focussed on particular beliefs and related practices (astrology, numerology, palmistry, hypnosis, tarot, and so on). An essential feature of all segments of the community involves the performance of these practices. With considerable variation in the form of collective activity (churches, study groups, businesses, etc.), activities are organized around these particular practices. In spite of differences in the definition and meaning of membership categories, a basic structure can be identified. These basic categories are represented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the basic membership categories include: leaders (people who organize activities and direct the affairs of particular groups), practitioners (those who engage in particular esoteric or occult practices), and seekers (people who consume esoteric or occult goods and services). Practitioners are categorized further as professional (people who engage in practice for pay, in public settings, and as a full-time activity or with special expertise), and nonprofessionals (people who practice in private without receiving pay). Seekers also may be further divided into students (people who engage in scholarly study), or clients (people who seek out the services of professionals); and clients may be categorized even further as
believers (those who are receptive to esoteric or occult teachings and practices), and non believers (those who resist esoteric or occult doctrines and practices).

**TABLE 1.--Basic categories of participants in the esoteric/spiritual/psychic community**

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<th>Leaders</th>
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<td>Practitioners</td>
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<td>Seekers</td>
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**Segments of the Community**

Beyond the basic features of the esoteric community discussed above there are important differences among more or less distinctive collections of members or segments within the esoteric community. It is within these concrete spheres of activity that particular beliefs, practices, and social identities take shape. Three relatively distinctive segments—esoteric, spiritual, and psychic—are evident. In this section of the chapter the basic structure and organization of each of these segments of the community will be described and analyzed.

**The Esoteric Segment**

The word "esoteric" used with reference to segmented interests reflects a scholarly concern for different knowledge claims. People composing the esoteric segment of the community tend to be among the best educated; they usually work at esoteric occupations where they
are successful, at least in middle-class terms; they devote non-work
time to esotericism; and, they are more inclined to periodically par-
ticipate in discussions of ideas than join a particular cult. Physi­
cal well-being (healing) is a focal dimension of this esoteric seg­
ment.

Within the esoteric segment of the community distinctions among
categories of membership are relatively simple. As shown in Table 2
there are three basic categories: coordinators (people who organize
collective activities); practitioners (those who provide esoteric
goods and services); and, seekers (people who are in search of en­
lightenment). Practitioners are divided further into nonprofessional
and professional. In general, professional practitioners include
readers (people who provide personalized services like past life re­
gression, tarot divination, palmistry, astrology, and the like to
clients on an individual basis), teachers (who direct classes or
otherwise provide instruction on esoteric topics), and medical prac­
titioners (people who provide services like healing to individuals,
or services aimed at directly contributing to physical well-being).

Within the esoteric segment of the community two basic categories of
seekers also may be identified: students (people who attend classes
or otherwise engage in scholarly activity); and, clients (people who
seek the services of practitioners, especially medical practitioners).

The activities in the esoteric segment of the community, as
shown in Figure 2 are organized in terms of a number of study groups
(ARES, ESPS), a book and supply store (ESP-B), and a medical clinic
(AREC) all connected to an organization called "ESP." In addition
TABLE 2.—Categories of participants in the esoteric segment of the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinators</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Nonprofessional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seekers</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of other organizations and individuals very casually associated with ESP. Basically ESP is a clearing house for information, operated by about six people, most of whom are volunteers. ESP maintains a suite of business-like offices in a predominantly middle-class section of Valley City. For a fee of $20 a year members are entitled to a regular monthly mailing of all group activities and miscellaneous benefits (such as discount rates on items purchased in the group's book and supply store). This legally non-profit organization claims a paid membership of about 1,700 and over 3,000 people who receive the monthly mailing (without charge). The ESP calendar of events usually includes activities for every day of the month. Activities range from special speakers (some of whom have national reputations), films, and demonstrations to classes in astrology, the tarot, numerology, palmistry, hypnosis, and the like. Unlike most of the organizations in the psychic segment of the community, ESP is not intended to economically support the people who run the organization. Speakers and teachers, for example, are almost always hired from outside the
Figure 2.—The Esoteric Segment of the Community
The ESP organization also controls the book store (located in a small shopping center several miles away from the larger organization). This store is staffed by volunteer help, and it offers a considerable range of esoteric books and supplies with a somewhat better selection of medical and health related materials than other specialty shops in the Valley. Training classes offered through ESP are sometimes held in the back room of the bookstore.

ESP also sponsors a number of study groups meeting once a month to discuss esoteric topics. Once a study group is established, the larger organization may lose track of it unless participants continue to advertise in the ESP bulletin or otherwise maintain contact with the ESP coordinators. Since the organization makes no real attempt to exert any kind of control over study groups, even the organizers tend to be unaware of exactly how many groups are going at any given time.

ESP is closely related through overlapping friends and members with a full-time medical clinic. The clinic (AREC) is operated by two physicians (M.D.'s), a husband and wife team, with the assistance of a small staff of medical and "psychic" practitioners. Perhaps needless to say, this clinic is one of the most legitimate organizations in the community from the perspective of the exoteric society. Except for the use of esoteric techniques along with more conventional medical practices, this clinic resembles its exoteric counterparts. Besides the clinic operation, these people also host an annual conference of national notoriety, and maintain a number of study groups.
These study groups operate in conjunction with ESP, and they tend to specialize in matters related to esoteric medicine.4

The Psychic Segment

The "psychic" segment predominantly involves people who earn all or part of their income from the sale of esoteric goods and services. Some of these people are very successful economically, but there is a wide variation in socioeconomic status. The term "psychic" indicates an essentially secular concern with exploring, using, and investigating the human mind, especially the possibility of hidden, concealed, or unused senses. Psychic knowledge is viewed as a path to personal power and success. These people also tend to be interested in the "occult," but this word is rarely used (except among insiders) since it is thought to project an unfavorable public image. Since these people are involved in commercial endeavors, considerations of public imagery are important. Most of the organizations in the psychic segment are officially non-profit ("religious") organizations, but this reflects legal relationships with the exoteric society, not whether or not people are engaged in business.5

Table 3 pictures the basic categories of membership within this segment of the community. The most obvious membership categories are organizers (people who arrange for Psychic Faires or otherwise provide leadership for collective gatherings), practitioners (people who provide services), and seekers (people who seek out psychic services). Among psychic practitioners there is considerable specialization. These people basically can be divided between professionals (experts
TABLE 3.—Categories of participants in the psychic segment of the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizers</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Nonprofessionals</th>
<th>Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nonexperts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Readers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seekers</td>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>Disbelievers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Believers</td>
<td>Regulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nonregulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

who engage in psychic practice as a more or less full-time activity for pay) and nonprofessionals (those who practice in private without pay). Nonprofessionals are divided further into experts (people with extensive knowledge) and nonexperts (people who practice without considerable expertise). Professional practitioners are categorized by community members as teachers (people who offer classes or otherwise direct scholarly study of the esoteric or occult), writers (people who write papers or articles for publication on the esoteric or occult), researchers (people who engage in quasi-scientific studies of psychic, esoteric, and occult phenomena), and readers (people who provide direct personal services like astrological charts, numerology, palmistry, and tarot divination to clients). Seekers are categorized in terms of clients and students. Clients are divided further into believers
and disbelievers.

The psychic segment of the community is the largest and most active. It is organized around an association of psychic practitioners called APRA. Founded by a husband and wife team, this organization is perhaps the central organ of the community. They devote full-time to APRA, the publication of *Psychic Magazine*, production of Psychic Faires, the promotion of two-day and week-long seminars (on hypnosis and related practices) held throughout the country, and private practice. The APRA organization also includes approximately forty professional practitioners. Like ESP this organization hosts some kind of activity for every day of the month. Unlike ESP, however, these activities are specifically designed to earn money. Most activities are held in a large suite of offices leased by APRA. They are located in an upper middle class section of the city.

As pictured in Figure 3, APRA is directly related to other commercial enterprises (MBS, SE, CG), several book and supply stores (AY, AB, PA), research associations (PVPA, AR), and religious and quasi-religious cults (UL, MAC, TC, HC, CCT, UMSC). These groups are related to APRA through advertising and other contributions to *Psychic Magazine*, participation in Psychic Faires, and other business and casual friendship relations.

Book and supply stores specializing in esotericism tend to be affiliated through business relations with the psychic segment of the community. Beyond their obvious importance as places where necessary books and supplies may be obtained, these businesses serve as centers for information, a place where interested parties can meet
Figure 3.—The Psychic Segment of the Community
unceremoniously in public, and in several cases as the sponsors of special classes open to the public on subjects like the tarot, astrology, hypnosis, numerology, and palmistry. Store owners sometimes serve as instructors (teachers), but these people more commonly are hired from among the ranks of professional practitioners. Store owners and professional practitioners split fees for these services with approximately 10-25 percent of the fee remaining in the store.

Commercial organizations tend to operate in much the same fashion. They all tend to emphasize some aspect of mental and/or physical well-being, with some groups specializing in service-therapy and others in education-instruction. Three basic types of service are offered: 1) private readings (or counseling); 2) special workshops (usually offered on a short-term basis like a weekend); and, 3) extensive therapy-education (involving weekly meetings for six months). The cost of these services varies from business to business depending on factors like the reputation of professionals, the type of training or therapy (palmistry is less expensive than hypnosis, for example), and where the service is performed (private office visits are more expensive than Psychic Faires). There are attempts to standardize prices, however, primarily on the basis of what the market will bear. The cost of a private reading runs from $5 to $50; special (short-term) workshops range from $30 to $60; and a full course of study-therapy varies from $200 to $400. Extensive programs of study-therapy commonly are divided into beginning and advanced classes. Hence, completion of a full course of study in hypnosis or mind and body science, for example, might run as high
as $3,000 or $5,000.

Commercial organizations also employ similar methods for attracting clientele. They all advertise in esoteric and/or exoteric sources. At least one business periodically runs a local TV advertisement. The favored way of attracting clientele, however, is through mailing lists. Every commercial organization has a list of potential clientele—students obtained by registration of people at Psychic Faires, and getting former consumers to name friends. Since several businesses in the Valley have been here for more than ten years (a long time in this field), rather extensive and tested mailing lists exist.²

Professional practitioners operate in all segments of the community, but they tend to be most directly involved in the psychic segment. Professional services offered by individuals include akashic life readings, astrology, biorhythm charts, psychic (clairvoyant) counseling and readings, dream analysis, yoga, healing, numerology, palmistry, past-future life regression-progression, psychic art, hypnosis, and tarot readings. The majority of the 100-150 people sometimes offering these services are affiliated with particular groups, usually businesses or churches. Professional practitioners actively compete for clientele and affiliation with groups. Within the community professional practitioners are known by reputation based on their perceived competency.⁸

The Spiritual Segment

The "spiritual" segment of the community is composed primarily of religious and quasi-religious cults. The word "spiritual" denotes
an emphasis on the moral condition of humanity. Members tend to be concerned with salvation, liberation, and enlightenment. These people see their mission as service to human kind, and they stand opposed to the perceived "materialism" of people in the psychic segment.

As shown in Table 4, the categories of participants in the spiritual segment of the community, though similar to other segments, take on a distinctive character. The basic membership categories used by members include ministers (people associated full or part time as ordained officials of some religious or quasi-religious collectivity), members (people who are recognized by others as active participants in particular religious or quasi-religious groups), and seekers (people who attend religious or quasi-religious services, or who somehow utilize services offered by these groups). Members distinguish among three basic categories of ministers: leaders (the principal minister of a group), teachers (ministers who provide instruction to members or the general public), and counselors (ministers who offer services like tarot card readings, astrology, palmistry, hypnosis, and so on). Members are further categorized into staff (people who in some way assist in the work associated with the group, not uncommonly wives, husbands, or close friends), and regulars (people who can be depended upon to regularly attend group functions and otherwise support the group's activities). Seekers are distinguished further as clients (people who seek out particular services), students (people who receive instruction from a minister), and visitors (people who occasionally drop into group functions). Like other segments of the community, clients are divided into believers
and disbelievers. Visitors also are distinguished in terms of believers and disbelievers.

TABLE 4.—Categories of participants in the spiritual segment of the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministers</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seekers</td>
<td>Clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disbelievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>Believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disbelievers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Membership in spiritual groups is relatively small (5 to 50 per group), transitory, and lower middle class. These cults are commonly organized around a charismatic leader or several dynamic personalities. Female leadership is common. The continued existence of these groups is dependent on regular contributions from members and visitors (seekers) who move from group to group. The larger, more successful groups may receive several supplementary sources of income. It is not uncommon for the group leader to be indebted to an anonymous wealthy backer, or to receive limited support from a charter organization (usually located on the West Coast). Another popular strategy is for the minister(s) and other key members to offer a variety of professional services...
like tarot readings, for a fee or recommended donation. Ministers commonly participate in Psychic Faires. For these cults, an increasingly popular money making strategy is to hold a "mini-faire." Within the spiritual segment of the community two or three cults will get together to produce a faire for one group, and later exchange the favor.

In some ways the spiritual segment of the community is the most loosely organized, and yet social ties here are very strong. The principal coordinating organization is called SAC. As shown in Figure 4, a number of cults are linked together through SAC. This organization is composed of minister-leaders from each group who meet and discuss matters of mutual interest on a once-a-month basis. Through a local bookstore and its owner (who also leads a quasi-religious cult) SAC publishes a Spiritual Directory. Beyond these activities, however, SAC does very little. This organization was originally intended to solidify the spiritual segment of the community and provide a basis for intergroup activities outside the domain of the psychic segment. Members, however, have had a difficult time agreeing on goals and otherwise sponsoring events.

Discussion

This chapter has focussed on describing and analyzing the basic structure and organization of the esoteric community in the Valley of the Sun. Externally, the community is bounded by the exoteric society and laws regulating the sale of esoteric and occult practices. Internally, members of the community clearly distinguish their activities from illegitimate practitioners called gypsies. Members generally exaggerate the actual size of the community to include virtually
Figure 4.— The Spiritual Segment of the Community
all of the activities, events, and members in the larger esoteric scene. The actual size of the active participants in the community— as noted above—is about 300 people. These findings clearly support the previous contention that a substantial portion of the esoteric or occult revival in America today is largely a matter of popular entertainment, not serious and devoted practice. Furthermore, the basic characteristics of the people in the esoteric community do not support previous discussions of social, economic, or psychic deprivation. In all observable ways the members of the esoteric community are "normal" Americans.

Within the esoteric community a basic structure and organization of members and their activities were observed. Members draw on particular beliefs and practices and these associated activities are structured and organized to facilitate accomplishing esoteric or occult practices. In spite of variation within particular segments, the basic categories of participants recognized by members include leaders, practitioners, and seekers. Basic activities generally focus on study or therapy in some form. The collective organization of members and their activities generally assumes the form of cultic groups of three basic types: churches, businesses, and study groups.

It also is important to note that in spite of a basic outline of members and their activities, there is considerable variation within particular segments of the community. People in the esoteric segment tend to be oriented toward scholarly study. The psychic segment tends to be oriented toward quasi-scientific research and commercial ventures. The spiritual segment is preoccupied with an
orientation toward self-enlightenment and the supernatural. The fact that these basic orientations cross-cut and provide a context for the meaningful interpretation of esoteric and occult bodies of knowledge can not be overemphasized. This finding suggests that it is important to know the larger social context in which particular practices like tarot divination transpire, since this practice differs in terms of the segments of the community engaging in it.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that whereas the activities of members do occur within small, cultic groups, there are networks of relationship and patterns of communication that supersede individual cults (see Figure 5). It is the organization of cults in terms of friendships and channels of communication that provides for the basis of segments within the community and certain linkages among these segments. In important ways it is Psychic Faires that provide the basis for these interrelationships. Psychic Faires are clearly the most important single event within the esoteric community. It is to a description and analysis of Psychic Faires that I now turn.
Figure 5.—The Esoteric Community

Networks of Social Relations

Key
- direction
- formal
- informal
NOTES

1. There is a general lack of utopian sentiments within the community. Members by and large are too realistic and pragmatic to live on utopian dreams.

2. Members base these estimates on mailing lists. Counting members is very tricky business. Within any given group the attendance may vary from 5 to 50 people in any given week. Groups also arise and then disintegrate almost overnight. Finally, there is no way of estimating the number of isolated individuals who engage in professional practice, seeking, or any other activity in the community.

3. To illustrate: I once attended a meeting sponsored by ESP on the topic of spirit communication. A person from the West Coast was brought in especially to lead this discussion. During this meeting, which attracted about 35 or 40 people, the possibility of establishing an ongoing study group was explored. Within a short time it became clear, however, that people's interests diverged greatly. During breaks and after the meeting, people informally continued these discussions. The second meeting was attended by about half as many people. Out of this meeting two different study groups emerged (or maybe three, as I think a small group--4 or 5 people--formed around a husband and wife without the knowledge of the other people present). One group continued on the general topic of spirit communication and channeling but discontinued advertising with ESP. The other group formed around the guest speaker on a highly stylized form of past life regression called "rebirthiing." They continued to advertise with ESP until quite recently.

4. There are a number of study groups and businesses interested in health which are loosely related to the esoteric segment of the community.

5. This is an adjustment to legal regulation in the larger, exoteric society.

6. The APRA activities include private counseling or readings (palmistry, astrology, tarot, clairvoyance, hypnosis, or generally, psychic), healing massage, and past life regressions; classes in astrology, palmistry, tarot, hypnosis, and psychic abilities; lectures, demonstrations, and the like; and, psychic research projects.
The publisher of Psychic, for instance, maintains a mailing list of more than 13,000 people who have at one time or another indicated interest in community affairs. A subsegment of this list includes the names of approximately 5,000 people known to have at some time consumed goods and services offered in the community. Lists of this sort are exchanged between friends and are purchased. These lists are not available to just anyone, however. A bitter conflict ensued when the Editor of Psychic refused to sell one of his lists to an organization judged to be illegitimate.

In part the business of professional reputation and competency is reflected in the codes of ethics and list of legitimate practitioners maintained in the community. Both codes of ethics are similar. The Spiritual code reads:

1. I will approach counseling with respect, reverence and responsibility.
2. I will seek higher guidance.
3. I will keep the welfare of my client uppermost at all times.
4. I will respect the trust of my client.
5. I will keep all confidences.
6. I will strive for greater competency.
7. My advertising will reflect my integrity.
8. I will strive to give full value.
9. I will respect all who adhere to this code.
CHAPTER V

THE PSYCHIC FAIRE

Psychic Faires are the central feature of the esoteric scene in the Valley and a focal point for members of the esoteric community. During the period of my field work in the Valley several large Psychic Faires were held twice a year, one in the spring and another in the fall or early winter. In addition, there were many smaller "mini-faires" held throughout the year. Psychic Faires serve a number of very important purposes for members of the esoteric community. They perhaps most importantly provide an opportunity for members of the esoteric community to meet the general public and exhibit esoteric goods and services. In this respect Psychic Faires are used to build a positive image of the esoteric community for the general public, make potential converts, and provide economic support for individuals and groups in the community. Psychic Faires also provide an occasion for members of the community to meet collectively, make new friends, exchange ideas and services, reaffirm established friendships, and sustain some sense of solidarity over and against the exoteric society. In spite of certain differences from one Psychic Faire to the next, and between large and small faires, there is considerable similarity in structure and organization.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the Psychic Faire. I proceed by describing and analyzing the basic features.
of faires. Next, I describe and analyze the social structure and organization of faires. This chapter concludes with a general discussion of Psychic Faires and their general significance for esoteric activity in the Valley.

Basic Features

The production of a psychic faire requires considerable skill in promotion, organization, and advertisement both within the esoteric community and with respect to the general public. To be successful a psychic faire must attract a wide range of professional practitioners including readers, lecturers (or demonstrators), and collectivities (churches, professional associations, and businesses). A central, though not exclusive, concern of potential participants in psychic faires is "will we make money?" Generally speaking the participants in psychic faires purchase a "booth" from the organizer(s). Whereas mini-faires may not require a participation fee, the larger the faire (in terms of participants and perceived attendance) the higher the fee. During the period of my field work the fee for participating in a faire varied from $15 per person per booth to about $50. Since faires usually last for about two days (Friday, Saturday, and sometimes Sunday) the participants' fees run from about $65 to $150 per person for each booth. It therefore is important that participants have enough business to at least cover faire expenses.

Small psychic faires commonly are held in the facilities of a particular group in the esoteric community, but larger faires usually require the organizer to rent a building, usually the convention
facilities of a large resort motel in Snowbird Haven. The fees collected from participants and admission charges ($2 to $3 per person) are used to cover these expenses. In addition the organizer incurs some expense in advertising the faire. Depending on the planned size of the faire, basic sources of advertising include local community publications (Psychic Magazine, the Spiritual Directory, flyers, newsletters, and the like), handbills circulated in local neighborhoods, and esoteric sources like community shopping guides, radio, less commonly television, and rarely newspapers. Perhaps needless to say, participants' fees are established on the basis of anticipated expenses and these generally include a sizeable profit for the organizer(s). It is common practice to require a fee from participants equal to the basic expenses (facilities, advertising, etc.), with profit deriving from the admission price. Since a large faire will attract from 1,000 to 3,000 paid admissions, organizers' profits range from about $2,000 to $6,000 for a large faire. Considering the profit to be made on a large Psychic Faire, it would seem that there would be a number of people competing. This is not the case. During the period of my research only one person—the Editor of Psychic—was able to organize a successful large psychic faire. This factor alone makes this person one of the most powerful members of the esoteric community. This issue will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter.

Although there is considerable variation in the physical layout of psychic faires, they share in common certain basic features. Figure 6 presents a physical picture of this layout. Generally speaking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Booth</th>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>TO LECTURES AND/OR DEMONSTRATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booth 1</td>
<td>Exhibit 1</td>
<td>Booth 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth 2</td>
<td>Exhibit 2</td>
<td>Booth 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booth 3</td>
<td>Exhibit 3</td>
<td>Booth 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth 4</td>
<td>Exhibit 4</td>
<td>Booth 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth 5</td>
<td>Exhibit 5</td>
<td>Booth 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Booth 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booth 7</td>
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<td>Booth 8</td>
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<td>Booth 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booth 10</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.—The Physical Arrangement of a Psychic Faire
there is a large (conference) room divided into semi-private spaces for booths and exhibits. Depending on the building and size of the faire there will be from 20 to 30 booths arranged around the walls of the room. Exhibits (especially books and supplies) usually occupy the center of the room, with walk space between booths and exhibits. In addition, there are usually a series of smaller rooms used for lectures and demonstrations. Finally, large psychic faires commonly have a refreshment booth serving soft drinks and snacks.

The Social Structure of Faires

In spite of variations in faires a basic social structure can be identified. The basic categories of participants in a psychic faire are shown in Table 5. These basic categories of membership include organizer(s) (the people responsible for the production of the faire), organizational staff (people associated with the organizer who sell refreshments, collect admission, and otherwise assist in the organization of activities), professional practitioners (people selling esoteric goods and/or services), and, of course, seekers. Professional practitioners are categorized further by members in terms of readers (people who sell particular services, especially divination of some sort), lecturers (local or national experts in a particular area, such as magic, astrology, hypnosis, and the like, who put on demonstrations or lectures), and groups (including both commercial and noncommercial members of the community). Seekers are divided into two subcategories, clients (people who seek the services of readers) and visitors (people merely interested in the happening).
Clients are distinguished further as believers, of which there are two types, regulars and nonregulars, and nonbelievers. Visitors are identified further as students, explorers, and denouncers. These basic categories of participants serve as the basis for social identity as seen from the perspective of members of the esoteric community at psychic faires. In other words, people are either insiders (organizers, staff, or professional practitioners) or outsiders (seekers).

TABLE 5.—Categories of participants at psychic faires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizer(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Organizational Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Practitioners</th>
<th>Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seekers</td>
<td>Clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explorers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denouncers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to basic categories of membership recognized by members of the esoteric community at psychic faires, there is a basic structure of activity. The basic categories of activity at psychic faires are extensive and elaborate, as shown in Table 6. For this
reason Table 6 has been divided into two parts, a and b, each depicting a set of activities. As shown in Table 6 the basic categories of activity are readings (a service provided by a professional practitioner for a client), treatments (a different kind of service provided by professional practitioners for clients), lectures (or demonstrations), exhibits (booths illustrating some aspect of the esoteric or occult, some of which are commercial operations), and a party (usually a dinner on one evening of the faire for the participants and other insiders).

As shown in Table 6a readings are categorized by members into a diffuse and often perplexing set of different types. These basic categories of activity also serve to further identify participants. Members distinguish among readers on the basis of what kind of reading—tarot, astrology, sand, auras—the person does. It is important to note, however, that these categories are by no means absolute. Whereas readers are identified most commonly with a primary type of activity—a tarot card reader, an astrologer, a numerologist, etc.—professional practitioners commonly perform more than one activity. Several of the better tarot card readers in the community, for example, also do astrology, numerology, palmistry, and/or playing card readings as separate activities or in conjunction with reading the tarot.

As shown in Table 6a treatments constitute a distinctive sphere of activity. The principal basis for this distinction is whether or not one serves the clients' psychic (or psychological) as opposed to physical well-being. Generally speaking, readers deal with nonmaterial
### TABLE 6a. Categories of activity at a psychic faire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Tarot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playing Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numerology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rune Stones</td>
</tr>
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<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Psychic Healing</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Chiropractic</td>
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<td>Biorhythms</td>
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dimensions of the client, or at least do not attempt to directly intervene in physical health. Professional practitioners who provide
treatments, on the other hand, do deal directly with physical ailments. As noted in Table 6a these treatments take a number of specific forms. Psychic healing attempts to remedy a client's physical problems either by getting the client to concentrate on them and/or by the psychic practitioner mentally concentrating on these physical ills. Chiropractic treatment within the esoteric community is basically the same as within the exoteric society, except that these practitioners usually also subscribe to esoteric doctrines and practices (like psychic healing) which are incorporated with other techniques. Yoga, reflexology, and biorhythms also deal with various aspects of a client's physical health or illness.

Table 6b displays the remaining categories of activities at a psychic faire. Lectures and/or demonstrations are not limited to the topics listed in Table 6a. While these are popular topics for lectures and demonstrations these activities deal with the entire range of esoteric teachings and practices.

Exhibits, as shown in Table 6b, are divided into two basic types, commercial and noncommercial. Exhibits differ from readings and treatments in that they are presented by groups rather than individuals. Commercial exhibits offer particular goods and/or services for sale. These include art works, books, supplies (many of which are trinkets including jewelry, oils, incense, and the like), as well as educational and therapeutic services. Noncommercial exhibits are sponsored by groups less directly involved in money making activities. These include research associations, religious or spiritual groups, and professional associations, such as astrologers or psychic
TABLE 6b.—Categories of activity at a psychic faire

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<tr>
<th>Lectures/Demotions</th>
<th>Pyramids</th>
<th>Atlantis</th>
<th>Astral Projection</th>
<th>Reincarnation</th>
<th>UFOs</th>
<th>Magic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibits</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Supplies (trinkets)</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
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Party/Dinner

practitioners. Whereas the commercial exhibits are specifically oriented toward profit, noncommercial exhibits are designed specifically to attract new members. This is not to say, however, that at least some of the services offered by noncommercial groups are free. These groups also charge for their services.

The last type of activity shown in Table 6b is the psychic party. This activity is usually held on the first or last evening of the faire. While outsiders are not exactly excluded from this activity,
they are not usually encouraged to attend. This party is designed specifically for insiders to get together. At the party members have an opportunity to make new friends, renew old friendships, exchange ideas, and engage in shop talk. If the event is held at the beginning of the faire then members' attention will likely focus on these activities: what they will be doing, new techniques, recent events in their lives, speculation about the success of the faire, and perhaps agreements as to the prices to be charged. If the party occurs at the end, then members' talk will focus on how successful they were, problematic clients, particular successes, and the like.

The Social Organization of Faires

The culture of the esoteric community provides a number of basic rules whereby the activities of psychic faire participants are organized socially. While participation in a psychic faire is officially open to almost anyone willing to perform professional service, lectures, demonstrations, or exhibits, the actual inclusion of professional practitioners and other insiders is a selective process. The organizer(s) of a psychic faire usually contacts prospective participants prior to public announcements of the faire. Potential participants not close to the internal operation of the esoteric community thereby are excluded for the most part. The organizer employs a variety of rather explicit criteria in selecting potential participants. Organizers attempt to attract the widest possible variety of professional practitioners and exhibits. It is desirable to have someone at the faire to perform all of the specialized practices and
activities listed in Table 6. Beyond seeking a variety of practitioners, the organizer(s) seek out people with established reputations in the esoteric community and people with previous experience doing psychic faires. A person's reputation in the community is based on insiders' perceptions of basic competence and comments from the general public. Furthermore, the organizer attempts to attract professional practitioners who specialize in practices likely to attract the general public. In recent years, for example, past-life regressions have attracted large numbers of the general public. Astrology is another highly attractive speciality. In contrast, whereas there is a regular market for card readings of several different varieties, they are less attractive to the general public.

While there is considerable flexibility in the evaluation of readings, a hierarchy can be more or less discerned. Hypnotic regression, astrology, and psychic readings, all other things being equal, are the most highly valued practices. Less highly valued, but still attractive are numerology, tarot, sand, handwriting, psychic art, auras, and any other practices performed by only a few practitioners. Playing cards, palmistry, tea leaves, and scrying are less highly valued. In fact, these and other practices are not uncommonly incorporated by professional practitioners in a rather complicated professional performance designed especially for the public at a psychic faire. Cross-cutting this fluid hierarchy of professional practices is the reputation of the professional practitioner. An accomplished tarot card reader is more highly valued than a hypnotist of questionable competency and reputation. From the perspective of the organizer and
participants it also is highly desirable to have as wide a variety of treatments and exhibits available to the public as possible. These activities are evaluated principally in terms of the reputation of the practitioner.

There is a conscious attempt on the part of organizers to exclude practitioners without an established reputation in the community, and especially anyone suspected of being a gypsy or engaging in gypsy-like practices. The only possible exception to this is people with national reputations (some of whom resemble gypsies) or practitioners whose performances are likely to attract the attention of the general public.

The novice attempting to break into the psychic faire scene most likely will encounter a number of difficulties. If these potential practitioners are lucky enough to hear of a faire in the planning stages and are able to get in touch with the organizer, more than likely they will be told that all booths have already been sold or that the organizer is still uncertain as to whether or not there will be room. This response is rarely on the level since organizers can almost always make room for one or two more booths. I have known organizers to set up a booth for an established practitioner on the very day of the faire, for example, although a half a dozen other people were turned down. Once in a rare while an organizer will "take a chance" on an unknown practitioner and several very good professional practitioners have been discovered in this manner. More likely, however, the organizer will check the person out with other members of the community. In some cases this search may produce a sponsor.
for the person.

The easiest way of breaking into the psychic faire scene is to acquire a sponsor from among the established practitioners in the community. Lin and I became faire participants because we knew the organizer and were befriended by tarot card readers who served as our sponsors. Once we had an established reputation by doing faires it was not difficult to gain admittance at other faires. If our first faire participation had resulted in negative reports to the organizer from other professional practitioners or the general public, then in all probability we would have been excluded from future participation. During our participation in the faire scene I knew of several practitioners who were excluded because of negative reports from other professionals and the general public. I attempted to check out the basis for these reports but received rather fuzzy and ambiguous reports on why these people had been excluded—they were acting like gypsies, their readings were very negative, they made references to witchcraft, etc.—and was otherwise unable to confirm any precise factual basis for this exclusion. The facts really do not matter, however, since the mere perception of unethical conduct is sufficient in the absence of peer support to result in stigma.

The booths assigned to professional practitioners and other participants at a faire also depend on reputation and personal relationships with the organizers and other community insiders. People with a national reputation and regularly participating locals are assigned the best locations at the faire. Best, in this case, is determined by a high degree of visibility and accessibility to clientele. Participants
without an established reputation, inside contacts, or new-comers to
the faire scene will receive marginal booths, such as next to the re-
freshment stand, near busy intersections, or otherwise hidden and in-
accessible. The first faire Lin and I participated in, for example,
we were assigned a booth near a closet housing the public address sys-
tem. It also was located in a corner making it less visible and ac-
cessible to clientele. This factor, and the fact that the organiza-
tional staff was continually encroaching on our space to change tape
recorded music made it a very undesirable booth.

Before the faire actually opens, professional practitioners and
other participants set up booths. This entails hanging signs over the
booth advertising the services or practices to be offered, dressing up
the reading or exhibition table, and arranging any other props (decks
of cards, crystal balls, candles, and all other manners of esoteric
and occult paraphenalia). In short, preparing to meet the general
public. During this period participants circulate among themselves,
engaging in casual conversation. This interaction is hardly aimless,
however. In the course of casual conversation practitioners very
carefully check out other displays and evaluate their own booths on
this basis. Since making money depends on visibility, accessibility,
and attractiveness to clientele this matter is very important. I have
known practitioners to shun other practitioners perceived to have out-
done themselves and/or arrange their booths during the faire to keep
up with competitors. The attractiveness of one's booth to the general
public may make the difference between making and not making money.
In this respect professional practitioners are highly competitive.
This time of setting up and casual conversation also is used to establish the going rate for goods and services to be offered at the faire. All present will be polled sometime during this period to find out the rates practitioners have in mind. Eventually a base fee for particular types of services (especially readings and treatments) is established. The price of readings, for example, usually is fixed at between $10 and $20 a reading. If the established fee turns out to be too high and practitioners perceive they are losing too much business for this reason, fees may be renegotiated during the faire. In general, however, once the minimal rates have been established all professional practitioners are expected to conform to this standard. It is permissible to charge more than the going rate if one chooses. But rate cutting is a breach of professional standards and it is severely sanctioned. I know of people who were excluded from subsequent faires, for example, because other professionals believed they were undercutting the established rates.

Established rates do not apply to readings or treatments for other professionals, however. In the case of professionals doing things for other professionals, these people negotiate an agreeable rate of exchange. This is usually what I do in exchange for what you do. Yet, it is not always easy to work out a mutually agreeable rate of exchange. During my participation in faires, for example, the going rate of a past-life regression was about $25 to $50, while tarot readings were valued at between $10 and $15. Consequently, I was unable to work a trade for a past-life regression, without otherwise becoming indebted to the other professional practitioner.
A number of other rules of conduct are generally observed by professionals and clientele. Unless friendships are well established it is not acceptable to ask professional practitioners how much they have earned. Whereas people do exchange this sort of information the exact figures are manipulated for specific purposes. During the course of the faire and especially in conversations with the organizer profit estimates almost always error conservatively. Professional practitioners attempt to leave the organizer with the impression that booth fees were too high. Since the organizer is dependent on professional practitioners s/he is sensitive to whether or not practitioners are making money. In a few cases I have known organizers to actually refund part of the fee if it becomes clear that a faire is resulting in professional losses. If the faire is generally successful then practitioners rarely admit to losing money. To lose money when everyone else is making it clearly signifies a lack of accomplishment reflecting on the practitioner's reputation in the community. It is also wise not to appear too successful, especially if you are a new-comer, since this also may result in a tarnished reputation.

Once a faire is under way conversations among professionals are restricted to neutral territory, such as vacant booths or hallways. It is a severe breach of professional standards to engage other professionals in their booth (unless specifically invited). Professional practitioners always attempt to sustain the appearance of being available for a client. To engage another professional in their booth may result in the appearance of unavailability and loss of business. This
rule is so important that I have never known anyone to violate it unless explicitly invited to do so, as in the case of breaks or slack periods.

Professional practitioners also observe respect for other professionals' clientele. Beyond appearing available, professionals are required to simply wait for clientele. Even if you are not busy and another professional has ten people waiting for a reading, it is unethical to offer your services to these people. In addition, professional practitioners are expected to maintain at least the pretense of respect for all other professionals. To disparage other professionals to clientele is a breach of professional ethics and sanctioned by all professionals, even if there is general consensus as to the incompetence of a particular practitioner. This rule also applies very generally to interaction among professionals, but there are occasions where a collection of professionals will disparage the competency or reputation of another professional, as in the case of people thought to be gypsies or engage in gypsy-like practices.

Professional rules pertinent to respect for other professionals and encroachment on territory also are enforced on clientele. Professionals may listen to gossip about other practitioners but very rarely will they react to clients' comments. The rule against encroachment on the territorial space of professionals also is enforced on clientele, visitors, and anyone else present. Unless otherwise stated all readings and treatments are supposed to be private. On numerous occasions I have heard professional practitioners request to be alone with a client. If a professional practitioner is busy, a
prospective client is required to wait until the person is free before inquiring about a reading or treatment. If this rule is violated without expressed permission, the client may not be acknowledged or the request for a reading or treatment may be denied. Privacy can be especially problematic in the case of couples or collections of friends or relatives who descend on a professional practitioner. In general, professional practitioners have previously prepared a standardized comment in the event that two or more people want to sit in on a reading. A psychic reader I know, for example, tells unwanted bystanders that being too close messes up the "vibes" and results in an inaccurate reading. These statements generally serve the purpose, but I also have known practitioners to refuse to do or to continue with the reading or treatment unless bystanders move.

Generally speaking, then, psychic faires are organized around the central activity of providing professional readings or treatments. The general public—clientele, visitors, etc.—pay to get into a room with booths arranged around the walls and exhibits located in the center. For the price of admission they may observe the happening and attend a number of lectures or demonstrations held at regular intervals. Readings or treatments require an additional outlay of money. If this is not known beforehand, novices to the faire scene quickly learn to ask the price of any readings or treatments they desire. While shopping for a price is not discouraged, clients quickly learn that prices for particular services are standardized; generally speaking, they do not know, of course, that professionals have worked this out by mutual or imposed agreement. Generally speaking, clients also
learn quite quickly that there is considerable variation in the reputation of professionals. Whereas there is a strictly enforced rule against disparaging other professionals, these people commonly direct clientele toward people with established reputations. In some cases this permits professionals with established reputations and sufficient business to charge more than the going rate. This works in the interests of newcomers to professional practice. Yet, it is more than offset by the lack of business due to insufficient reputation in the community. Here again sponsors may be important. During my first psychic faire, for example, the people who sponsored Lin and me regularly sent us clients when they had waiting lists. This was very much appreciated, but somewhat of a mixed blessing. Several of the clients sent my way were people with such complex and irremediable problems that our sponsors did not want to take the time to read for them anyway.

Discussion

Whereas there is an identifiable structure and organization to the activities of members and participants in psychic faires, it must be emphasized that these categories and rules provide only the most general basis for a social order. Members and especially the general public share very unevenly in this knowledge, and its application in particular situations and settings is always problematic and artfully accomplished. Furthermore, there are many and mostly incomplete categories and rules for accomplishing a specific activity, like tarot divination. These issues are taken up in the next few chapters that
deal specifically with reading the tarot.

The importance of psychic faires for the esoteric scene generally, and the esoteric community in particular, cannot be overestimated. The psychic faires provide for direct contact between the esoteric and exoteric societies. Through psychic faires members of the community are able to meet with the general public, manage public images of the esoteric community, and make money in support of their activities. For the esoteric community the psychic faires provide a setting and situation for interaction among isolated individual members and members of particular churches, study groups, and commercial enterprises. To the extent that members of the community share in a common culture this is the principal setting in which meanings are created, negotiated, and sustained on a face-to-face basis.

As previously noted the production of psychic faires makes the organizer(s) one of the most powerful people in the community. In the Valley, the editor of Psychic uses this major channel of communication and production of faires as the basis for tremendous power. None of the sponsors of mini-faires has been successful enough to seriously challenge this leader. Indeed, the production of a psychic faire by the local university in cooperation with this leader was used as an index of his power for the entire community. The university faire was controlled by its student government in spite of an attempt by the editor of Psychic to get them to turn the production over to him. Unlike the editor, the student government leaders did not have inside contacts within the community and therefore they were unable to line up an extensive variety of reputable professionals.
This problem was compounded by a misunderstanding on the part of student government leaders as to the commercial aspects of the esoteric community. They seemed to labor under the assumption that esoteric and occult participants were like traditional religious people with a strictly altruistic interest in the general public. These problems were compounded further by a misunderstanding of potential clientele and a failure to advertise and schedule the event in terms of target populations. Student leaders, for example, assumed that the topic of esotericism was of extensive general interest among students. Attendance at the faire indicated that it was of most interest to older students, not on campus at the time the event was scheduled, and other members of the local university community. As a consequence of these problems the faire generally was a failure, and student leaders ended up refunding most of the booth fees to the few professional practitioners who did attend. The editor of Psychic used this failure as a demonstration of his ability to organize a successful faire. Professional practitioners with whom I talked generally supported this conclusion and agreed that in the future they would primarily restrict their participation in faires to those sponsored by the community leader.

Finally, it must be noted that the editor's personal power extends to the power of the psychic segment of the community of which he is the principal leader. While there are many dimensions to this person's power and that of the psychic segment of the community, control of psychic faires alone is sufficient to place other segments of the community in a position of dependence. Indeed, there is a profound
sense in which the esoteric community as such is the product of this person's organizational skills.
NOTES

1. I have been able to collect modest information about psychic faires from other regions of the country. Data drawn from the West Coast, East Coast, and Midwest support the conclusion that psychic faires also are a central feature of this esoteric scene nationally. Furthermore, these data suggest that whereas there are some regional differences in the structure and organization of faires, the picture presented here is very much like what occurs in other parts of the United States.

2. The major newspaper in the state where the Valley is located has repeatedly refused to accept advertisements on psychic faires and particular professional practitioners. This editorial decision has been officially legitimated for the reason that the paper is unable to ensure the ethics of professional practitioners. Perhaps needless to say, this reason is understood as bullshit by members of the community. Whereas this is perhaps subtle, members of the community take it as a further reflection of the tension between the esoteric community or scene generally, and the exoteric society.

3. It may be of some interest to note that alcoholic drinks are never served at these events. This situation was occasioned by an attempt to serve alcohol at a large psychic faire. Professional practitioners, especially those from the spiritual segment of the community, along with people devoted to physical health, raised such a fuss that the organizer had to stop sales after a half day's operation.
CHAPTER VI

BECOMING A TAROT CARD READER

The preceding chapters have described and analyzed the esoteric scene in America today, the esoteric community in the Valley, the central activity of Psychic Faires, and the manner in which I became a member of the esoteric community. Esoteric beliefs, practices, and the activities of members have been interpreted within the general social context of making sense out of the everyday life world; that is, providing it with meaning. In some sense this general description and analysis of the esoteric and occult has dealt with phenomena about which there has been considerable previous sociological discussion. This discussion differs from previous reports principally in terms of the terms of the apprehension of an insiders' world of meaning. Whereas previous studies have stopped at this point—and commonly short of describing and analyzing the members' perspective—the following chapters explore in considerable detail actual esoteric and occult practices. In this chapter I describe and analyze the manner in which I became a tarot card reader in the esoteric community. The next chapter focuses on the sociohistorical construction of the occult tarot and the formal structure of this body of knowledge. The last chapter on the tarot describes and analyzes the manner in which tarot divination is socially accomplished in particular situations and settings.
Together these chapters are intended to provide an existentially grounded interpretation and understanding of the central feature of the esoteric and occult in America today—that is, its actual everyday life practice.

My Discovery of the Tarot

When this study began I was largely ignorant of the existence of tarot cards, the body of knowledge they represent, and the manner in which they are used for divination. My first encounter with the cards came through "D," a student who claimed to be a "witch." "D" invited Lin and me and our children to her home one evening for the purpose of discussing the esoteric and occult. In anticipation of the evening Lin and I had decided to ask D for a tarot reading (as this topic had been mentioned previously). Shortly after our arrival D brought out several tarot packs, and as I looked them over she began explaining the cards and how they worked. Since D and her fifteen year old daughter read the tarot and take the advice of the cards seriously, everyone—including the children—became involved in looking at and talking about the cards.

It was some time later before I had the opportunity to get the promised reading. Eventually D spread the cards for me and began talking about my past, present, and future with considerable certainty. My notes on the evening (recorded later) indicate that I was not exactly impressed by D's reading. In discussing the matter with Lin, however, we both agreed that the tarot was something of special interest. Indeed, it was one of the first occult practices I had
observed first hand.

I continued to interact with D and her children socially, and from time to time we got together to discuss matters of mutual interest, commonly the occult. On one of these occasions D again read the cards for Lin and me. My reading was especially strange since after spreading the cards and making a few comments, D refused to continue on the pretense that she could not tell me what the cards said at this time. In reading the cards I noticed that D had a tendency to dwell on the relationship between Lin and myself. Her references to the possibility of one or both of us having a sexual affair became a recurrent feature of these readings. I interpreted the situation as one in which D was not too subtly attempting to discover the exact nature of the relationship between Lin and me, in the absence of explicit information from us.

I shortly became convinced that D's references to the probability of Lin, in particular, having an affair was an attempt to manipulate us. The information about Lin's future affair included detailed descriptions of a particular male, someone with blonde hair, built in such and such a manner, and so on. I came to take this information seriously and began looking for this blonde-haired male among our friends, associates, and acquaintances, as well as the people with whom Lin interacted at school. Lin felt my reaction was silly, although the fact that these prophecies bothered me also bothered her. On this account, Lin's field notes are instructive:

[D] has read the cards for herself, her family, and friends for years and has a collection of decks, several of which I found exceptionally pleasing in an
aesthetic sense. She read the cards for Danny and me, but her interpretations were, on the whole, vague and at this point I can remember only a couple of items from my reading which were specific. One prediction she made was rather noteworthy, more because of our reaction to it than because of its possible accuracy: she stated that I was going to have an affair with a blonde man. My first response was, "Oh, how silly!" and Danny and I reasoned that, since we both had noticed a romantic attraction by D toward Danny, she was in a roundabout manner attempting to either create discord between us or to question our attitudes about an open relationship. Even though we verbally negated the idea of my having an affair, I began to notice in Danny's behavior what was, in my opinion, an irrational jealousy directed toward all the blonde men with whom I interacted. To me this was a real revelation: my Danny, the most sane, most rational, most skeptic of men—being affected by a prediction made by a tarot card reader!

Although it is difficult to convey the context in which this situation arose, I must admit this forecast really bothered me. I reacted by placing distance between myself and D.

Stimulated by D's use of the tarot, Lin became interested in getting a deck of her own. We began visiting occult book and supply stores in search of a tarot for Lin. Since it was Lin who was especially interested in the tarot at this point, her comments--taken from field notes--are again instructive.

I was fascinated and intrigued by the power (of suggestion?) inherent in the tarot and decided to obtain a deck of my own. We were researching several occult groups in the area at the time, and I also felt that my interest in and knowledge of the tarot could serve as an entree, a ticket for acceptance by the participants in these activities. Having legitimized my desire to own a tarot deck, we began a search for purchase that extended from [the Valley] to [the West Coast] and finally ended when Danny bought me the Aquarian tarot deck (illustrated by David Palladini) and the accompanying "symbolic key to the ancient mysteries" by F. Graves.
Through this book Lin began learning the symbolic meanings of the seventy-eight cards and other information (shuffling the cards, spreading the cards, techniques for interpreting the order of the cards, etc.) necessary to do a divinatory reading. By the early portion of 1977 she was doing readings for herself, the rest of the family, and a few close friends.

As the occult theosophy of the tarot is a very complex subject, requiring for divinatory readings the storage of considerable information for immediate recall, Lin's early readings were performed in a very uneasy and sometimes tedious fashion. As part of her plan of study, Lin used the book accompanying her deck as a workbook, writing in different interpretations of the cards and additional information in the corresponding section of the text. Lin's early attempts at tarot divination were accomplished in conjunction with consultation of this text.

During the Winter Lin enrolled in a class on the tarot offered by a "professional" tarot card reader, a man who was also the minister and leader of a quasi-religious organization in the Valley. In attending these classes we were surprised and disappointed that the instructor seemed to be simply reading divinatory meanings of the tarot to the class from standard reference works. As a non-participant observer I was interested to see that Lin commonly knew as much about the tarot cards as the instructor. The first several meetings were characterized by a constant dialogue between Lin and her teacher. While I found these sessions an excellent opportunity to collect data on tarot card readers and the theosophy of the cards in use, Lin quickly
became disenchanted. After several classes she decided to discontinue involvement since she felt that as much could be accomplished by individualized study.

In February of 1977 I began giving serious consideration to following Lin's lead and making the tarot the focal point of the study. In early March I again attended a psychic faire. This time I decided to request several tarot readings to as to learn more about its operation. At the faire I paid for and received two tarot readings from different professionals in the Valley. The first reading was very general and did not seem to me to be especially interesting or unusual. The second reading, however, was exciting, largely due to the obviously polished and accomplished performance of the reader. During the next few days, weeks, and months I periodically reconsidered the advice of the tarot reader and made a conscious effort to seek verification of the more specific predictions. Within several months I had arrived at the tentative conclusion that some of the predictions had indeed happened, but not in ways that seemed especially out of the ordinary. Over a year later, however, a different assessment began to emerge. Several events occurring during the intervening time, coupled with an emergent friendship with this particular reader, left me uncertain as to the accuracy of the predictions. I began to find it much easier to interpret this tarot reading as accurate.

During the next year I began the long process of becoming a tarot card reader. Even though I began reading the cards for divinatory purposes, my abiding preoccupation with the tarot tended away from divination and toward an investigation of different schools of
theosophy. I commonly used the tarot for the purpose of meditation, and even more commonly spent my time with different texts on and related to the subject. This investigation of the tarot led me deeper and deeper into the more scholarly aspects of the esoteric and occult. Hence, my discovery of the tarot served as a concrete point of departure into the world of contemporary esotericism, and the focus of subsequent investigating and reporting.

Learning to Read the Cards

Since I had been reading intensively in the esoteric and occult literature on the tarot, receiving tarot readings, and observing Lin's divinatory use of the cards, it was not extremely difficult to begin using the cards for divinatory purposes myself. This transition from a mere observer of tarot divination and querent of the cards was eased by considerable difficulty in my personal life at the time. I began using the cards to talk with myself and divine possible alternative courses of action. It was most reassuring to receive very positive information from the cards about a series of personal problems and decisions I was about to face. In consulting the cards I learned that these upcoming events would turn out to my liking in the long run. Which they did.

Still another factor easing my transition from tarot observer to tarot participant and reader was the frequency with which Lin was doing divinatory readings. The people who came to our home in search of a tarot reader provided ample opportunity for me to begin reading the cards for friends and strangers. After about a dozen rather clumsy
attempts at divination I gradually became more confident of my ability to read the cards. Within several months I was reading the cards with a considerable degree of success and self-confidence.

Throughout the Winter and Spring of 1977 I continued to collect esoteric literature on the tarot and decks of tarot cards. Through the literature I began to gain a sense of the tarot and its underlying theosophy. My study of the tarot literature constituted a growing commitment to this particular aspect of occultism, and like the student of any other subject I began to interpretatively integrate the occult lore of the tarot into a personal meaning system. Although my commitment to a rationalistic-scientistic worldview made it difficult at times to accept large portions of occultism, I learned to suspend my belief in "science" enough to enjoy certain occult experiences. As this commitment to the tarot grew I broadened my search of literature to include more academically legitimate sources of information. My investigation of the history, philosophy, theosophy, and use of the tarot gave rise to a series of related questions about the history of esotericism in Western culture. I increasingly came to the realization that esotericism essentially constituted a distinctive cultural tradition in the West, an underground tradition which had been systematically excluded over the centuries from the dominant cultural views. I finally arrived at the conclusion that to adequately appreciate esotericism, the entire "history" of Western culture would need to be rewritten. This conclusion reflected the manner in which I was able to synthesize a commitment to exoteric science and esoteric arts and sciences, like the tarot. Whereas I remained predominantly committed to
rationalism and empiricism as bases for knowledge and the conceptions of reality advanced on these bases, I also realized the severe limitations of this knowledge. Esotericism and occultism added dimensions lacking in this scientific worldview, especially an acknowledgement of the emotional and intuitive aspects of human experience. I was not willing to relinquish a scientific worldview, but I was willing to radically call it into question, and modify it in terms of occult claims and conceptions.

Throughout 1977-78 the apartment in which Lin and I resided became a common meeting place for a diverse collection of people interested in esotericism and occultism. Discussions commonly centered on the tarot and Lin was frequently requested to do divinatory readings for visitors. By this time I had gained considerable confidence in my own ability to read the cards; I too began reading the tarot for friends and other visitors. As the word that we did tarot readings circulated among this circle of friends and acquaintances, people began requesting this service from us on an increasingly regular basis. Evenings were quite commonly spent with friends and/or recent acquaintances reading the tarot and discussing the pertinence of its arcane wisdom.

It is virtually impossible to literally reconstruct the actual process whereby I became a tarot card reader. In important ways one's ability to actually read the cards is less important than the ability to sustain the impression of being able to do it successfully. This ability is developed in the process of doing it, not necessarily by any amount of academic study or preparation.
Through a combination of reading the tarot and referring to esoteric literature my appreciation for tarot divination grew. I generally disliked being placed in the position of counselor for strangers and listening to their problems, but the tarot provided a series of structural solutions for dealing with problems and a format for talking about life problems I otherwise found too intimate to discuss. Whereas I earlier felt somewhat uneasy about my ability to perform a tarot reading—or what would be recognized as tarot divination—I gradually became confident that I could read the cards in a manner much like people who provided this service for pay.

Nevertheless, many of the people with whom we had been interacting were novices to esotericism. Since my primary research interests were in the people who engaged in esotericism as a way of life, I began exploring the possibility of taking a course in the tarot from a "professional" reader. During the summer of 1977 I attended an organizational meeting of a formal class on the tarot. The instructors, a couple who read the cards as part of full-time involvement with esotericism in the Valley, were people with whom I had interacted before and respected. Indeed, Lin and I had previously received readings from "H," perhaps the leading tarot adept in the Valley. During and after this meeting I was able to talk in considerable detail with H. Since he knew that I had been reading the cards, he questioned my need to enroll in the course. I explained that I felt it necessary to receive instruction from someone with real expertise in tarot divination.

The following weekend Lin and I met the instructors at a local occult book and supply store for the purpose of taking the first of
two half-day lessons on the tarot and its divinatory use. Since Lin
and I were the only two students, out of approximately twenty people
in attendance at the organizational meeting, H made a decision not to
hold the class. So as not to lose the time entirely, however, H sug­
gested that we spend some time discussing the tarot and doing readings
for one another. After about an hour of asking questions of H, and
his wife, "S," H suggested that we do tarot readings. I was asked to
provide a reading for S, and Lin and H paired off to do a second read­
ing.

This proved to be a very uncomfortable situation for me. There­
tofore I had done readings for many different people (over a hundred
readings), but never before for someone who was an accomplished tarot
reader, let alone an instructor on the subject. With considerable
apprehension I asked S to shuffle to cards and cut them. I then
spread the cards in a very simple past, present, future format and be­
gan offering divinatory information. Somewhat to my surprise words
came easily, as they had before in attempts at divination. As I con­
tinued the reading, patterns of meaningful people and events began to
emerge from the cards, and I arranged these meanings into a set of in­
structions and advice that I hoped would be meaningful to S. Still
rather ill-at-ease, however, I hurried quickly through the reading,
bringing it to a somewhat abrupt close. I then asked the standard
closing question: "Do you have any questions about anything I said?"
S asked a few questions about the divinatory advice and carefully man­
gerated the situation so as to indicate that she appreciated the reading
and believed it to be helpful. Moreover, she indicated a feeling that
I had done an adequate job. We then reversed the roles, and she provided me with a reading. After we had finished and discussed the reading, we turned to find out how H and Lin were doing. H had just finished reading the cards for Lin and they were wrapping up the discussion of his advice. It was now Lin's turn to read.

With her usual polish Lin began reading the cards for H, with S and me listening in on the happening. Relieved that my turn was over, I became intent on observing this event. As Lin began reading the cards for H it became apparent that her usual "intuitive" capabilities were operating. Occasional comments on the part of H and S indicated that Lin was "hitting" on people, places, and events that they recognized as meaningful in H's life. As the reading progressed in this fashion, it seemed that Lin became more confident in what she was saying about H. At several points I became somewhat uncomfortable with the directness of Lin's interpretations about H's personality and lifestyle. As the reading drew to a close, Lin offered rather specific and quite personal information about H's self. Almost breathlessly I awaited H's reaction. It became clear immediately that he was impressed with her ability to read the cards and with the rather remarkable boldness of her interpretation. Yet, he seemed somewhat resistant to entirely confirm what Lin had said about him. S immediately became party to the conversation and began slowly, almost point by point, confirming Lin's interpretation, checking at the same time to be sure that such a degree of self disclosure was agreeable with H. With this additional input into the situation, H offered less resistance, and seemed to confirm S's statements. Having largely wrapped
up the reading, I checked the time, and discovered somewhat to my sur-
prise that we had been playing with the tarot for better than an hour.
The time provided a convenient excuse to draw closure on the meeting.
Before leaving, however, H and S encouraged us to try reading the cards
for pay either at a Psychic Faire or in connection with one of the
book and supply stores. Upon leaving, all of us confirmed that it had
been a most worthwhile and meaningful experience. Moreover, we made
tentative plans for getting together in the not too distant future.

Reading the Tarot

Early in the Fall of 1977 Lin and I were asked to read the tarot
for a fund raising event at a local Unitarian Church to which several
of our friends belonged. In spite of considerable apprehension about
doing tarot divination in public, before complete strangers, for pay,
we agreed. This experience proved to be ground breaking for me. Al-
though Lin had done a number of readings for complete strangers in such
an alien setting, I had never before read for complete strangers out-
side of our home. My apprehension was increased by the knowledge that
many, if not all, of the potential querents would not be familiar in
the least with esotericism, and thereby unprepared for an actual dem-
onstration of the occult.

The first reading confirmed my worst fears. Arriving at the
Church after Lin had been reading for several hours, I discovered a
considerable waiting list. So as to give everyone an opportunity to
receive a tarot reading I quickly organized a table in the same room
as Lin. My first querent was a woman about 45-50 who had been quite
anxious to receive a reading. Unbeknownst to me, she had expected a completely "private" reading; that is, a reading in a setting without other people present. After a brief explanation of the tarot and instructions to her on shuffling and cutting the cards I proceeded to spread and read the tarot. Every comment I made, however, was met with complete and total rejection—almost before the words were out of my mouth, it seemed. Nothing I could say fit with her experience. After about ten minutes of this horror, I finally stopped and indicated that all I could do was to read the cards; what they seemed to signify with respect to her situation required her participation. I also suggested that if she did not like what I was saying that she could have her money back. At this point she became less resistant to my attempts at divination, and began listening to what I had to say, occasionally acknowledging the significance and accuracy of certain statements. I rapidly completed the reading, but she insisted that I spread and read the cards again so she might really get her money's worth. I agreed, only for the purpose of getting rid of her as fast as possible.

By the time the reading was complete I was finished. I was ready to leave and forget about ever reading tarot cards in this manner again. Shortly, however, the meaning of the situation became clear to me. The minister indicated that the female querent had been upset at not getting a private audience. Slowly the meaning of her conduct began to fall into place. I hurriedly made arrangements to relocate my table in another room of the Church and continued reading the cards. Much to my relief the rest of the readings were routine. Indeed, two
of my readings met with considerable success. From this experience I was able to salvage a sense of reasonable accomplishment at reading the tarot in public. I reasoned that from this point onward nothing again could shake my faith in my ability to read the tarot.

From January of 1978 to the middle of April marked our most intensive period of participant involvement with the tarot in the esoteric community. During this period Lin and I conducted interviews with all of the key people who read the tarot for pay and other key informants with whom trusting relations had been developed. During this period we also socialized extensively with these same people—constituting a core of the esoteric community. Social evening in the homes of esoteric practitioners or at our place provided an excellent and relatively unobtrusive setting in which data on the tarot and esoteric community could be collected. In many important ways our participation with these people became based on friendship to which the collection of research data was secondary. Lin also conducted a class in tarot divination during this period. Consequently, on a once a week basis our home became the headquarters for a small group of people learning to interpret the tarot for divinatory purposes. In addition, it was a frequent gathering place for people interested in the occult, and a place where people (many of whom were our friends) came for tarot readings.

In a sense, the frequent requests by friends and acquaintances for divinatory readings became a problem. Many times I was not in the mood to do a tarot reading since completion of a satisfactory reading requires intense concentration. It is not a skill that can be turned on.
and off easily. In most cases I spent at least one hour doing a complete tarot reading, and not uncommonly another hour talking with the querent. I finally decided to stop reading the tarot for just anyone unless I collected a fee, although I did continue to read the cards for friends without pay on occasion. Yet in some ways this decision was a mistake. It soon became apparent that tarot divination might develop into a full time business activity. Although I originally encouraged people to call and set up an appointment for a reading for a fee, this practice was gradually discontinued.

In February Lin and I made a commitment to "J," the organizer of Psychic Faires, to purchase a booth and read "professionally." We were encouraged in this effort by H and S who had originally suggested that we read for pay. Reading the cards for pay at a Psychic Faire radically reoriented my perception and understanding of the esoteric community and "professional" reading. As a "professional" reader I assumed a perspective on the occult from which I had heretofore been excluded. Previously I had arrived at Psychic Faires as a seeker after everything was in operation—after all the front work had been done, and readers, psychics, and the like were prepared for meeting outsiders. Participation at the Faire provided a look into the work involved in preparing the scene for seekers and giving a "professional" performance.

Since Lin and I were just beginning to do "professional" service—in the context of the esoteric community—we purchased one booth for both of us rather than two separate booths. The plan was for Lin to read for a while, and for me to relieve her. In this way we both
received an opportunity to read the tarot for pay, without paying out additional money for a second booth. It also provided us with rest time and the opportunity to visit with other readers.

We arrived at the Psychic Center at about 11:30—a half hour before the Faire officially began. I was not too surprised to find that J had reserved a booth somewhat off in a corner for us, since it was to be expected that the very best locations would be reserved for regular Faire participants. J did not offer to relocate us in a more centralized position, but he did apologize for our rather out of the way location. Since J is dependent economically on the people who purchase booths, one of his primary concerns is that everyone is happy.

Lin and I proceeded to set up the booth. We had brought a frilly shawl to use as a table covering and a large poster advertising tarot divination made by a friend for this purpose. With the sign in place over the booth and the table arranged to our liking, things were ready for business. I was quite nervous about reading for pay even though this was not the first time. Since only one of us could use the table at a time, I retired to the car to brush up on my divinatory skills. This left Lin in charge of the booth. After about an hour she came out to the car. Business was slow but she found out some really interesting things to share with me. Before people began arriving several of the "professionals" present made the rounds from booth to booth checking out what people planned to charge for a reading. In this way they were able to establish a standard fee. For this Faire a fee of $10 per reading was agreed upon. Although few explicit statements
were made, it became clear that to undercut the ten dollar price would be a breach of the emergent order.

As the Faire progressed Lin and I began to worry about covering the expense of the booth investment ($40). She had only two customers all afternoon, and five readings were necessary to cover the day's expenses. No small part of this concern for money was related to the extent to which this topic came up in discussions among professionals. Everyone's primary concern seemed to be whether or not they would make expenses and show a profit for the time investment. The better known psychics were doing a good business, but we were not alone in having only a few customers. Throughout the day this general lack of activity provided plenty of opportunity to simply sit and talk with other professionals. In turn, these conversations were rich in insight into the actual work-a-day world of professional psychics.

By the end of the day Lin and I had only done four tarot readings between us. We would not have even done that many except that our friends H and S had sent several clients to us as they were too busy to handle everyone desiring a reading. Attempting to analyze the reasons for this situation, it became obvious that there were people who regularly attended Psychic Faires and knew readers at least by reputation.

Sunday was not much better. Although we did manage to do six readings and thereby cover expenses, nearly a full eight hours in the booth also was invested. In the afternoon Lin did several readings. When I arrived about suppertime she was quite discouraged, although excited to relate the details of numerous conversations with
professionals. Since we had a dinner engagement that evening the plan was for Lin to leave at supper time and for me to read as long as business was good and then join her at our friends' house. Although business was slow at first, just before I was ready to leave several querents sat down at my booth. I had no sooner finished two readings than another querent arrived. I also finished this reading and was preparing to leave (as it was long past time to join Lin) when H sent another client my way. Given the situation I felt more than obligated to do the reading.

Later that evening in reflecting on the last two days' activities I realized that I did not enjoy in the least doing tarot divination for pay. It was extremely demanding emotionally, indeed nerve racking, and time consuming, with little by way of reward beyond the collection of research materials. Furthermore, I had been required to do readings for people I have the most difficulty in reading for--women between the ages of 50 and 60. Whereas all of the readings I performed went very well, it still was not an enjoyable experience.

Reading at the Faire did provide insight, however, into the world of professional service. Within the context of a Faire the reader is faced with a situation in which there is virtually no choice of clientele. The reader is required to perform a particular service, in my case tarot divination, on demand. Even under the best conditions tarot divination is a tricky business. In the more private setting of a home I had the opportunity to mentally prepare for rendering a divinatory performance. This includes tuning into knowledge of the divinatory meanings of the cards and mentally anticipating the various steps.
in the performance. In the private setting there is usually an opportunity to become acquainted with the person before the reading is performed. In doing the reading there is time to explain what is happening to the querent and prepare them for what to expect; that is, to negotiate a sense of my personal understanding of the tarot. Once the cards are spread there is less pressure to immediately demonstrate deep insight into the querent's life situation. If you are unsuccessful with a particular spread of the cards there is plenty of time to spread them again, without demonstrating a lack of professional expertise.

Within the context of a Psychic Faire this more casual situation is radically altered. Complete strangers walk up, sit down, and request a divinatory reading of the cards. There is a subtle and immediate pressure to reveal deep insight into the querent's life. In a straight tarot reading conducted in private, the reader can depend on the cards and techniques, such as the grammar previously discussed, to produce meaning for the querent. If an account of the querent's life does not emerge from the cards, a brief period of concentration and meditation on the cards will usually produce vivid images which can be conveyed to the querent as a foundation for subsequent negotiation. At a Psychic Faire, however, one is obligated to produce insight immediately. To immediately demonstrate a sense of expertise, the reader is required to find and use nonverbal and verbal cues provided by the querent in the event that images are not immediately forthcoming from the cards. Every professional reader is consciously aware of access to this information and the possible necessity of using it in the event that they are unable to "get anything" from the cards.
In doing readings at home I was able to assume the position that if the reading turned out to be a failure, "so what." At a Faire this state of mind is simply not possible. The querent expects a demonstration of the occult. Other readers assume that you are able to do whatever it is that you claim. One's reputation and identity in the community depend, then, on the ability to deliver upon demand. In many situations this is no problem, the cards simply seem to jump out at you, the words flow easily, and the querent periodically provides feedback that what is being said is significant. If this does not happen, however, there must be a way of remedying the situation. In cases of this sort the professional reader has recourse to the techniques of "cold reading." You check out the querent's style of dress, age, sex, rings, and any other visible or verbal cues that might be potentially useful. Based on this information you attempt to immediately demonstrate deep insight into the querent's life situation. If you are lucky you "hit" upon something to which the querent responds. Once this dialogue is established it then becomes possible to return to the cards and develop this theme—health, sex, marriage, money, career, etc.—on the basis of a structural interpretation of the cards.

Whereas professional readers attempt to do straight readings—that is, readings based exclusively on the cards or particular techniques and not on the techniques of cold reading—everyone also employs cold reading techniques when necessary. This is especially true for the person attempting to become established in the community. Once a considerable reputation has been established, it then becomes possible to occasionally admit that for whatever reasons, your "psychic"
abilities are simply not functioning in a particular reading situation. But this admission is potentially disastrous for the person attempting to become established. Furthermore, among insiders there is no special secret that everyone occasionally employs cold reading techniques. Indeed, the professional service-for-pay situation itself is viewed as a sort of prostitution. That is, readers uniformly distinguish between serious readings performed for friends, family, or self as opposed to those performed for pay. At the aforementioned Psychic Faire, for instance, there was considerable joking among insiders about particular clients ("what a dope," etc.) and the reading for pay situation. Toward the end of the Faire, after the early afternoon tension had subsided and readers were more relaxed and tired, one booth participant broke up the insiders present with a behind the scene remark: "Well, here comes another mark, oops, I mean client."

Late in the Spring of 1978 Lin and I again read the tarot cards at a Psychic Faire. Having been through this experience before, I was considerably more relaxed, and the Faire was more or less routine. At this Faire it became clear to me by the way we were treated by insiders that we had achieved considerable acceptance. Unlike previous get-togethers among community leaders, our booth was commonly a meeting place for casual conversation about community affairs, esoteric beliefs and practices, and everyday life problems. Unlike previous encounters with members, in this situation I was treated without reservation as a fully participating member of the community. This degree of acceptance was further reinforced by the request that I provide a special lecture on an aspect of esotericism of my choosing.
As Spring gave way to Summer, I gradually discontinued participating in community affairs and turned my attention to the drafting of the present report. This gradual movement away from intensive participation in the community was facilitated by less activity during the hot summer months. Although I continued to interact with the people who had become relatively close friends, I prepared them for my eventual withdrawal. This withdrawal was complete when I moved from the Valley in September of 1978.

Membership in Perspective

The process whereby I became a more or less fully participating member of the esoteric community as a professional tarot card reader involved a gradual movement from an outside, exoteric observer. Since this transition from outside observer to esoteric participant was gradual it is difficult to account for all of the changes I underwent. Nevertheless, to become a participant in esotericism and/or occultism is to learn to see the world differently than before. To be a member of an esoteric subculture is to possess knowledge about the other people and groups inhabiting this subworld of meaning, and the cognitive categories used to interpret and justify human existence in the everyday life world.

In the beginning I had no special knowledge of the world of esotericism and occultism beyond the popular cultural stereotypes. By investigating the world of esotericism I gradually learned to identify individuals and collectivities belonging to this subworld and to distinguish among their activities. As an outside observer I had been
unable to distinguish among the perplexing array of esoteric beliefs and practices or the participants involved. Before attending the first Psychic Faire, for example, I was unaware of anything called the "esoteric community," or of the different factions of which it is composed. Although the differences between tarot card readers and psychic readers seem obvious now, this distinction had no real meaning to me before becoming involved in community affairs. In addition, through my involvement with the tarot I gradually learned to distinguish among tarot readers in terms of specific theosophical orientations to the cards and styles of interpretation. All of these meanings were a blur from the perspective of the exoteric society.

As a member of the esoteric community, knowledge of the manner in which this social world is arranged becomes taken for granted. To the outsider, for example, the comment that so and so is a "gypsy" is relatively meaningless. To the member, by contrast, the application of this label serves to identify an illegitimate practitioner and clearly distinguish the moral order of the esoteric community from the realm of fakes and frauds. Likewise, members know as a matter of routine differences between types of esoteric doctrines, related practices, and the people with whom these beliefs and practices are associated. Tarot card readers, for instance, never use the term "fortune-telling" to identify what they do. "Fortune-telling" is what "gypsies" do, whereas legitimate tarot card readers do "divination."

To be a member of an esoteric subworld is to learn new and different interpretations for the mundane affairs of everyday life. One of the people who learned to read tarot cards from Lin, for example,
was a 28 year old female, divorced, and the mother of a seven year old
daughter, from a middle-class background, and a public school teacher.
When we first met "L" she was into teaching school, raising her daugh­
ter, casual dating, and doing art. As she learned to read the tarot
it became a means of making sense of virtually every aspect of her
life. While at our home one evening, for example, L related a story
about meeting a new boyfriend. By her account a girlfriend had in­
vited her to a local bar where they were to meet other friends and
play a few games of backgammon. After several visits to the bar, L
decided one evening to take her tarot cards. In retrospect she main­
tained that she had a feeling that she should do a reading for a man
they had met. At the bar that evening she mentioned the tarot cards
to this man and another person near them immediately became attentive
and requested a tarot reading. Although they had not met before, L
had previously seen this man in the bar and agreed to do a tarot read­
ing. Through the tarot reading they became friends and later began
dating. When I first met her friend, who was a lawyer, at L's home
one evening, they both talked about the tarot and how significant L's
reading had been. We were playing cards that evening and L's date be­
gan talking about psychic powers and seeking L's cooperation in medita­
ting upon receiving a good playing hand. They would join hands across
the table and concentrate on particular cards. Several outstanding
hands merely reinforced this attempt to call upon psychic powers.

Several days later L came over to our home. She was in the pro­
cess of making several important decisions. Since meeting the lawyer
they had become almost constant companions and the esotericism of the
tarot had become an important source of solidarity between them. He had invited her to go with him on a business trip to Hawaii. L was anxious to go but a previous boyfriend lived in Hawaii, a guy whom she still cared about and wanted to see. To complicate the situation further, L was aware that since she and the Hawaiian boyfriend had been apart, he had become involved in a romantic relationship with another woman. Although she wanted to go to Hawaii, in thinking about the possible trip L began to realize that the lawyer, with whom she had planned to go, was not the person she wanted to be with. By L's account she attempted to resolve this very complex situation by tarot divination. In consulting the cards she began to have the feeling that the man in Hawaii was about to call her. Sure enough, by her account, he did call within several days to report that he had just broken up with the girl he was seeing, and he wanted L to come for a visit. In relating this story it became clear that L was using the tarot and related esotericisms to interpret present circumstances and make decisions about what course of action to follow. The evening she related the story Lin and I were asked to read the tarot cards for her. Neither of the readings we provided pointed directly to a particular course of action. Indeed, I used the tarot reading situation to explore L's feelings about the situation, and raised questions she might want to consider in choosing among alternative courses of action. Nevertheless, this advice was used to justify making a particular decision. Like many other people, L had learned to use esoteric knowledge to make sense of particular life situations.
L's experience stands in marked contrast with that of people who do not subscribe to esoteric teachings. To interpret events esoterically requires that one at least accept the plausibility of esoteric doctrines and practices. Once this assumption is made it is easy to interpret the world in this fashion. If this assumption does not hold, practices like tarot divination are impossible. This was vividly demonstrated to me in an attempt to explain the operation of the tarot to a friend who was a graduate student in sociology at a large midwestern university. While in the Valley for a visit, this friend, "C," asked me to do a reading for him as a demonstration. I agreed and explained that I would do a straight reading to illustrate and then we could discuss its sociological significance. I thought this approach would place us both in a position to assume for the time being the plausibility of tarot divination. I explained a little of the tarot, had C shuffle the cards, and then spread them in a divinatory fashion. As I began talking about past events in C's life a rather silly grin came over his face and in short order we were both laughing uncontrollably at the nature of the information I was providing. This reaction totally destroyed the sense of the situation, and it was some time before I was able to regain my composure. I acknowledged to C that whereas the information I was providing might seem obvious considering our close personal relationship, I was seriously attempting to restrict myself to interpreting the tarot as it pertained to his particular situation.

Having hopefully salvaged some sense of seriousness about what I was doing, I again began interpreting the cards for C. A few minutes later, however, we were once again rolling with laughter. Again I
took control and demanded that we assume the position that tarot divination was a plausible and serious matter. With order restored, I began for the third time to provide C with a divinatory reading of the tarot. For the third time he began grinning, then breaking out in laughter. In the face of C's incredulity, I too found it impossible to take the matter seriously and the attempt at divination ended.

In reflecting upon this situation later in the day I became personally disturbed by the incident. In all of the tarot readings I had performed this had never happened to me before. I slowly began to realize that C had been unable to assume the plausibility of our activity. Whereas I also remained somewhat skeptical about members' understandings of tarot divination, before this incident I had never had difficulty in assuming its legitimacy for the time being. C's incredulity sufficiently disrupted this assumption so as to make it difficult, if not impossible, for me to continue. In short, then, any doubts one may have about the legitimacy of esoteric beliefs and practices must be suspended at least temporarily in order to create a sense of mutual accomplishment. Once the activity has been performed, then it is possible to reflectively analyze it, calling into question any or all of the performance.

This chapter has described the process whereby I became a more or less fully participating member of the esoteric community as a professional tarot card reader. It has focussed on my transition from the exoteric society as an outside observer to a professional tarot card reader in the esoteric community. Besides describing this process I have attempted to describe my subjective feelings and reactions.
to the people, places, and situations encountered. This discussion therefore is not merely an account of the methods by which data were collected, but a discussion of how I became the data.

It must be emphasized that membership is never absolute. The transition from exoteric to esoteric culture is gradual. As one becomes a participant in esotericism you gradually learn the social landscape, the meaningful categories of experience contained therein, and ways of interpreting reality esoterically. In the process one gradually becomes attentive to previously unknown interpretations of the everyday life world. To become a member of the esoteric scene is to find a different significance and meaning in life.
CHAPTER VII

THE STRUCTURE OF THE TAROT

The Occult Tarot

Ostensibly the tarot is a special pack of seventy-eight cards. Like standard playing cards—to which the tarot may be related—the tarot is composed of four suits: swords (epees, spades); wands (staves, scepters, batons); cups (chalices, goblets); and pentacles (money, coins, circles). Within each suit cards are numbered ace through ten and include a set of court cards commonly called page, knight, queen, and king. Together these cards are said to compose the "minor arcana" (or lesser secrets) as distinctive from the twenty-two special cards called the "major arcana" (or greater secrets).

The history of the tarot is complete with a considerable variety of interpretations or theosophies of the cards. The labels for the twenty-two special secrets and their arrangement in the pack vary by particular occultists and theosophies. The labels for the cards and their arrangement with respect to one another is viewed, interpretatively, as proper if one agrees with the arrangement, and improper if the given order and arrangement does not correspond to a particular theosophy. Whereas the labels and order of the twenty-two major arcana vary, it is possible to identify more or less common labels and arrangements. Table 7 contains a list of the major arcana, including...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Primary Label—Secondary Labels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The Fool (The Foolish Man, the Vagabond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Magician (Juggler, Wizard, Magus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Popess (High Priestess, Female Pope, Wise Woman, Pope Joan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Empress (Isis, Queen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Emperor (Osiris, King)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Pope (Hierophant, Priest, Grand Master, Head Priest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Lovers (Marriage, Eros)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Chariot (Tirumphal Car, Wagon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Justice (Scales)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Hermit (Wise Man, Sage, Aged Man, Father (time), Hunchback)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Wheel of Fortune (Fate, Chance, Rota)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Strength (Force, Fortitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Hanged Man (Traitor, Thief, Tau Cross, Judas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Death (Skeleton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Temperance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Devil (Satan, Lucifer, Typhon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Tower (Lightning Struck Tower, House of God, Babel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Judgement (Day of Judgement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The World (Universe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a commonly used sequence of the cards and commonly used label for each card. A more or less standardized meaning is associated with each card but this attribution of meaning(s) depends on particular historical interpretations.

The origin(s) of tarot cards is obscure and a bewildering array of speculative theories have been advanced on the subject. Cards in general were known in the Eastern world (Korea and China) as early as the tenth century A.D. (see Hargrave, 1966). The appearance of cards in the Western world at a somewhat later date (around the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) suggests an Eastern origin of Western cards. It is commonly thought that cards appeared in the West as a result of trade with the East. There is not a direct connection between Eastern and Western cards, however. The earliest known Eastern cards differ considerably in design and structure from what appeared in the West.

Tarot cards first appeared in the West sometime about the fourteenth century along with the general renaissance of learning in Western Europe. Records of the earliest tarot packs known to have survived to the present indicate that the tarot was first known in Italy (Kaplan, 1975b). With the decline of the Byzantium Empire as a world trading power, Italian merchants came to control trade with the East and the Savoy passage into Europe. They spread the tarot from Northern Italy to Flanders, France, northwest Germany, and eventually the cards found their way into England, Scandinavia, and Russia (Douglas, 1972:26-38). Like standard playing cards to which the tarot may be related, the cards were used for the purposes of instruction, education, entertainment, divination, games, and gambling (see Hargrave, 1966).
The earliest known tarot pack, portions of which have survived to the present, was created for Filippo Maria Visconti—the Duke of Milan—in about 1415 (Douglas, 1972:22; Kaplan, 1975b). Filippo was a member of the powerful Visconti-Sforza families, who dominated considerable territory around Milan from about the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries. Through heraldic devices—symbolic representations of a dove, the ducal crown, the sun, an eagle, a lion, and interlocking rings—which mark the Visconti-Sforza tarocchi cards, scholars have identified several partial decks (see Kaplan, 1975a). Within the last several years the most nearly complete of all these existing decks—the Pierpont Morgan Bergamo pack—has been reproduced and marketed as the Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck (see Kaplan, 1975c). This tarot is very ornate and more than likely it was commissioned to honor special events, like weddings. It is unclear as to whether or not these early packs were used for divination or fortune-telling. In any case, there is little evidence that early tarot cards were associated with intellectual occult traditions of the period (see Yates, 1964).

A variety of "theories" have come to be associated with the tarot. It is believed to be derived from China, India, or Persia; an Egyptian book of knowledge preserved by wandering gypsies; recovered and returned to Europe by the crusaders; brought into Europe by invading Islamic armies; invented in Europe; a preserved Egyptian religion, or the mystery religion of Mithras, or part of a pagan Celtic tradition; the product of medieval heretics; the teachings of Kabalists in Morocco; related to the collective unconscious; and/or, associated
with the symbolism of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. While most of these theories of the tarot's origin have been discredited in recent years— even within occult circles—many contemporary practitioners subscribe religiously to a particular theory of origin and a related theosophy of the cards.

From the standpoint of exoteric (scientific) rules of evidence there is little to convince the skeptic that tarot cards existed much before the late fourteenth century. It seems likely, moreover, that the idea of cards was stimulated by contact with Eastern cultures, the peoples of which used cards for various purposes including divination. It seems probable, then, that an Italian merchant recently returned from the East directed some craftsmen to construct a pack of cards very loosely based on a knowledge of Eastern cards. Whether or not this pack was a tarot deck or not can be debated. The similarities between tarot cards and standard playing cards suggest a common origin. But, whether or not the tarot developed from standard playing cards—by adding the major trumps and a knight to the court cards—or playing cards came about as a consequence of dropping the trumps (except perhaps for the Fool which may have been retained as a joker) and the knight, is unclear. It is conceivable that playing cards and tarot cards have several independent origins about the same period of time.

In any case, early cards in the West were used primarily by the wealthy. Until the invention of block printing and other means of inexpensively reproducing decks in large numbers, use of cards was limited to folks with means, merely by the expense of producing a deck. The so-called Visconti pack, for instance, is truly a work of art, and
it cost far more than anyone but the very rich could afford. With the techniques for mass reproduction of the cards, they rapidly became available to people of more modest means. Among the wealthy, cards were used to provide instruction in the proper structure of human society, law, logic, the Bible, and other religious teachings, Greek mythology, history, geography, math, grammar, astronomy, and for technical skills like carving meat and fish. The recurrent religious symbolism of early packs of tarot cards suggests that they also were used for meditation and perhaps divination and/or fortune-telling. In Italy the tarot was used for the purpose of playing a card game like modern pinochle. In the game of Tarocchi, the major arcana or trumps serve as a permanent trump suit. Players bet on the number of points or tricks they can take on a given hand.

Once tarot cards were available to the more general public they became widely employed for gambling. The association of cards with gambling and the related activities of drinking, cheating, and the like, led to disapproval, especially by churchmen. Consequently, some people believed the cards to be the invention of the devil and related to paganism. In addition, cards in general were used for fortune-telling. This use of the cards also came into conflict with Church teachings concerning the nature of God and his plan for the future of human kind. Hence, a considerable opposition on the part of the Church, and through its leaders, the secular authorities, developed to the use of tarot cards.

After about 1750, tarot packs—most of which had been in Italian—began to appear with French suit marks. The publication of Court de
Gebelin's *Le Monde Primitif* (1781) marks the beginning of occult reference to and use of the tarot. de Gebelin (1725-1784) was a Protestant clergyman and Freemason with a scholarly interest in ancient civilizations. One volume of the massive *Le Monde Primitif* was devoted to tarot cards and the argument for an Egyptian origin. The symbolic pictures of the tarot, de Gebelin argues, represent the structure of the world and the purest doctrine of ancient Egyptian priests. In anticipation of the demise of their civilization, these priests synthetically represented the totality of their wisdom in the symbolism of the tarot. Furthermore, it was disguised as a game to prevent its destruction by Christians. According to this view, wandering gypsies preserved the cards as a game and eventually spread it throughout Europe. de Gebelin also argued that the word "tarot" derived from "tar," the Egyptian word meaning road or way, and "ro," meaning king or royal. Hence, the French word "tarot" meant the royal road. Furthermore, de Gebelin noticed a relationship between the 22 trumps and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. With respect to de Gebelin's arguments, it is important to note that he lived in a sociocultural period in which there was considerable fascination with ancient Egypt and other civilizations of the ancient world. This interest, of course, was stimulated during the Renaissance, especially through the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition, and it persisted into the modern world. It also should be mentioned that the hieroglyphics were not deciphered until after de Gebelin's death.

Theories of the sort advanced by de Gebelin—supported by elaborate and sophisticated arguments—were important in legitimating the
esoteric quality of the tarot and thereby its authority and significance for occultism. Indeed, the Egyptian-Gypsy theory has survived among occultists to the present, although contemporary students have exposed its evidential inaccuracy. Subsequent discoveries, such as the Rosetta stone, have led to rejection of this theory by leading occult sources on the tarot. Douglas (1972:20), for instance, borrowing from a leading authority on playing cards (Hargrave, 1966), observes that, "... Gypsies did not appear in the West in any numbers until the middle of the 15th century, a full hundred years after the cards were known in every country from Italy to Northern France."

Nevertheless, Court de Gebelin's quasi-scholarly writings were popularized and capitalized upon by a student, Etteilla (Alliette, his given name, spelled in reverse). Etteilla was a Parisian wig maker who also interpreted dreams, constructed horoscopes, read palms and tarot cards. To de Gebelin's more scholarly thinking on the tarot, Etteilla added smatterings of Kabalism and thinking derived from Raymond Lull. He also suggested that the tarot was composed 171 years after the Flood, a product of the God-like Hermes. Etteilla's writings were presented in Maniere de se recreer avec le Jeu de Cartes nomnees Tarot, published between 1783-1787. Etteilla also constructed his own tarot deck called the "Grand Etteilla Egyptian Gypsies Tarot," in an attempt to restore the cards to some original form. Commercially available today, this pack deviates considerably from other decks of the period, and it appears to be designed principally for the purpose of fortune-telling. This redesigning of the tarot, however, began a long tradition of searching for the most true and correct
version of the cards.

Nearly a hundred years after Etteilla, in 1856, Eliphas Levi (1810-1875), also known as Alphonse Louis Constant, an abbe of the Roman Catholic Church, published the *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic*, thereby building upon occult interpretations of the tarot. Levi was the first writer to systematically fit the tarot into the schema of the Kabala, linking the cards to the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition of Renaissance scholarship. He suggested that the 22 tarot trumps corresponded to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet; the four suits corresponded to the ten aspects of God. He believed the tarot to be of Jewish origin and related the cards to the preserved Egyptian Book of Thoth (Hermes). Hence, Levi is the first occultist to systematically relate the tarot to the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition thereby providing the foundation for subsequent occult interpretations of the tarot as the key to all of arcane wisdom.

Levi's writings on the tarot were developed further by Paul Christian, who like many occultists of the period substituted his real name, Jean Baptist Petois, for an occult pseudonym. Like Levi, who was Christian's teacher, he sustained a seriously scholarly interest in occultism. Christian constructed his own Kabalistic astrology to which the tarot cards were related. He believed that there was considerable evidence of Egyptian origins in a book on Egyptian mysteries attributed to Iamblichus (4th century A.D.). Furthermore, Iamblichus was thought to be an initiate of Osiris. The tarot trumps were supposed to be derived from a secret gallery in the Pyramids containing the symbolic pictures of the tarot trumps.
In France of the period there was again a tremendous interest in occultism. In 1887 Ely Star (whose real name was Eugene Jacobs, a "quack doctor") published *Mysteries of the Horoscope* using pictures borrowed from de Gebelin. Star operated in a lively circle of occultists in Paris during the 1880's, his wife was a fortune-teller, and this period—extending for the next hundred years—constitutes the Golden Age of modern occultism. Besides Levi, the most important writer on the tarot of this period is Papus (1865-1916) whose real name was Gerard Encausse. A physician, Papus published a series of books related to the tarot: *Traité Élémentaire de Science Occulte* (1888); *Le Tarot des Bohémiens*—the first handbook on the tarot (1889); *Traité Méthodique de Science Occulte* (1891); and *Le Tarot Devinatoire* (1909). Papus served in the French Army during W.W. I, traveled extensively to Russia where he was a friend to the Tsar, and provided leadership for an obscure Martinist group with a very large membership. The activities of this group were linked to the O.T.O (Order of the Temple of the Orient—a secret society founded by A. Crowley), and thereby to sexual magic.

Papus provided several important connections with other significant occult figures, not the least of whom were Oswald Wirth and the "Great Beast," Aleister Crowley. Swiss by national origin, Wirth published a rectified tarot of his own design. This deck is available commercially today, and it is of some special interest since Papus used these symbols in writing the first handbook on the tarot (*Le Tarot des Bohémiens*). Like other leading occultists of the period, Wirth was involved in many activities: medical hypnosis, a member of a Masonic...
society, and the Theosophical society. In addition, Wirth was a student and secretary of the Marquis Stanislas de Guaita.

The Marquis Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897) was a very influential French magician. He used drugs, published *Le Tarot des Imagiers du Moyen Age*, and in 1888 founded the Kabalistic Order of the Rose-Cross.

Whereas the activities of French occultists of this period provided an important tradition for the preservation of a revitalized Renaissance occultism, it was the activities of British occultists that were to have the most lasting influence on subsequent developments, especially in the English speaking world. Kenneth MacKenzie was a leading British occultist of the period. He founded the Royal Masonic Cyclopedia in 1887. He also was connected with other leading figures; he visited Levi in France in 1861; worked on a book on the tarot which was never published; and was related to the Societas Rosicruciana, founded in 1866.

One of the most prominent leaders of British occultism was MacGregor Mathers (Samuel Liddel Mathers). He published a booklet on the tarot in 1888; belonged to the Societas Rosicruciana; participated in Scottish Freemasonry; and, played an instrumental role in the foundation of the most famous *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, serving as the visible head of this organization in 1890.

Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1940), another member of the Golden Dawn, is perhaps the best known occult scholar of this period. He joined the Golden Dawn in 1891 and was a serious devotee of occultism, especially as practiced in the secret traditions. Waite suggested
that the four sacred objects of the Grail legends reappear in the
tarot. In 1903 he came to control the Golden Dawn temple in London,
and as leader of the society rewrote some of the rituals in a Chris­
tian spirit. He opposed the practice of magic, but encountered re­
sistance from other members, and closed down his version of the
Golden Dawn in 1914. Waite is best known for his design of a recti­
fied modern tarot deck, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith. If there
is a standard tarot pack, it is the Waite (or Waite-Rider) deck.
Subsequent designers of tarot packs have borrowed heavily from Waite.
Previous decks rarely provided extensive symbolic representation for
the 56 minor cards; after Waite almost all of the packs follow his
illustrations of the minor secrets, at least in spirit. In addition,
Waite altered the order and numbers of several cards in the major
arcana. This modification also has been copied by many subsequent
designers. Finally, Waite wrote extensively on all manners of the
occult, with the specific intention of making occult traditions un­
derstandable and meaningful to the average person. He has been
heavily criticized for this attempt since such an action consti­
tutes a severe breach of the ethics of secret societies. Moreover,
other members of secret societies have charged that Waite purposively
deceived his readership with respect to the true and correct doc­
trines of secret societies, especially the Golden Dawn.

Clearly the most colorful figure of British occultism at the
turn of the century was Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). Crowley was
raised among the Plymouth Brethren and he reacted throughout his life
to this early training in Christianity. Even as a child Crowley
apparently resisted Christian doctrines. He believed he was the Great Beast 666 of Revelations, whose mission was to destroy Christianity. As a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Crowley was first a devoted pupil of Mathers; later, however, he desired more prominence than he received in the order. After a series of disagreements with Mathers and others, he broke with the organization. Crowley was responsible for founding, organizing, and leading a number of secret organizations, including the Order of Silver Star, and the O.T.O. In the O.T.O. Crowley attained the highest rank. He is known both for his occult writings and other literary works. In 1944 he published his own version of tarot knowledge in The Book of Thoth and produced his own tarot designs—especially noteworthy for their erotic symbolism—which were artistically executed by Lady Frieda Harris.

Crowley vividly illustrates the exoteric stereotype of the Renaissance magus. He was infamous even during his lifetime for the most bizarre behavior. Crowley had a series of wives, several of whom committed suicide and/or went mad; the British press alleged that he engaged in pagan rituals and witchcraft; he was said to be sexually attracted to almost anything; and, he gained a considerable reputation as a sexual magician of the first order. Crowley believed he was the reincarnation of the great French occultist Levi.

The British occult traditions served as the basis for American developments. Paul Foster Case (1884–1954) was influenced by the Order of the Golden Dawn, especially Waite. Case claimed to be the head of the Order in the United States and Canada, and in this country he founded the Builders of the Adytum, a quasi-secret society built along
the lines of the Golden Dawn. This society still exists today. Case wrote three influential books on the tarot: *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* (1947), is the best known. Finally, Case also produced a rectified version of the cards, illustrated by Jessie Burns Parke, which serves as the official deck of the Builders of the Adytum.

Elbert Benjamine (also known by the pseudonym Z. Z. Zain) is another leading American occultist. He produced his own tarot deck called the Zain or Egyptian tarot, and founded the Church of Light in Los Angeles. Like Case's organization, the Church of Light is a quasi-secret society not unlike the Golden Dawn.

One additional American figure deserves at least brief mention. Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles and the Insight Institute. This organization uses a special tarot designed by Hall, and it also resembles the other quasi-secret societies mentioned above.

In sum, then, the contemporary occult tarot is the product of occult interpretations of its significance, begun during the eighteenth century in France. Several generations of French occultists interpreted the tarot in an occult fashion linking it to the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition of the Renaissance. This occult interpretation of the tarot reached a climax in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the leading members of which viewed the tarot as the symbolic key to the totality of arcane wisdom. This theosophy of the cards—represented by several different strains—was transplanted in the United States. During the last fifty years, Case, Benjamine, and others successfully established classical occult societies (most of which have remained
largely invisible) using the tarot as a symbolic key. With the more recent revival interest in the tarot also has grown. There are no less than fifty relatively recent (or recently released) works on the topic, and more than fifty tarot packs are available commercially today. It is noteworthy that a number of these tarots represent a revitalization and reinterpretation of arcane doctrines associated with the cards. Based on the sale of tarot cards in the Valley, I estimate that there are around 15,000 people who own at least one tarot pack.

Structures of Meaning

To understand the meanings of the tarot cards it is useful to think of it as a language. Each of the seventy-eight cards may be thought of as representing a different word in tarot. One set of words are contained in the twenty-two special cards of the major arcanum. Within the minor arcana these words or meanings are structured in terms of four suits. The divinatory interpretation of the cards requires a set of rules providing a sort of grammar. There are, for example, rules for spreading the cards and interpreting them in relationship to one another. Seen in this manner tarot divination is a complex and creative interactional process. The reader of the tarot is involved in a constant and ongoing dialogue with the pack. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to describing and analyzing the manner in which the meanings of the tarot may be structured. This discussion concentrates on a more or less formalized structure of the cards. For the time being the manner in which this language is actually used will be ignored for the purpose of getting a basic idea of its formal structure.
Table 8 presents a dictionary of meanings for the twenty-two cards of the major arcana drawn from the writing of three leading authorities: Douglas (indicated by a "D"); Kaplan (represented by a "K"); and Waite (noted by a "W"). While this selection of authorities is somewhat arbitrary, Douglas is one of the most scholarly writers on the tarot, Kaplan is a very contemporary writer who has attempted to synthesize the divinatory meanings of the cards by drawing on all the leading authorities, and Waite is perhaps the best known and leading authority on the cards. In addition to providing a basic divinatory meaning for each of the twenty-two special cards, Table 8 makes occasional reference to reversed or inverted meanings when they have been provided by the author. Reversed meanings are indicated by a "/" following the basic meaning of the card. It should be understood then that the divinatory meaning of a card may be interpreted one way if the card is seen as upright from the perspective of the reader or querent, and another way if it is reversed or inverted.

**TABLE 8. — Divinatory meanings of the major arcana according to three authorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Fool</th>
<th>The Magician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D unexpected influence; decision to be made; a new cycle of destiny/problems from impulsive action</td>
<td>D strength of will; initiative leading to success and triumph; adaptability and versatility; diplomacy and self confidence/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K thoughtlessness; irrationality; insecurity; spontaneity; pleasure; lack of discipline; indiscretion; beginning of an adventure; initiative; enthusiasm/faulty choice; indecision; apathy; lack of confidence</td>
<td>K thoughtlessness; irrationality; insecurity; spontaneity; pleasure; lack of discipline; indiscretion; beginning of an adventure; initiative; enthusiasm/faulty choice; indecision; apathy; lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W folly; mania; extravagance; intoxication; delirium; frenzy</td>
<td>W folly; mania; extravagance; intoxication; delirium; frenzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Magician (Continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>weakness of will; failure of nerve; inability to face reality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> Originality and creativity; utilization of capabilities; imagination; self-reliance; willpower; self-confidence; flexibility; slight of hand; bewilderment/weakness of will; indecision; ineptitude; delay; lack of imagination; willpower applied to evil ends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> skill; diplomacy; address; subtlety/sickness; pain; loss; disaster; enemies</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The High Priestess</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> the revealing of hidden things; bringing strength and hope; intuitive insight; source of creative talent/difficulties from emotional instability; problems from lack of foresight or reluctance to take sound advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> wisdom; sound judgement; common sense; understanding; serenity; objectivity; ability to teach others; intuition; lack of patience; platonic relationships/shortsightedness; lack of understanding; selfishness; improper judgement; conceit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> secrets, mystery; future unrevealed</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Empress</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> fertility; abundance; fruitfulness; motherhood; domestic stability; honesty; inspiration through nature; sense of security through pleasures of the senses; growth/domestic upheaval; over-protectiveness; sterility; psychic alienation; poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> feminine progress; action; development; fertility; attainment; marriage; children; material wealth; evolution; harassment; a leader; practical; intuitive/vacillation; inaction; lack of interest; delay in progress; anxiety; infertility; loss of material possessions; frittering away of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> fruitfullness; action; initiative; length of days</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Emperor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> willpower; self-control; conquest; authority; ambition; knowledge through experience/immaturity; weakness; subservience; loss of position; failure of ambition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> worldly power; accomplishment; confidence; wealth; stability; authority; leadership; war-making tendencies; paternity; male influences; direct pressure; conviction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emperor (Continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domination of intelligence and reason over emotion and passion; strength; attainment; goal directed/immaturity; ineffectiveness; lack of strength; indecision; inability</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hierophant</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D good counsel; advice; imposition; teaching; giver of wisdom; freedom through knowledge; inspirational help; the comfort of religion/misinformation; distortion of the truth; slander; propaganda; bad advice; misrepresentation</td>
<td>Ritualism; ceremonies; mercy; humilities; kindness; goodness; forgiveness; inspiration; alliance; compassion; servitude; inactivity; lack of conviction; timidity; conformity; inept in adapting to new circumstances; clinging to former ideals/overkindness; suspectibility; impotence; vulnerability; fragility; unorthodoxy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K marriage; alliance; captivity; servitude; mercy; goodness; inspiration</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Lovers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D time of choice; advised reliance on intuition rather than intellect; a moral choice/danger of a moral lapse; severe temptation; inability to make choice</td>
<td>Love; beauty; perfection; harmony; unanimity; trials overcome; confidence; trust; honor; beginning of a possible romance; infatuation; oblivious to consequences; examining; speculating; yearning/failure to meet test; unreliability; separation; frustration in love and marriage; interference by others; untrustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K attraction; love; beauty; trials overcome</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Chariot</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D success; triumph over obstacles; secure progress; victory through personal effort/one who rides rough-shod over others; overbearing forcefulness; inattention to rights of others; egocentricity; ruthlessness</td>
<td>Adversity overcome; turmoil; vengence; success; possible journey; escape; fleeing from reality; perplexity; urgency to gain control of emotions; determination/unsuccessful; defeat; failure; sudden collapse of plans; conquered; overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K succor; providence; war; triumph; presumption; vengeance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TABLE 8.</strong>—Continued</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength/Fortitude</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> opportunity to put plans into action; defeat of base impulses; reconciliation with an enemy/defeat; surrender to unworthy impulses; failure of nerve leading to loss of opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> strength; courage; fortitude; conviction; energy; determination; resolution; defiance; action; confidence; innate ability; zeal; fervor; accomplishment; conquest; heroism; virility; tireless efforts; liberation/weakness; pettiness; sickness; tyranny; lack of faith; abuse of power; indifference; succumb to temptation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> power, energy, action; courage; magnanimity; success; honors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Hermit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> need to retire from activities to think and plan; help and advice from wise counsellor; need to take things slowly; discretion and silence/refusal to take sound advice; suspicion of motives of others; fear of innovation; rejection of wisdom and assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> knowledge; solitude; prudence; discretion; caution; self-denial; withdrawal; regression; dissertation; annulment; insincerity; misleading; misguided; failure to face facts/imprudence; hatchiness; prematurity; foolish acts; incorrect advice; immaturity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> prudence; circumspection; treason; dissimulation; roguery; corruption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Wheel of Fortune</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> commencement of a new cycle; processes of destiny working through time; laws of fortune; suspicious omen/turn for worse; closing of a cycle of fortune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> destiny; fortune; fate; outcome; felicity; special gain or loss; culmination; conclusion; inevitability; unexpected events; advancement; progress/failure; ill luck; unexpected bad fate; broken sequence; interruption or inconsistency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong> destiny; fortune; success; elevation; luck; felicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> act of judgement; artibration; agreements by negotiation; vindication of truth; integrity/injustice; lack of fair dealing; bias; prejudice; legal tangles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> fairness; reasonableness; justice; proper balance; harmony; equity; righteousness; virtue; honor; virginity; just</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8—Continued</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justice (Continued)**

- reward; good intentions; self-satisfaction; equilibrium; impartiality/bias; false accusations; bigotry; severity in judgement; intolerance; abuse
- equity; rightness; probity; executive; triumph of the deserving side of law

**The Hanged Man**

- ability to adapt to changing circumstances; flexibility of mind; wisdom, justice from the unconscious/materialism; impending psychic disorder; inner struggle ending in defeat
- life in suspension; transition; change; reversal of the mind, way of life; boredom; abandonment; renunciation; sacrifice; repentance; readjustment; reorganization; improvement; rebirth; surrender; lack of progress/lack of sacrifice; failure to give of one's self; false prophecy; useless sacrifice; preoccupation with the ego

**Death**

- unexpected major change in circumstances; destruction as a blessing in disguise; removal of outdated or superfluous/element of chance
- clearing of way for new efforts; transformation; unexpected change; loss; failure; alteration; loss of income of financial security; beginning of a new era; illness/stagnation; immobility; slow changes; partial change; inertia; narrowly missing a serious accident or escaping from death or disaster

**Temperance**

- success possible by control of volatile factors; harmonious partnership/opposition by ineptitude; progress thwarted
- moderation; temperance; patience; accommodation; harmony; compatibility; fusion; adjustment; good influence; fortunate omen; consolidation; possibly too moderate to reach goal/discord; disunion; conflict of interest; hostility; inability to work with others; impatience; sterility; frustration

**The Devil**

- need to sublimate lower self; hidden forces at work/lust for
### TABLE 8.—Continued

#### The Devil (Continued)

- **D** for power; temptation to abuse one's position for personal ends; dangerous; repression of instincts
- **K** subordination; ravage; bondage; subservience; downfall; lack of success; weird experience; black magic; unexpected failure; violence; shock; fatality; self-destruction; disaster; unethical/release from bondage; respite; divorce; enlightenment
- **W** ravage; violence; extraordinary efforts; force; fatality

#### The Tower

- **D** suffering of individual by forces of destiny; apparent unfairness of natural disasters which strike all/unnecessary suffering; self-undoing
- **K** sudden, complete change; breaking down of old beliefs; abandonment of past relationships; changing opinion; unexpected events; disruption; adversity; calamity; misery; deception; bankruptcy; termination; havoc; downfall; ruin; divorce; loss of stability; loss of money; loss of security, love; setback; breaking into new areas/continued oppression; following old ways; living in a rut; entrapped in unhappy situation; imprisoned
- **W** misery; distress; indigence; adversity; calamity; disgrace; deception; ruin

#### The Star

- **D** insight into possibilities of future; widening of horizons; new life; vigor/rigidity of mind; self-doubt; lack of trust
- **K** hope; faith; inspiration; bright prospects; mixing of past, present; promising opportunity; optimism; insight; good omen; spiritual love; astrological influence; fulfillment; satisfaction; pleasure/unfulfilled hopes; disappointment; pessimism; bad luck; lack of opportunity; stubborness; imbalance
- **W** loss; theft; privation; abandonment; hope; bright prospects

#### The Moon

- **D** crisis of faith; need to use intuition; not reason/failure of nerve; fear of stepping beyond safe boundaries
- **K** deception; obscurity; trickery; dishonesta; disillusionment; danger; error; bad influence; insincerity; selfishness; deceit; false pretenses/trifling mistakes; overcoming bad influences; taking advantage of someone
- **W** hidden enemies; danger; deception; occult forces; error
TABLE 8.—Continued

The Sun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>vindication of daring ideas; success; achievement against all odds; triumph of innovator; safe refuge after peril; acclaim; approval; just reward/misjudgement ending in failure; fantasies of success replacing real attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>satisfaction; accomplishment; contentment; success; favorable relationships; love; joy; devotion; engagement; favorable omen; happy marriage; earthly happiness; liberation/unhappy marriage; loneliness; cancelled plans; broken engagement; clouded future; lack of friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>material happiness; fortunate marriage; contentment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judgement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>joy in accomplishment; new lease on life; return to health; justified pleasure in achievement/loss; guilt; reproach for wasted opportunities; punishment for failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>atonement; judgement; need to repent, forgive; conduct toward others unfair, unkind; rejuvenation; improvement; promotion; legal judgement in one's favor/disappointment; delay; failure to face facts; indecision; procrastination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>change of position; renewal; outcome; loss through lawsuit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>final, successful completion of matters in hand; culmination of events; ending of a cycle of destiny/stagnation; loss of momentum; failure of will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>attainment; completion; perfection; ultimate change; success; assurance; synthesis; fulfillment; triumph; admiration of others/imperfection; failure to complete task started; lack of vision; failure; disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>assured success; recompense; voyage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A dictionary for the meanings of the minor arcana is more difficult to find. Some occult writers do provide specific divinatory meanings for each card, but it is common to merely summarize each of the suits or sets of cards within each suit (such as court cards, all aces, all tens, and so on). It is also common practice to construct a structure for interpreting these cards. The reasons for this are quite
simple: fifty-six different meanings are difficult to memorize, and these cards are viewed as less important than the major arcana. Before I illustrate interpretative structures it is useful to provide some indication of a dictionary of conventional meanings for the minor arcana.

Table 9 presents the meanings of the minor arcana according to two authorities: Kaplan (represented by a K); and Case (represented by a C). These writers are leading authorities on the tarot and they do provide a dictionary of meanings for the minor arcana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 9.—Divinatory meanings of the minor arcana according to two authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wands</th>
<th>The suit of wands, rods, scepters, batons, or staves, is commonly associated with creativity, intuition, and spirituality. Cavendish associates this suit with vigorous, creative energy, work business, enterprise, initiative, and pressing things; Kaplan relates it to enterprise, growth, progress, advancement, animation, invention, energy, modesty, humility, and laborer-worker; and Douglas attributes the notions of inspiration, ideas, and intellect to this suit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ace | C energy; strength; enterprise; principle; beginnings  
K creation; beginnings; invention; start of undertaking; fortune; enterprise; gain |
| Two | C domination  
K mature individual; ruler; attainment of goals, needs; boldness; courage; dominant personality |
| Three | C established strength  
K practical knowledge; business acumen; strength; enterprise; negotiation; trade; commerce; undertakings |
TABLE 9.—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>perfected work</td>
<td>romance; society; harmony; newly acquired prosperity; peace;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tranquility; fruits of labor; rest after peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>strife; competition</td>
<td>unsatisfied desires; struggle; labor; endeavors; violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strife; conflict; obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>victory after strife; gain</td>
<td>conquest; triumph; good news; gain; advancement; expecta-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tions; desires; result of efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>valor; courage in face of difficulties</td>
<td>conquest; success; gain; overcoming obstacles and challenges;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>surmounting overwhelming odds; advantage; victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>activity; swiftness; approach to goal</td>
<td>swift activity; sudden progress or movement; speed; hastily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>made decisions; too rapid advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>preparedness; strength in reserve; victory after opposition</td>
<td>expectation of difficulties, changes; awaiting tribulation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>anticipation; hidden enemies; deception; discipline; order;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a pause in current struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>oppression; burden of ill-regulated power</td>
<td>overburdened; excessive pressures; problems soon to be res-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>solved; striving to meet a goal or to maintain a level or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>position; possibility of power for selfish ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>dark young man; messenger; brilliance; courage</td>
<td>faithful, loyal; envoy; emissary; consistency; important news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C dark, friendly young man; departure; change of residence</td>
<td>K departure; journey; advancement into the unknown; alteration; flight; absence; change of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Queen |  |  |
|-------|--------|
| C dark woman, magnetic; friendly; business success | K a sympathetic, understanding person; friendly; loving; honorable; chaste; practical; full of feminine charm and grace; capable of meaningful expression; love; gracious hostess; sincere interest in others |

| King |  |  |
|------|--------|
| C dark man; friendly; ardent; honest; possible inheritance | K honest, conscientious; mature; wise; devoted; friendly; sympathetic; educated; gentleman; married; fatherly |

| Cups |  |  |
|------|--------|
| This suit is associated with love, marriage and emotional matters |

| Ace |  |  |
|-----|--------|
| C fertility; productiveness; beauty; pleasure | K great abundance; fulfillment; perfection; joy; fertility; opulence; fullness; happiness; productiveness; beauty; pleasure; goodness; overflowing; favorable outlook |

| Two |  |  |
|-----|--------|
| C reciprocity; reflection | K love, friendship beginning or renewed; passion; union; engagement; understanding; cooperation; partnership; marriage |

| Three |  |  |
|------|--------|
| C pleasure; liberality; fulfillment; happy issue | K resolution of problems; conclusion; solace; healing; satisfactory result; partial fulfillment; compromise |

<p>| Four |  |  |
|-----|--------|
| C contemplation; dissatisfaction with material success | K weariness; aversion; disgust; disappointment; unhappiness; bitter experience; stationary period |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>partial loss; regret; friendship without meaning; marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>without love; imperfectional flaw; delayed inheritance; in-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>complete union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Six</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>memories; past influences vanishing; childhood; nostalgia;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faded images; longing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Seven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>fantasy; unrealistic attitude; imagination; daydreams;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foolish whims; wishful thinking; illusionary success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Eight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>discontinuance of effort; disappointment; abandonment of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>previous plans; shyness; modest; abandoned success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Nine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>material success; physical well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>success; material attainment; advantage; well-being; abun-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dance; good health; victory; difficulties surmounted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Ten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>lasting success; happiness to come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>home; abode; happiness; joy; pleasure; peace; love; con-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tentment; good family life; honor; esteem; virtue; reputa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>fair, studious youth; reflection; news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>studious and intent; reflective; meditative; loyal; willing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to offer services; helpful; trustworthy worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 9.—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card</th>
<th>Knight</th>
<th>Queen</th>
<th>King</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fair man; venusian; indolent; arrival; approach</td>
<td>fair woman; imaginative; poetic; gift of vision</td>
<td>fair man; calm exterior; subtle; violent; artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opportunity; arrival; approach; advancement; attraction; inducement; appeal; request; challenge; proposal; proposition</td>
<td>warmhearted; fair; poetic; beloved; adored; good friend, mother; devoted wife; practical; honest; possesses loving intelligence; gift of vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility; creativity; learned person; professional; business person; lawyer; religious; scientist; considerate; kindness; reliable; liberal; artist; generous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>This suit is associated with evil, death, disaster, courage, conflict, and intellectual matters</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invoked force; conquest; activity</td>
<td>great determination; initiative; strength; force; activity; excessiveness; triumph; power; success; fertility; prosperity; deep emotional feelings; love; championship; conquest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>balanced force; indecision; friendship</td>
<td>balanced force; harmony; firmness; concord; offsetting factors; stalemate; affection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sorrow; disappointment; tears; delay; absence; separation</td>
<td>absence; disappointment; strife; removal; dispersion; diversion; opposition; separation; delay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rest from strife; relief from anxiety; quietness; rest; not a card of death</td>
<td>respite; rest after illness; repose; replenishment; solitude; exile; retreat; temporary seclusion; abandonment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9—Continued</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Five</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>defeat; loss; failure; slander; dishonor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>conquest; defeat; destruction of others; degradation; adversaries; revocation; infamy; dishonor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Six</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>success after anxiety; passage from difficulties; journey by water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>trip, journey; travel voyage; route; headstrong attempt to overcome difficulties; expedient manner; success after anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seven</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>unstable effort; uncertainty; partial success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>new plans; wishes; fortitude; perseverance; attempt; endeavor; hope; confidence; fantasy; design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eight</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>indecision; waste of energy; crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>crisis; calamity; conflict; domination; imprisonment; turmoil; bad news; censure; criticism; sickness; calumny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nine</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>worry; suffering; despair; misery; loss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>misery; concern; unhappiness; miscarriage; anxiety over a loved one; worry; despair; suffering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ten</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>ruin; pain; desolation; suffer misfortune; not a card of sudden death; end of delusion in spiritual matters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>ruin; pain; affliction; sadness; mental anguish; desolation; tears; misfortune; trouble; disappointment; grief; sorrow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>vigilant; acute; subtle; active youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>adept in perceiving, uncovering unknown or less obvious; insight; vigilance; agility; spying; discreet; active youth; alert and awake to unknown dangers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>active; c'ever; subtle; skillful; domineering young man; enmity; wrath; war</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>bravery; skill; capacity; strength; heroic action; opposition; war; impetuous rush into unknown without fear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Queen</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>widowhood; mourning; keen, quick; intensely perceptive; subtle woman; unusually fond of dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>sharp; quick-witted; keen; intensely perceptive; subtle; widow or sadness; mourning; privation; absence; loneliness; separation; previous happiness, present misfortune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>distrustful; suspicious man; full of ideas; thoughts and designs; care; observation; extreme caution</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>active; determined; experiences; authoritative; controlled; commanding; professional; proficient; analytical; justice; force; superiority; full of ideas and designs</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pentacles</th>
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<tr>
<td>the suit of coins, disks or money is associated with material success, business, employment, careers, and money</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ace</th>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>material gain; wealth; contentment</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>perfection; attainment; prosperity; felicity; great wealth; riches; bliss; ecstasy; gold; valuable coins or artifacts; treasures; combination of material and spiritual prosperity</td>
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<tr>
<th>Two</th>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>harmony in midst of change</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>difficulty in launching new projects; difficult situations arising; new troubles; embarrassment; worry; concern</td>
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<tr>
<th>Three</th>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>construction; material increase; growth; financial gain</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>great skill in trade, work; mastery; perfection; artistic ability; dignity; reknown; rank; power</td>
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<tr>
<th>Four</th>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>earthly power; physical forces; skill in directing forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>love of material wealth; ursurer; miser; ungenerous</td>
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<td>Table 9—Continued</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Five</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>C concordance; affinity; adaptation</td>
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<tr>
<td>K material trouble; destitution; loss; failure; error; impoverishment; mistress; lover; misaffection</td>
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<td><strong>Six</strong></td>
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<td>C material prosperity; philanthropy; presents</td>
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<tr>
<td>K generosity; philanthropy; charity; kindness; gratification; gifts; material gain</td>
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<td><strong>Seven</strong></td>
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<td>C success unfulfilled; delay, but growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>K ingenuity; growth; hard work; progress; successful dealings; money; wealth; treasure; gain</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eight</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>C skill in material affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>K apprenticeship; craftsmanship; fast to learn; candor; frankness; modesty; handiwork; personal effort</td>
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<td><strong>Nine</strong></td>
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<td>C prudence; material gain; completion</td>
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<tr>
<td>K accomplishment; discernment; discretion; foresight; safety; prudence; material well-being; love of nature</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ten</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>C wealth; riches; material prosperity</td>
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<tr>
<td>K prosperity; security; safety; family; ancestry; inheritance; home; dwelling</td>
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<td><strong>Page</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C diligent; careful; deliberate youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>K keen concentration; application; study; scholarship; reflection; respect; knowledge; desire for learning; ideas; a do-gooder; bearer of news</td>
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<td><strong>Knight</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>C laborious; patient; dull young man</td>
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<tr>
<td>K mature; responsible; reliable; methodical; patient; persistent; able to conclude task; laborious; organized; capable</td>
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TABLE 9.—Continued

Queen

C  generous; intelligent; charming; moody; married woman
K  prosperity; well-being; wealth; abundance; luxury; opulence; extreme comfort; generosity; security; liberty; magnificence; grace; dignity; charitable; noble soul

King

C  friendly; steady; reliable; married man
K  experienced; successful leader; character, intelligence; business acumen; mathematical ability; loyal friend; reliable in marriage; successful business person; wise investment; ability to acquire money and valuable possessions

These more or less conventionalized meanings—as presented in Tables 8 and 9—provide considerable indication of the categories by which the world of everyday life is apprehended from the perspective of tarot knowledge. The everyday life world is seen in terms of twenty-two different dimensions corresponding to certain aspects of human existence. Furthermore, the everyday life world also involves the forces of emotions, evil, spirituality and good, and physical or material things. Each of these major forces, as represented by the four suits, is divided further into fourteen different dimensions represented by the cards numbered ace through ten, and the court cards.

It must be emphasized, however, that these conventions may be radically altered by particular readers in concrete situations. Like any body of knowledge, members' understandings of the tarot are partial and incomplete. Furthermore, these more or less conventional meanings are reinterpreted in terms of different orientations to the esoteric and occult. Within the esoteric community the tarot is used by all of the distinctive segments—spiritual, psychic, and esoteric—and within
these orientations the conventional meanings of the cards are reinterpreted to fit these philosophies of life.

As previously noted, members' interpretations of the tarot cards commonly depend less on the memorization of conventional meanings for the minor arcana than on the use of structure for interpretation and attribution of meaning. Whereas the fluent speaker of tarot may be able to recall a particular meaning for each of the fifty-six cards, very few tarot card readers actually do. Perhaps the most basic structure of interpretation has already been noted; that is, the attribution of some general significance to each of the four suits. To illustrate: cups stand for emotional matters; swords deal with intellectual concerns and/or disaster; rods pertain to spirituality or psychic powers; and pentacles represent economic, material, or career considerations. Each card in a suit can be interpreted then within these general guidelines. This process is facilitated by ordering the cards within each suit. Commonly used structures include viewing the cards on a continuum (from ace to ten, or ace to king) from good to bad (or the reverse), immature to mature, ignorance to enlightenment, ideal to actual, and so on. By recourse to a grammar (or structure) of this sort it is possible to consistently recreate meaning at any time regardless of particular decks of cards.

Use of this grammar is sufficient to produce an interpretation of the meaning of the tarot cards, but it is not sufficient to produce an acceptable divinatory reading. To interpret past, present, and future events it also is necessary to arrange, lay-out, or spread the cards in such a fashion as to facilitate an interpretation of events.
Just as social scientific data arranged in tabular form (with operational definitions and the rest) remain sterile, so too, an arrangement of tarot cards is meaningless in the absence of interpretation of relationships among the cards. The problem of arranging the cards is resolved by recourse to more or less standardized spreads and accompanying rules for interpreting the cards in a particular arrangement. Figures 7 through 11 represent a number of commonly used divinatory spreads of the tarot. One of the simplest spreads is represented in Figure 7. This spread requires the reader to arrange the cards in three rows of seven cards each. These rows represent past, present, and future events. Using a layout like this in conjunction with the previously described grammar the reader is able to advance a plausible interpretation of the cards. Though more complicated, the other spreads illustrated are employed in basically the same fashion.

Yet, the actual accomplishment of a tarot card reading that is acceptable to both the reader and a querent depends on the interaction between these two parties. This, of course, is a very complex process involving reciprocity between reader and querent in negotiating and constructing meaning as pertinent to the life of the querent. This, then, is the topic of the next chapter.
Figure 7.—Past-Present-Future Spread

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Cards 1-7 represent the past
Cards 8-14 represent the present
Cards 15-21 represent the future
Figure 8.—Celtic Cross Spread

1-Covers the situation—mood, motivation
2-Source of restraint or failure
3-Foundation for seeker's present condition
4-Past—events or situations gone by
5-Crown—defines merits of seeker's involvement with issue
6-Influences about to bear on the situation
7-Seeker's attitude toward the reading, subject of the reading, or the reader
8-Source of beneficial energy
9-Seeker's hopes or fears as they relate to the central point of the reading
10-Outcome or result of the events and phenomena surrounding the subject of the reading
Figure 9.—Circular spread—Forecast

#13 is the most important card; gives overall tone of the reading and the year ahead. Interpret it first.

Then interpret the twelve cards of the circle in sequence, moving in an anti-clockwise direction.

Card #1 refers to the month ahead, #2 to the month after that, etc.
Figure 10.—Horseshoe Spread

Card 1 refers to past influences

Card 2 refers to the querent's present circumstances

Card 3 refers to general future conditions

Card 4 indicates the best policy for the querent to follow

Card 5 reveals the attitudes of those around the querent

Card 6 points to obstacles standing in the way of a solution to the querent's question

Card 7 intimates the probably final outcome of the question
Figure 11.—Tree of Life Spread

1-The querent's highest ideals
2-His creative power. The "father" card
3-His wisdom. Ability to bring ideas into form
4-Virtues, good qualities, ability to build up
5-Force, conquest, tendency to destruction
6-Health, beauty, tendency to sacrifice for others
7-Love, instincts, arts, lust
8-Procreation, crafts, science, design
9-Imagination, psychic senses, engineering
10-The querent's physical body or earthly home
CHAPTER VIII

READING THE TAROT

Tarot divination (reading) is an occult practice whereby a "reader" interprets past, present, and future events for a "querent" through the medium of a special pack of seventy-eight cards. The last chapter described and analyzed the structure of tarot knowledge. The tarot was viewed as similar to a language; the words of this language represented by each of the seventy-eight cards. In the course of its sociohistorical creation the occult tarot has been attributed a more or less standardized set of meanings. It was noted that tarot card readers employ certain structures whereby the meanings of particular cards may be economically derived without recourse to memorized meanings for each card.

The accomplishment of tarot divination also requires that the cards be arranged (spread) in such a manner as to provide the reader with a series of situations or events (past, present, and future) to talk about. In reading the tarot particular cards thereby acquire special significance in relationship to a larger totality, the spread. Whether or not a querent is actually present a divinatory reading may be accomplished on this basis. Most tarot readings, however, involve face-to-face interaction between the reader and the querent. Whether or not the querent is present, the sense of having accomplished a divinatory reading of the tarot ultimately depends on
communication between these two parties. If the reader is unable to provide an interpretation of the cards, or if the querent is unable to make sense out of the interpretation, then a mutual sense of accomplishment will not have been achieved.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the manner in which a divinatory reading of the tarot is accomplished socially; that is, the manner in which a reader and a querent arrive at a mutual sense of having performed a divinatory reading of the tarot. I proceed by describing and analyzing the concrete interactional situations in which tarot divination is performed, and differences among the people who read the cards. Then I identify the essential features of tarot divination as an interactional accomplishment. This chapter is illustrated with comments by tarot card readers and transcriptions of actual divinatory readings of the cards.

Social Context

The tarot, as an occult body of knowledge, may be used for meditation, scholarly study, or divination. This discussion focusses particularly on its divinatory uses. Used in a divinatory fashion the tarot may be read for one's self or for other people. Divinatory readings, however, are most commonly performed for other people. Part of the reason for this is that most readers find it difficult to read the cards for themselves. The reasons why self reading is difficult will become apparent once I have displayed the essential features of a reading. Tarot readings also may be performed for pay or without pay. Although this chapter focusses on readings done for pay, there
are important differences between these two types of readings and this must be noted.

Divinatory readings of the tarot performed without pay tend to take a considerable period of time (one to three hours) and usually involve extensive interaction between the reader and the querent. It is not uncommon, for example, for these readings to digress into lengthy discussions about the life of either the reader or the querent which are only marginally related to a particular spread of the cards. In addition, readings performed without pay most commonly occur between people who are at least casual, if not intimate friends.

In comparison, readings performed for pay generally involve people who do not know each other, except perhaps through previous professional association. The professional reading situation is commonly defined by both parties as essentially a professional-client relationship. Interaction is thereby confined to matters within the proper domain of this relationship; that is, excluding discussion about the reader's family background, friends, pets, and any other matter not related to the performance of a reading. Furthermore, the reading for pay situation is not uncommonly one in which the reader's professional competency and expertise is on the line, so to speak. That is to say, the reader is expected (at least by self) to demonstrate the ability (beyond question) to deliver a satisfactory divinatory reading of the cards. When performing before strangers the reader really never knows whether or not the legitimacy of this practice is accepted by the querent. Even very good professional readers occasionally have an off day, and therefore the ability to perform a reading is always
subject to demonstration. This is especially problematic in the reading for pay situation since everyone assumes the querent will get his/her money's worth.

The legitimacy of a professional tarot card reading is indexed by both readers and querents in several ways. If for some reason the querent questions the legitimacy of the reading during its performance it is standard practice to offer the person their money back. If the querent accepts—and I have never heard of anyone accepting this offer—then the matter is finished. On the other hand, if the querent refuses, then the legitimacy of the happening has been confirmed, and powerfully so since it was in the face of opposition. Another principal means for affirming the legitimacy of tarot divination is to make some reference to the accuracy of the information. A professional reader looks for signs (body language, verbal expressions) by the querent that indicate a "hit." The key term "hit" is used when there is some verbal or non-verbal indication that a piece of information somehow is congruent with the querent's experience: a statement about the past is taken as true, information about the present seem correct, or a prediction about the future is perceived as a likely possibility. Implicitly or explicitly most professional readers like to "score" or "hit" as soon as possible in a reading to establish their legitimacy and get the querent's attention. An early "hit" also is likely to get the querent to open up and participate more fully in the reading thereby negating the possibility that the legitimacy of the practice will be questioned. Whereas these events may occur in a reading done without pay, they are not especially problematic since, if for no other
reason, the person cannot really expect much for nothing.

With respect to differences between readings with and without pay it also should be noted that the setting in which these readings are performed usually differ. Readings done without pay are most likely to occur in a private situation such as the living room or bedroom of someone's home. A reading for pay, on the other hand, is most likely to occur in a public situation, such as a Psychic Faire or some kind of business establishment. If a professional reader does readings at home, then this situation is already defined as a professional-client relationship, and the home is usually arranged to carefully define the nature of this relationship. The professional reader, for example, usually sets up a special table for the purpose of reading, includes other props such as business cards and tarot decks for the querent to choose from to set the stage, and tells the querent where to sit.

Tarot readings also differ in important ways depending on the person doing the reading and their particular orientation to esotericism. The absolute distinction between "gypsies" and "professional practitioners" has already been noted. This distinction is especially important in the context of readings performed for pay. In some cases the distinction between gypsies and professional practitioners is very fine; that is, the commercial nature of professional readings may propel the reader toward quasi-legitimate practices—such as techniques for making an early "hit"—resembling strategies thought to be employed by gypsies. In general, however, there are observable differences. Members of the esoteric community tend to advertise, for example, in local trade journals—like Psychic Magazine—by word of mouth, and in
book and supply stores. Gypsies, on the other hand, commonly advertise in local newspapers or in small consumer papers distributed throughout the Valley. Ads placed by professional readers generally mention the services offered (Tarot Readings), along with the name (not uncommonly one used merely for professional purposes), and a phone number to call for an appointment. As a rule, advertisements placed by community members list only one service—although tarot card readers and other professionals commonly do perform more than one service.

In comparison, gypsies often list many different services. It is not uncommon, however, to go to a gypsy for a tarot card reading and be switched to playing cards, or some other technique for fortune-telling. Unlike members of the esoteric community who never use the term "fortune-telling," this word is regularly employed by gypsies. The following advertisements placed in a local paper provide several concrete examples of gypsy services.

Mrs. Silva Psychic Tarot Card Reader. I have with God's miraculous power, healed people from evil spirits that have done damage to you and your loved one. I guarantee that once you contact Mrs. Silva, psychic spiritualist, beyond any doubt, who will put you on God's road to happiness, money, restore your nature, remove the pain from your mind and body of bad luck, and evil influence surrounding you. Names, dates, facts, lucky hands and lucky days. All readings $5 (with this coupon). 7 days a week [address and phone number deleted].

Sister Annette. Palm & Card Reader. Tells past, present, and future. Helps you with all problems: love, marriage, business, health, names, dates, facts. If you have any of these problems come and see her today. Special: $5 reading with this ad [phone and address deleted].
Madame Walker. Fortune Teller. Card Reader. Palm Reader. Past-Present-Future. Are you worried, troubled or in doubt? Do you want happiness, success and peace of mind? I can help you and advise you on all matters of your life. If you want to overcome your obstacles, see me. I can and will help you. ½ Price Reading with this Coupon [phone number deleted].

Compare the above examples of gypsy advertisements with the following advertisements placed in Psychic Magazine by esoteric community members:

Tarot Readings by Dawn. Appointment Only. [phone number deleted].

Tarot-Astrology. Will 1978 be your year? I can't promise that it will be, but why don't we get together and find our? [name deleted]. [phone number deleted]. Member: National Association of Psychic Practitioners. Horoscopes make nice Christmas gifts!

[The Cosmic Star Church for Spiritual Development—real name deleted] (non-denominational). Private Counseling and readings. Call Rev. [name deleted]. Check on classes starting soon—call [phone number deleted] and [address deleted].

These examples provide a concrete indication of some of the differences between gypsies and community members. Note, for example, that gypsies usually employ titles like sister, madame, or Mrs., while community members either do not use titles or use labels like Dr., Rev., or in some cases list esoteric and/or exoteric degrees. Community members do sometimes use pseudonyms: the advertisement by "Dawn," for example, refers to a female of another name who also uses the initials of a graduate degree in educational counseling on occasion. Community members also will list membership in quasi-professional associations, such as the National Association of Psychic Practitioners. Whereas the one advertisement by a community member above in some ways resembles those
of gypsies (reflecting the extent to which professional service is commercialized) the use of this professional association clearly distinguishes this person from gypsies. Still another important difference between community members and gypsies is sex. Almost without exception gypsies are females, while community professionals are as likely to be male as female.

As previously observed, the particular occult practice performed is in some ways less important than the manner in which the person is oriented to esotericism. "Psychic" readers combine their interest in the esoteric and occult with an attempt to make money from these activities. Even though money is a motivating factor for psychic readers, this is not to say that they are not dedicated or sincere. Just the opposite; psychic readers see themselves as professionals, like physicians or lawyers, with a service to offer the public. Like esoteric professionals, they see nothing wrong with collecting money for this service. "Spiritual" readers, on the other hand, de-emphasize the economic aspect of reading professionally. The fee collected by spiritual readers is called a "donation." They tend to see themselves as "ministers." The suggested, if not required, donation is legitimated as necessary to sustain their work and/or the group's mission. Most of the tarot card readers tend to fit more or less into one of these categories, with slightly more psychic than spiritual readers. There are a few people who are best characterized as "esoteric" readers. These people emphasize esoteric knowledge itself as a source of power. They see themselves as teachers who are able to assist those willing to seek enlightenment. Esoteric readers may not charge for
their services, and if they do, it usually is a nominal fee.

In spite of differences among readers, these people may be defined in terms of certain basic features. Tarot card readers in the esoteric community generally are about equally divided between the sexes. Females are somewhat more likely to be spiritual readers, while males are slightly more likely to be psychic readers. These people range in age from twenty to sixty, with a majority between thirty and fifty. Most professional tarot card readers are high school graduates; about half claim some college; and a few people claim graduate degrees (M.Ed., M.S.W., Ph.D.). In general psychic and esoteric readers are better formally educated than spiritual readers. With rare exception these people report personal (individual) incomes of under $15,000 and most of them make less than $8,000 a year. Psychic and esoteric readers tend to be more financially stable than spiritual readers. Very few of the professional tarot card readers in the community depend exclusively on income from esoteric services. Spiritual readers predominantly are ministers of quasi-religious cults, but about half of these people also are employed in exoteric occupations at least part time. Three psychic readers support themselves for the most part through professional service. The rest of these people are students, retired, housewives, or they work full time in exoteric occupations. Although there is considerable variation in tarot card readers' lines of employment (mechanics, sales, key punching, teaching), there is a tendency for them to be employed in human service fields: vocational counseling, psychiatric social work, educational counseling, college or high school teaching, and
the like. This is especially true for psychic and esoteric readers. For most of the professional tarot card readers, then, tarot divination is a preoccupying interest by which they are able to earn money on a more or less regular basis.

Among professional tarot card readers very few people indicate a commitment to exoteric religion. Spiritual readers tend to be intensively involved with particular esoteric cults, and in this sense they are devoutly religious. Psychic readers also sustain a profound commitment to a sort of supernaturalism, but this is not uncommonly defined in terms of some sort of paganism or witchcraft (WICCA). There is perhaps some reason to believe that several of these people actually participate in witch covens.

Since there are important differences among psychic, esoteric, and spiritual readers it is necessary to at least briefly explore these different orientations to esotericism in general and the tarot in particular. Psychic readers combine a sincere personal commitment to esotericism and occultism as a way of life with an interest in making money and at least partially supporting themselves through these beliefs and practices. Within the community psychic readers constitute a sort of esoteric parallel with esoteric scientists (as manifest through an interest in psychic research) and clinical psychologists (as evidenced in their use of the tarot as a sort of therapeutic tool). Psychic readers tend to present a more polished performance than spiritual and/or esoteric readers, and they are self-consciously aware of the show business aspect of what they do. Theosophically, psychic readers tend to see the tarot and related
occultisms in a quasi-scientific manner as opposed to spiritual justifications. Whereas psychic readers are among the best informed readers on the classical meanings of the tarot, they are also among the most creative in using it. In part their creative use of arcane wisdom is related to the practical demands of reading the tarot for the general public—as previously noted. Psychic readers, in other words, commonly combine a classical understanding of the tarot with a more free flowing "psychic" interpretation of the cards. One psychic reader, H, for example, gave Lin the following account of how the tarot works.

I see the cards as triggers to intuition, rather than having specific meanings each time. I see them as a system we can use to dope out the future, as a fantastic tool for self-understanding. I see them as something we ought to approach with a sense of responsibility ... because the tarot is a tool which can, under the right circumstances, enable you to really crank somebody up and change his life. I don't think we have the right to play God and say this is what you've got to do, but certainly you have a right to make somebody feel better about himself, anyway we can do it. It is a hell of a tool. It is a con job, sure, but you can look at a spread of cards ... and turn their head around so that good things will happen. And the person will believe it because the cards said so, and it must be true.

For H and other psychic readers the tarot is viewed as a tool, among other occultisms, by which he is able to influence the course of his life and assist other people with their everyday life problems. It is a way of seeing and acting in the world. H's remark about conning only makes sense in this context; that is, he recognizes that the world is a stage and we are all performers.

Psychic readers also tend to resent non-professional practitioners. Many of these people have practiced the tarot and occultism for
many years, and they often resent newcomers to the scene. S, a long time psychic practitioner, hits this issue head on in the following statement.

See, I'm kind of a snob. O.K.? Cause I hate these people who, in 1965, all of a sudden decided to get involved in the occult. And I had this experience last night where I really wanted to physically beat up on this girl. I wanted to mess her face up. I seldom have the desire to beat someone's face in, but I happen to consider myself a professional, number one. Number two, she was batting out of her league. She comes up and she says, "I just read for myself." I say, "That's cool." . . . I mean it was just like one-up-manship on this thing. I just can't deal with these people that get onto the tarot and they really think they're in. I'm just above all that.

In contrast with psychic readers, spiritual readers are usually connected in some manner (usually as ministers) with quasi-religious cults. Tarot divination is related by these people to esoteric beliefs in the supernatural and a generalized goal of service to human kind. Within this context, tarot divination is seen as a form of "spiritual" counseling aimed at helping the individual acquire a perspective on life, and directing people toward spiritually meaningful goals and action. Although most spiritual readers do charge for the service they provide, this is viewed as a necessary evil. Spiritual readers also participate in Psychic Faires. They claim that monies received in this manner are used to support the activities of their esoteric cults. In addition to community-wide faires, several of the spiritual groups in the Valley regularly (like once a month) hold a "mini-faire." These faires provide economic support for the group and a means of making contact with potential converts. Mini-faires also provide an opportunity for members to work together and enjoy
fellowship.

G, a leading member of the spiritual segment of the community, provides an example of this orientation to the tarot in the following passage.

Every time I would get into an oral reading, I would get into these esoteric things. And I didn't think that was what people came to the psychic faires for. And so, I thought, well, I'll tune in through the cards. I don't need to know anything about them [the cards]. But I found out I was doing the same thing anyway, and my tarot reading is a very esoteric type of reading, a very spiritual reading. But I found that that's the kind of people that come to me. If they want to know about the tall dark handsome man they're going to meet next Tuesday, they go see the gypsy down the street.

Noting the commercial aspect of tarot card reading, G comments: "I use it for a counseling tool, and a lot of people who come for counseling don't have any money." In other subtle ways G sees himself (and other spiritual readers) as distinctive from the more visible psychic readers. Part of this difference has to do with competition among readers for clientele, recognition, and affiliation with other esoteric groups. "Some of my very good friends read the tarot professionally. Its really very interesting; we do compete, in a friendly manner. We read for each other sometimes. . . . Its like psychologists, I guess. They get together sometimes too, but they don't believe in each other."

Talking about other tarot card readers, G observes: "We [professional tarot card readers] talk about doing spiritual work, but we compete. There is a competitive feeling. No matter how spiritual I feel, at times I feel, how come they're going to them and not to me?" G continues:
I think it would be neat to have an association of tarot readers, but we probably would all disagree and get mad at each other. You know? I don't know that it would do any good. I base this only on the fact that I own 12 books on the tarot and none of them agree with each other and I don't agree with any of them. So, but, I also do agree with all of them. . . . I agree that that's their truth and that's what works for them. And therefore I wonder if a professional organization would really be of any value. Because I give them the perfect right to say anything they want to, but I'm going to do it my way.

Without much reading between the lines it should be obvious that G perceives disagreement and competition to be at odds with his understanding of a spiritual way of life.

Still another dimension of spiritual readers can be gleaned from G's sense of what a tarot reading should accomplish. "If I do my job right, you're going to learn you don't need me. That's what its all about. Not fostering this dependency. That doesn't mean that I don't have continuing clientele, because I do." Since G believes in predestination he takes a somewhat different stance on "freedom of will" than other tarot card readers. "You can't change the event, you can only change your attitude towards it." He also wants to sustain the uniqueness of humanity and individuals without giving up a belief in predestination. Hence, G remarks: "We call ourselves unique beings, and we are. But we all go through the same processes to get to, you know. We may emphasize different things, but we're not so darned unique." One final dimension of G's sense of a spiritual reading has to do with predicting future events. His belief in predestination is used to justify prediction. Since this strategy resembles ones used by psychic readers, G is somewhat defensive about it:
I probably predict, through the use of the tarot, in less than one out of fifteen readings. . . . Sometimes I predict as a grabber. . . . When I hear myself predicting a definite happening within a certain time frame, through the use of the tarot, all right, its so that it will hit them with the validity of what I'm saying in the entire reading. That's the only purpose that its ever used for.

Within the same context, G discusses clients' reactions to predictions. "The choice is always theirs. And so I have to say what I'm going to say. Cause, even if its 100% wrong, even if it makes them so angry that they say, 'I'll show him!,' and do it exactly opposite, there's a purpose in that too."

N, another spiritual reader in the community, provides a further indication of what is meant by "spiritual" in the following discussion of the word "occult":

The [word] occult is really very negative to the general public's viewpoint. They don't understand it. And even those who call themselves occult students usually don't understand it either. And most of the ones who are using the word occult are ones in the negative emmations so therefore, its, uh, not in order to be calling yourself something that is accepted as something negative because this is not the word you mean. . . . To me, the occult in true essence is trying to understand God in what is not usually taught and given. Its mystical. Its the not understood. It is hidden because you don't understand. You can't relate to where there's more answers. And if you search for them, you're really doing occult searching. But, uh, most people don't relate occult to God and that's really what it is. And the ones who are calling themselves occult students are not relating to God either. They usually relate to the witchcraft aspect.

With respect to the tarot, in particular, N comments: "Everything that is in metaphysical and religious studies at all can be found in the tarot."
A final example of what is meant by spiritual readers is provided by NE. She sees the tarot as a means of providing human help to other people.

I do try to go out and help people if I can. Because I think you should. Because if you have anything or try to do anything, if you don't help other people, then you lose it. You really do. A lot of people lose a lot of their inner good because they clutch it. They clutch what they have and they lose it. . . . I don't like to read them [the cards] every day [for one person]. I do call a lady on the phone because I love her and she's lonely. I tuck her in every night with a few cards because she hasn't got very many friends.

Besides her lady friend, NE reports reading the cards for a very diverse clientele. "I have two belly dancers who come here and some nurses, and I have some psychiatrists, and I have a couple, three or four, lawyers, and bankers, and I have people on welfare, and I don't know all."

Although NE is not a member of any religious cult, there can be no doubt that she is a spiritual reader: "Tarot readings, astrology, or anything, if you put it in the hands of the father, it comes." This spirituality is organized simply, on the basis of a belief in the father and the desire to help people in any way she can: "I try my very best, whoever comes, to work with the person in all ways. . . . Whatever I think they need at the time to help them." But, she warns: "When you're going into people's lives with the cards you have to be very careful because you can really flub them up. . . . When you're doing this for people you really expose yourself. With the cards you become one with the person."

Esoteric readers tend to see the tarot in terms of a path of scholarly enlightenment. These people are less likely to charge for
professional services, or if they do, vary the fee according to the particular situation and circumstances—rather than money, these people may trade items or services with clientele. Furthermore, esoteric readers tend to be well educated in the exoteric and esoteric societies. The following examples are provided by J, a reader who relates his esoteric training in social work.

Questioned by Lin about the sense in which he understands the tarot, J responds:

I deal with games that are going on in a person's life, and patterns. So it's not really predicting the future. But the patterns will repeat unless there's some intervention. So in that sense it's forecasting. I think the cards are a means for developing intuition; that they are as flexible or as rigid as the individual who's reading them. And whatever problem you're stuck on in your own growth is reflected in the kinds of problems you have reading the cards.... I know that if I'm reading the cards in the correct manner that the cards teach me new solutions and alternatives.... When I do therapy for people I'm not talking to them any differently than when I read their tarot cards.

Another example of an esoteric reader is provided by S, who also is trained in exoteric counseling. S is especially interested in integrating her exoteric and esoteric commitments: "My intention with all the occult studies is to make the intuition—the right side of the brain—as respectable as the left.... I have professional credentials and background.... hopefully that will help bridge the gap someday." In spite of S's esoteric commitments, she sincerely believes in the occult power of the cards.

My Gestalt trainer would get really pissed: "Why are you doing this reading shit?" You know? He said, "It's all projection anyway. It's the ultimate projection trip," he kept saying.... And it really bothered me because I wanted to know the difference between projecting and
coming up with information that I couldn't possibly know about this person. I could understand psychologically projecting, but I couldn't understand knowing that this person was going to get $500 and that would enable them to take the raft trip down the Colorado River that they wanted to take. Where did it come from?

S also uses the tarot in her exoteric occupation. "I don't come from a place of 'doing readings'; I use it as a counseling tool." Later in the same conversation S comments: "I've been awfully encouraged lately because I've been using it with people I'm working with and it just cuts right through the bullshit and it takes just one session instead of twenty."

The Essential Features of a Reading

In spite of the differences among tarot card readers, orientations to readings, and the other contextual dimensions noted above, there are many basic similarities to all tarot card readings. The essential features of a tarot reading include: 1) an assumption that the activity is plausible (a valid and legitimate activity); 2) an assumption that somehow the querent has a problem or problems to be solved; 3) an assumption that the tarot card reader is able to make meaningful suggestions as to this problem; and 4) an assumption that the querent will find at least some of this advice to be related to his/her experience. In the absence of any of these basic features of a divinatory reading of the tarot, a mutually satisfactory sense of accomplishment can not be sustained.

The following transcription of an actual tarot card reading performed at a Psychic Faire provides a concrete illustration of this activity and these essential features. This reading was performed by
"B" for "D." "B" is a professional practitioner with considerable experience although he does not have an extremely good reputation in the community; that is to say, he is accepted as a professional practitioner, but not someone who comes highly recommended. The querent, "D," knew very little about the tarot at the time, and his performance is not unlike that of any other querent. This reading was selected because I am intimately familiar with it, it is relatively short, and there is no reason to believe that it is in any way unlike other tarot readings.

The tape recording begins with considerable background noise characteristic of the Psychic Faire setting. "B" has already negotiated the price of the reading and is shuffling the cards. This reading is somewhat unusual in that a third party, "L" is sitting in on the beginning of the reading. The tape begins with L saying:

L: Do you want him [D] to sit across from you or next to you? I can't read the cards when somebody is sitting across from me, I can't... .

B: Oh, no, I [non-transcribable sequence]. [Shuffling of the cards and other background noise].

D: What deck is this?

B: It is the Moroccan Fez deck, uh and uh, its only the second day I've been using it, I [untranscribable segment].

L: Oh, I have... is that the Aquarian deck that you have there?

D: No, its the Rider deck.

B: No, its the Rider deck.

B: Now what I'd like you to do is cut them into three piles [sound of cutting the cards].

B: And then reassemble them any way you would like to.
B: O.K., then, this spread is called the three-seven spread [see Figure 7], and I use three rows of seven where, uh, the first row represents the past, second the future, or, second the present, and third the future [reader pointing at each row as he talks].

B: And the way it works is the middle card of the seven, like for instance, you have the king of cups for your central card, that's known as your key card and you read the other ones in relation to that as it more or less gives you the general, ah, line of what the reading's going to follow from that initial card (and stuff). [background chatter]

D: [talking to L] Why don't you go take some pictures of other things

L: Well, I'm plugged into you [talking about the electrical cord]

D: and come back.

L: I can only go this far [walks off the distance].

B: Have you ever had a tarot reading before?


B: Never with this deck--this is, the thing I like about this deck is the pictures are fairly simple. They don't have some of the, ya know, they're so, they try to make them so mystical they distract you too much and these are nice and simple [untranscribable segment] following [untranscribable segment].

Although the actual reading has yet to begin a number of important things have already happened. The reader has attempted to size up the querent. Much of this sizing up was done nonverbally, in terms of eye contact, and other visible cues. This sizing up is also indicated by the direct question: "Have you ever had a tarot reading before?"

In this instance the reader directly asks basically if the querent really knows what is going on. The reader also has established control of the situation. He is directing the interaction by instructing the querent on what to do, and by informing him of what is happening.
In this respect tarot interactions are very much asymmetrical: the reader is the first party to the interaction and implicitly—by the rules of natural conversation—he has the right to direct the interaction and supply a particular definition to the situation. The querent, on the other hand, is obligated to follow the lead of the reader, as he is in an inferior position. Again by the rules of natural conversation he is obligated to speak only when spoken to, or when the reader pauses and offers the querent a socially sanctioned turn in the conversation. These basic rules of doing conversation will be followed throughout the rest of the reading or else considerable repair work will have to be done. Picking up where I left off:

B: aum, what I see in your past and its into your present and more than likely into your future also is you have this, well, its almost like an obsession with finding out things, you, you, you like to learn, its like a sponge almost. You keep, you like to keep soaking up things, ah, on the mental, mental level. (pause)

B: ah (pause) it looks like at times in your past this has been distracted from due to, oh day to day things that have to be done, ya know, like working and this sort of thing. You haven't always been able to apply enough time to this as you would like to as far as, ah, learning and experiencing different things; whereas at present it looks like that's sorta turning over, that you're finding more time to than you have in the past, and that, ah, you don't have as many things tying you down as you did before (pause-----------------).

It is important to note at this point that the reader assumes that the querent is listening to this advice and attempting to assess whether or not it fits with his experience. It also may be assumed that the querent is searching his experience for verification of the
reader's comments. The several pauses in the conversation have been provided by the reader to (a) allow him time to concentrate on composing the next statement, and (b) to allow the querent an opportunity to take a turn in the conversation. Indeed, the reader expects the querent to take a turn in the conversation and provide feedback about these initial statements. Since the querent chooses not to take a turn the reader is forced to either continue or ask the querent a question.

B: Getting up into the present (pause), do you have any friend that lives either in the military or police or still is (pause), ah.

D: I have a close friend that was at one time in the military, yeh.

Since the querent has refused to take a turn in the conversation thereby providing the reader with some indication that he is on the right track, the reader asks a question to which the querent is obligated to respond. This sets up the following turns in conversation where the querent becomes more responsive.

B: Look, it looks like he may be having some problems at present or something.

D: Can you tell what kind of problem?

B: Possibly with a (pause) looks like with a female who's older than he is. Ah (pause)

L: that could be a couple of people

B: may be kinda dragging him down or ah not letting him; he may not think he's being held down but it seems like he's not really doing as much as he could be doing because of the [untranscribable].

D: Is there any advice that I could give him?
These sequences of the conversation are very important in establishing the plausibility of the reading. The reader assumes that the querent is able to recognize the person in the military to which reference is made. By asking a question about this suggestion the querent confirms that it is indeed possible. Thus the assumption of plausibility has been sustained until further notice at least. At this point a potential problem arises. L interjects the suggestion that it might be one of several different people. Both the reader and the querent either do not hear this comment or else they choose to ignore this possibility. The plausibility of what the reader has said makes it possible for the querent to ask the last question, and for the reader to offer subsequent information. If this assumption of plausibility did not hold for both parties then any subsequent discussion of the matter would be ridiculous to all concerned.

B: Ah (pause) you might tell him that (pause) not really to worry as far as being afraid of losing a friend by what actions he might take, like losing that person or something, because if she or any other people he happens to know, don't ya know, want to keep holding him down, and restricting him, ah, he's better off to probably find new friends and a (pause) cause, cause, it looks like he could be doing a lot more and enjoying himself a lot more if he wasn't as, as tied down and restricted and this sort of thing. (pause) um (pause) Also see some creativity in your present, ah, or do you do any work with your hands or anything, ah, making things or anything like that?

D: um-hum.

B: Looks like (pause) if you know, ya do above average work (pause) I have (pause) its hard to gauge extremes with the cards, ya know, you can get a general idea, ah, it looks like the work may leave you something even, uh, financially, ah, bring something into you--it either
is just starting to bring something into you at present or, ah, it looks like it will be bringing more into you in the future than it is right now.

D: Could that be writing rather than an— a craft or something like that?

B: It could be— well, what I mean it first appeared to me to be anything from painting pictures to writing to a this sort of thing [untranscribable comment] ya know, anything which you sit down and you do, kinda let yourself loose and be creative that sort of thing. Ah, ya know, almost like an art or something like this— writing say would be considered an art though, a::h, it looks like there's gonna be maybe a lot more work before you get it the way you want it, ya know? It's not the sorta thing like some, some people can just sit down and write something out that's good, its like there's gonna be a lot of, ah, a process and rewriting and a lot of just actual mental work to really get it good. And looks like if you can stick through that you have good possibilities as a writer, ah, the main thing is just getting the, ah, ya know, the preliminary stuff behind you and not worry too much about the mechanics and stuff at first, but worry, about that, ya know, cause ya have to have that to sell it, it has to be laid out right and spelled right and punctuated and all this but when you are writing just worry about the content and the imagination and the flow rather than the, ah, rather than the mechanics of the actual writing and it will go a lot, lot smoother— ah (pause) -- ah (pause).

The preceding series of turns in the conversation very nicely illustrate the assumptions that the tarot reader is able to make meaningful suggestions as to some problem, and the querent will find at least some of this advice related to his/her experiences. It is important to point out that this is a reflexive process. The reader makes a general suggestion— something about creativity. It is then up to the querent to discover in his experience the particular (in this case writing) to which the general refers. There is then a period of negotiation where the reader attempts to determine if indeed writing
will qualify as a particular for the general he initially suggested. He resolves any potential problems easily by deciding that writing does qualify as a particular of the general he mentioned—he even provides a considerable justification for it. On this basis—having discovered the particular—the reader is thereby able to make further suggestions about this matter to the querent. This phenomenon of reflexivity is even more evident in the following sequence.

B: In your future, I, there is one of two things, ah, either see you have a younger sister or a daughter, I don't know which or what. Do you have a younger sister?

D: uah [shakes head no] I do have a daughter.

B: Does she have blonde hair? or dark?

D: Yeh, one of them does.

L: Which one?

B: Yeh, I see her in your future (pause), ah

D: the one with blonde hair?

B: Yeh, ah, she seems to be a really happy sort of person.

D: (yeh)

B: ah [goes on] she, it seems that when, ah, she gets older she'll be the type that can kinda charm people into doing things she wants them to, ya know, kinda flirt with them and that sort of thing, ah. But I see her more in your future than she is at present and she doesn't seem to have as much bearing or as much influence at present as she will have in the future (pause) ah (pause)

D: Can you tell what's going to happen with her in relation to me in the future?

B: Looks like there is goin be a more (pause) ah (pause) its like a closer feeling, but I don't know if its a closer physical or a closer, ah, ya know, emotionally;
but, I'd say if she is not staying with you now I would say that, ah, ya'll develop a lot closer relationship and this sort of thing, ah (long pause)

This sequence of conversation is especially interesting due to its reflexive character. Notice that the first comment was a question about a sister or a daughter. The querent supplied the particular—a daughter. Then the reader and the querent negotiated the issue of hair color. Once the particular has been supplied again the reader is able to continue with the advice. In the last two turns of conversation both the reader and querent proceed as if it was a daughter with blonde hair that they had been talking about all along. Both parties ignore the fact that considerable work was required to uncover and negotiate who it was that they would be talking about.

B: Looks like the work you're doing at present is going to pay off in the future—I can't guarantee that it'll pay off monetarily according to these cards on, in the future, but it will pay off emotionally, if a, ya'll get a lot of satisfaction from this cause it looks like ya're goin complete whatever ya're working on and ya'll get satisfaction from whatever it is. But, ah (pause) there is a chance of money, it all, a lot of it depends on what outlet you go to, ya know, to a solicit, whatever it is.

D: Would it be advisable to seek monetary reward or not advisable, er, can ya tell?

B: I think that, ah, almost anything that the person puts out enough work for, it, they, they, more or less have to form their own, what they want and its going to [untranscribable] ah, like, if you feel bad about taking, bring in something monetary for what you've been doing then, ah, ya know, you shouldn't do it; but if like, ah, I've done all this work and a I've put a lot into it and, ah, ya know, I like to have something coming back for it then, ya know, its fine and ya always gotta remem-ber that, ah, even if you don't actually, if you're gonna have comfortable feelings then, ya know, even though its monetarily then ya have to remember that ya still have to live and a there's like certain necessities as far as
having to have a certain amount of money to get by on
and as long as you keep that in mind, whatever you are
most comfortable with--it does look like there's a, ya
know, chance of monetary gains but its kinda in your
own hands, which way you're gonna go with it (pause)
ah (pause) let's see (long pause).

B: Looks like after this particular project, you're go-
ing to go on to something else, in other words, this
project isn't going to be an end in itself; you're
going to keep going from there and, ah, I don't know
if its going to be along the same line or not, but
its--will a will be worth your kinda constantly
working toward something once you get one goal be-
hind you, you'll go on to another goal and this must
be then, must be your goal according to your future
rather than ever [untranscribable] finishing a goal
and thinking, ah, I've finished that goal and I feel
satisfied and I don't want to keep going any more, I
just relax and every time you get rid of one goal
you'll be setting yourself a new one to work toward, ah
[interruption from background announcements]

B: That's about all I can pull out of that unless you
have some questions on the (feelings or something
like that) or any of the other stuff I went over?

D: I don't think so.

[reading ends here and conversation continues with respect
to particular cards that appeared in the reading]

Several additional examples of tarot card readings are provided
in the appendix, but the examination of these sustains the same con-
cclusions with respect to the essential features of tarot divination.
They differ, for example, in style--both in terms of a collective
orientation (psychic, spiritual, esoteric) and in terms of particular
techniques characteristic of individual readers--and in terms of the
degree of dependency on the basic assumptions. In some readings, for
example, the assumption of plausibility is recurrently problematic
throughout the reading. Psychologists commonly refer to this phe-
nomenon as "resistance" on the part of the client. Previous chapters
supplied several examples of resistance on the part of querents, and
one example of a situation in which the assumption of plausibility
did not hold and the reading never actually transpired. It is impor-
tant to note that with respect to the assumption of plausibility
the querent need not take the advice literally or even believe it:
but the querent must accept the assumption that the activity itself
is legitimate and the advice is at least possibly true.

In some readings the assumption that there is a problem to be
solved is much more evident than in the example above. In the above
example the querent had no particular problem. Nevertheless, the
reader was able to discover several potentially problematic situa-
tions: the friend in the military; the task of writing; the blonde
haired daughter; and, problems related to job, writing, and money.
Had the querent been more responsive to these uncovered problems,
the reader probably would have dwelled more on finding concrete solu-
tions. Professional practitioners who read for pay in public settings
routinely assume that people come to them with a particular problem
or some set of problems. This assumption certainly is sustained by
my experiences in reading at Psychic Faires. At least half of the
people I read for were seeking particular answers to concrete every-
day life problems.

Some professional readers very much like to know if the querent
has a particular problem in mind, while others do not. The major rea-
son why professional practitioners do not routinely ask if the querent
has a particular problem and what it is, is that there is the risk
that the querent may feel that this somehow disrupts the magical
character of the reading. Yet the assumptions that the reader is able to provide meaningful advice and the querent is able to find how this meaning applies to him/her depends on reflexivity or the negotiation of these issues. Tarot card readers uniformly regard the closed querent as the worst type of client. "B," a professional reader, expresses this issue in the following manner:

If you know a little bit about your client, it certainly helps you to know how the interpretation should go. Because we all run into things that are rather defiant in terms of being able to say this belongs with this or it has to do with this situation. And if you know a little bit about your client one way or another, sometimes I feel the reading is much more meaningful, because you can tie it in properly.

While professional practitioners rarely attempt to get clients to reveal themselves beforehand, they much prefer people to actively participate in the reading. And, the reasons for this should be clear: unless the querent is willing to engage in interaction it will be impossible to mutually and reflexively accomplish the sense of what is being discussed.

It commonly has been assumed by the lay public as well as social scientists (see Hyman, 1976) that tarot readings, like other psychic practices principally depend on techniques labeled "cold reading."

The strategy of cold reading depends on the ability of the reader to discern considerable information about a client on the basis of visible cues. Wedding rings, style of dress, the manner in which a person carries themself, type of shoes worn, actual wear to these shoes, and the like certainly do provide important clues as to the client's life situations and potential problems. Professional tarot card readers
certainly do observe and take into consideration this kind of information, just as we all do in evaluating the people with whom we interact. For the most part, however, this information is acquired and used in a taken-for-granted manner. Whereas I have known tarot card readers to deliberately seek clues as to the querent's identity, especially for the purpose of hitting quickly on a potentially troublesome client, in my experience this practice is not widespread.

There are at least two basic reasons why professional tarot card readers have little use for conscious deceptions of this sort. First, even in a Psychic Faire setting it is commonplace for querents to volunteer considerable information about themselves. If this information is not volunteered and the reader feels a need for additional information it is commonly supplied on request. Second, the tarot itself provides an extensive range of topics for discussion, some of which are bound to be of interest to the querent. It should be recalled, for instance, that the structure of the minor arcana alone directs the reader to issues like emotions, spirituality or psychic powers, career or money, and the intellect or disasters. Each of the cards in a suit provide further suggestions about the direction advice in these matters may take. The major arcana directs attention to issues as central to human existence as marriage, domination, fertility, justice, virtue, and so on. All of these topics are time tested matters of fundamental concern to the nature of human existence in the world. It is almost inconceivable that mention of these issues would fail to produce at least some sense of possibility in even the more resistant querent.
Discussion

This chapter has described and analyzed the social context and procedures whereby a divinatory reading of the tarot is accomplished interactionally. Differences among types of tarot readings, orientations to the tarot, and individual styles were noted. Particular attention was concentrated on the essential features of tarot card reading. These data sustain the conclusion that tarot divination is a complex interactional accomplishment dependent upon members' abilities to make sense and meaning out of their lives and existential environment in particular settings and situations.

The occult tarot is a complex body of knowledge complete with particular meanings and rules whereby these meanings may be applied to particular member's lives. The tarot is the result of attributing meaning to a pack of seventy-eight cards. Since it is a sociohistorical product it should not be surprising that the tarot provides a set of conditions, topics, issues, and problems recurrently involved in everyday life existence. If one is willing to assume that the practice of tarot divination is plausible, and work to discover the manner in which the generals of a reading apply to one's particular life situation, there can be little doubt that it will work.

Unfortunately, there is the possibility that this description and analysis of the tarot will be seen as demonstrating the nonsensical character of tarot divination. This analysis, in other words, may leave the reader with the impression that there is really nothing to it. This is neither my intention, nor the facts of the situation. Indeed, tarot divination is a complex, creative, and artful
accomplishment. It is true that the practice of tarot divination will not stand up under the careful examination of scientific practice—validity and reliability—as conventionally conceived. But there is not reason why it should. Furthermore, it may be assumed that tarot divination is fundamentally different than other everyday life practices for making sense of the world. This is not correct either.

There is an overwhelming amount of hard scientific evidence that human beings using commonsense procedures, in everyday life settings, are able to make perfectly good sense out of literal nonsense (see Garfinkel, 1967). The procedures used by the readers and querents described here are not fundamentally different from the basic sense-making procedures we all employ in our everyday life experience.

Finally, whereas I believe that tarot divination is understandable as a consequence of certain basic properties of social interaction—especially reflexivity—this is not to say that it is not truly occult. During my field work I occasionally encountered tarot predictions and related phenomena for which I was unable to find a reasonable sociological or scientific answer.
CHAPTER IX

ESOTERICISM IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This work has described and analyzed different dimensions of the recent revival of the esoteric and occult. Specific attention was concentrated on (1) the social location of the esoteric and occult within the larger context of American society, (2) members' conceptions of this social world, (3) the structure and organization of members' activities, and (4) the manner in which esoteric and occult knowledge is actually implemented in concrete settings and situations. These basic areas of investigation were located in a theoretical-methodological context pertinent to recent sociological discussion of the nature or constitution of multiple or alternative conceptions of social reality.

Following John Irwin's (1977) discussion of "scenes" it was argued that the esoteric, occult, and related phenomena can be characterized as a social scene. Conceived in this fashion the term "esoteric" is useful as a gloss for a bewildering array of phenomena more or less lacking traditionally defined and socially sanctioned legitimacy in Western thought and culture. Viewed in this way a vast constellation of beliefs and practices from the occult, witchcraft, Satanism, and paganism to Eastern religions, New Age Christianity, self-help doctrines, ESP-parapsychology, and marginal or folk medicine are essentially esoteric. Whereas this reconceptualization of the notion
of esotericism expands its traditional usage, this serves a useful socio­

cological purpose. Ultimately, I have no vested interest in the term per se, and others might serve equally well. What is important is that sociologists have some clearly defined and reasonably delimited con­
cepts whereby these empirical phenomena may be apprehended without too seriously distorting the observed world of human meaning and action.

The notion of an esoteric scene, as it has been used here, di­
rects attention away from attempts to classify these phenomena merely on the basis of discrete bodies of knowledge, belief, or practice, such as witchcraft, tarot, astrology, or particular Eastern beliefs. Discrete belief systems do exist in relatively pure form, but partic­
ular groups or individuals more commonly mix beliefs and practices in confounding ways. Attention was directed instead to specifying dif­
ferent levels of interest, participation, and involvement in esoteri­
cism. It was argued, for example, that such levels include popular esotericism (a fluid level of participation between exoteric and eso­
teric culture), and then multiple levels involving particular foci more or less removed from the bounds of conventional society. Many of these foci constitute relatively discrete cults or movements.

Some of these groups are relatively isolated from the outside world, as in the case of some Hindu groups and paganism or witchcraft. Other groups are connected to national organizations, or local associations, as in the case of New Age Christians, Spiritualism, and self-help or metaphysical movements. Still other groups are intertwined in ex­
tensive networks of informal communication, business, and friendship at a local level, as in the case of the "esoteric community."
In important ways this kind of informal social organization is a pervasive feature of modern urban life. Similar arrangements seem to characterize politics, esoteric business relations, occupational or professional relations, and certain leisure activities. The youth counter-culture and the surfing scene, as described by Irwin, for example, closely resemble what I have characterized as the "esoteric scene" in America today. Like the "hippie scene," for instance, the esoteric scene has its weekend or casual astrologers, witches, tarot card readers, mystics, and the rest. There are more serious devotees who move from one esoteric teaching or practice to others in search of life's meaning. Still other people have made esotericism a way of life and/or a fulltime occupational pursuit. These responses and adaptations to esotericism are highly variable, of course. Some people have been involved seriously for many years, and occasionally over several generations. This "old guard," so to speak, also varies in the degree and extent to which participants are committed to serious belief versus money making, for instance. Furthermore, as the scene has emerged and become increasingly popular the old timers have been joined by a growing army of newer arrivals and recruits. This includes not only individuals, but groups or cults of almost every conceivable sort. Finally, there are those people who sustain a self-conscious isolation from the profane world of contact between the esoteric and the exoteric. Isolated individuals occasionally form study groups or cultic movements. More commonly, however, they prefer to remain isolated and free to follow their own interests in the mysterious or arcane.
My review of pertinent sociological literature revealed three basic theoretical-methodological perspectives on the esoteric, occult, and related phenomena. All three of these basic perspectives—positivistic, functionalistic, humanistic—were shown to be inadequate on a number of different accounts. The positivistic view is ideologically useful for disparaging esoteric and occult conceptions of reality and claims to knowledge, but useless for investigating members' conceptions and claims. While a social scientist may choose to provide an evaluation of esoteric doctrines and activities and suggest possible consequences of such a contribution or future to Western culture, this can only be done after these phenomena have been adequately described and analyzed as phenomena in-and-of-themselves. The functionalistic perspective attempts to explain why people are attracted to the esoteric and occult, but it fails to provide a theoretically adequate explanatory framework. Contemporary ideas of deprivation, for instance, are far too simple and ideologically biased. There is an important sense in which all human meanings are deprived—that is, we are deprived of an absolute meaning of life. The humanistic perspective provides a more adequate theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding these phenomena. Yet it lacks empirical grounding. In addition, the humanistic perspective tends to overemphasize the extent to which the social world is cognitively or rationally constructed and enacted. On this basis, theoretical-methodological attention was directed toward an existentially grounded sociology of the esoteric and occult. This perspective emphasizes the generation of theoretical truths based on the concrete investigation of members' existence in the everyday life.
world. Whereas other humanistic sociologies have stressed the rational dimensions of human existence in the world, existential sociology attends to rational and not so rational (even irrational) dimensions of daily existence.

To provide a sociologically adequate interpretation and understanding of the esoteric and occult in America today, this study emphasized that these beliefs and practices derive from a long but seldom recognized history in Western culture. Esoteric and occult beliefs and practices thereby represent socially and historically created solutions to the fundamental problem of the meaning of human existence in the world. That these beliefs and practices historically have been regarded as illegitimate says nothing about their truth value per se. Instead, the status of esoteric and occult beliefs in Western culture is the consequence of social processes whereby certain conceptions of reality and claims to knowledge—principally those of religion and science—have been socially sanctioned and enforced as the only legitimate views of a real world.

Properly understood the contemporary revival of esotericism represents part of an ongoing attempt by societal members to provide meaningful solutions to the problems of everyday life existence. In general terms this contemporary revival is related to massive alterations in the nature of human existence in the world, especially the radical transformations of social life that have been coincident with industrialization and urbanization. More specifically, massive public interest in the esoteric and occult has emerged within a general climate of opinion in which traditional religion has been transposed and virtually replaced
by a rationalistic-scientistic worldview. In recent years this conception of reality and procedures for its enactment have been seriously questioned. In contrast with the recent past it is no longer clear that the general public perceives science, and especially its technological applications, as the principal route to a better and more meaningful daily life. Scientific technology has freed people from many of the more pressing problems of survival, creating a sociocultural environment in which Americans especially have the leisure time to pursue many diverse worlds of meaning. Yet, scientific technology also has resulted in a complex array of problems including the very real possibility of an end to the world as we know it. Furthermore, within the domain of daily life a bureaucratic form of social organization has served to remove the individual further and further away from any feeling of authentic control of the big and little problems of everyday life. There is an important sense in which the seemingly irrational character of the esoteric and occult is a response to bureaucracy; this is especially true for those adherents from the middle classes.

The urban-industrial-bureaucratic world today is replete with a perplexing array of specialized worlds of meaning. Some people have invested in occupational careers whereby a sense of personal identity and meaning is sustained by reference to occupational subcultures. These worlds of meaning provide a collective paradigm for interpreting and enacting a real world. Other people have relegated the world of work to a secondary position in their lives—a source of income—and concentrated instead on a host of leisure time activities. These activities also provide a socially meaningful basis for personal identity.
and collective support for specialized worldviews. Largely as a consequence of the mass media and rapid worldwide communication, some of these activities have been transformed into large scale social scenes. The hippie movement, for example, became an almost worldwide scene that included drugs, rock music, and a general style of life considerably different from previous conceptions and meanings of everyday life existence.

The esoteric and occult as of yet have not reached the proportions of the hippie movement. Nonetheless, it has emerged as an internationally significant scene. Whereas practitioners of the esoteric and occult have existed in small numbers throughout the history of this country, in recent years large numbers of the general public have been attracted to these beliefs and practices. For the vast majority of these people, the esoteric and occult represent a leisure time activity. It is a dimension of popular culture and a matter of popular entertainment. Some of these folks do take esoteric and occult beliefs more seriously, and for them it may serve as a component of personal identity—"I'm a Scorpio," or "I'm a witch"—and a basis for meaningfully interpreting daily happenings. Only a small proportion of the people who express some interest in esotericism, however, are seriously devoted to these beliefs and practices as a way of life.

This study has concentrated particular attention on a relatively small collection of people who do seriously practice the esoteric and occult. The esoteric community in the Valley of the Sun represents a core feature of the esoteric scene in America today. For members of the community esotericism is more than a matter of popular
entertainment. It is a way of life whereby daily experience can be meaningfully interpreted. In addition, esotericism is for members of the community a way of earning some part of their living.

It must be emphasized that even within the esoteric community certain segmented interests exist. The esoteric, psychic, and spiritual segments of the community all represent slightly different interpretations of esoteric and occult teachings and general, collective orientations to enacting these alternative conceptions of reality. Within each of these segments beliefs in and practice of the tarot, for example, differ considerably.

In spite of different interpretations of the tarot the practical demands of doing readings for pay result in basic similarities. This sort of commercialism forces members to design and enact performances that more or less correspond to their perception of what the general public expects. An abiding concern of all professional tarot card readers is directly related to the successful accomplishment of what will be recognized as a divinatory reading of the cards. Members are self-consciously aware that this demand to present a polished performance involves a sort of deception or con. Yet the legitimacy of tarot divination is sustained by interactional negotiation of some intersubjectively meaningful interpretation of past, present, and future events. This study specifically identified several of the basic properties of this interactional accomplishment.

In what sense, then, does esotericism constitute an alternative conception of reality? What is the constitution of multiple visions of the real world? This study demonstrated that the esoteric and
occult are intimately interrelated with a larger sociocultural context. Even the most serious and devoted members of the esoteric community do not exist in isolation from the larger urban environment. Many of these people are employed in the exoteric society; they satisfy basic subsistence needs in this environment; and, even practice of central doctrines—like the tarot—depend on a complex relationship with members of the larger, esoteric society. The members of isolated cults, on the other hand, may be able to sustain considerable distance from the exoteric society. Yet even these people sustain at least limited contact with the outside world.

There is a limited sense in which the esoteric community and other esoteric manifestations do constitute a distinctive world of meaning, somewhat separate and apart from the exoteric society. Within the esoteric community there is an informal structure of membership and rules for conduct. This structure, rules, and meanings are at least remote to members of the exoteric society. In this sense, then, esotericism does constitute a more or less distinctive realm of reality.

Within the esoteric community basic structures, rules, and meanings are often vague and ambiguous. Any given member's knowledge of this general structure is quite limited. Members therefore are forced to continuously negotiate a mutual understanding of the setting, particular situations, and its meaningfulness. Insofar as interaction among members is rationally organized this is largely a product of members' quite normal social abilities to make good sense out of literal nonsense. The performance of tarot divination, for example, is
rarely—if ever—a rationally organized production. Yet through interaction members are able to find particular meanings and fit these to particular problems, people, and situations. To understand the world of esotericism therefore requires that one actively participate in its production. Only in this way is it possible to understand its existential meaningfulness.

If this study has opened the door, at least part of the way, for future investigations of esotericism, then one of my central purposes in this study has been served. In conclusion I would like to direct attention to areas in need of further investigation, analysis, and perhaps even explanation.

1. My description and analysis of the actual practice of tarot divination must be received at least as a very modest beginning. At numerous points in writing up the materials contained herein I was tempted to confine the analysis to tarot readings. This was not done for the reason that I did not feel confident an adequate understanding of tarot divination could be achieved without at least some preliminary understanding of the larger social context. What remains to be done, then, is a most intensive analysis of tarot card readings. Such an analysis should begin with the collection of a large body of "psychic" readings (tarot, astrology, palmistry, hypnotic, and those for which only mental abilities are required). These readings then should be dissected in terms of the most essential features of conversation and interaction (verbal and nonverbal). Highly technical linguistic techniques, such as conversational analysis, will be especially useful here. An analysis of this sort will permit comparisons and contrasts
among different styles and types of readings. The end product should be a more intensive and comprehensive understanding of all sorts of psychic, esoteric, occult, and extraordinary practices.

2. There needs to be more detailed investigations of all of the participants in the esoteric scene. These studies should concentrate on seekers and clients, as well as actual practitioners. It is especially important that relationships among these individuals be specified most carefully.

3. Whereas I have provided a general description and analysis of networks of communication and relationships among members of the esoteric community, more intensive analytic work is needed. An important component of this problem is more intensive descriptions of particular groups, their relationships with one another, and their connection with the larger, exoteric society. Whereas my description has concentrated on one particular region of the country, future investigations might seek to describe and analyze interregional, national, or even international networks of groups and practitioners.

4. A great deal of work remains to be done on the history of esoteric groups and ideas in Western culture. Studies of this sort also should endeavor to relate analytically distinct bodies of knowledge and practice to contemporary thought, practice, and practitioners.

5. I think that this general discussion of an esoteric scene and esotericism as a meaningful response to life's problems provides a fruitful avenue for future investigation, analysis, and perhaps even explanation. This perspective will remain theoretically immature, however, unless this problem of meaning is directly related to concrete
sociohistorical processes (changes) in Western society and the subjective conditions of people's everyday life concerns. My discussion of the general esoteric scene, for example, can be and should be related to particular social segments, especially class based interest groups and life styles. Approached from the perspective of a sociology of knowledge, an analysis of esotericism and class interests can be expected to produce a powerful explanation of particular manifestations of esoteric beliefs, practices, and lifestyles.
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This questionnaire has been devised by Danny and Lin Jorgensen (The Ohio State University and Arizona State University) as part of a larger project designed to explore contemporary interest in the esoteric/occult/mystical/meta-physical/psychic/spiritual field. Your cooperation in answering this questionnaire will be helpful in determining and documenting the nature and extent of this social movement. The collection of valid information depends on your cooperation and honesty. Please be advised that your responses will be completely confidential. If you do not wish to participate or if you object to answering any of the following questions please tell us. Thank you very much.

PART I

Please check the appropriate answer:

1. What is your age? ____ years ____ months
2. What is your sex? ____ male ____ female
3. How many years of "formalized schooling" have you completed?
   4 5 6 7 8/9 10 11 12/13 14 15 16/17 18 19 20
   Jr. High Sr. High College Grad. School
4. Have you received degrees other than those from "formalized schooling?"
   a. no
   b. yes

   If yes, what degrees? ________________________________

   Where were they granted? ___________________________
5. Do you have an occupation other than reading tarot cards?
   a. no
   b. Yes (specify) ____________________________________________

6. What was your income last year from reading tarot cards? $

7. What was your personal income last year before taxes? (Include all sources)
   a. less than $5,000
   b. $5,900 - $7,499
   c. $7,500 - $9,999
   d. $10,000 - $12,499
   e. $12,500 - $14,999
   f. $15,000 - $17,499
   g. $17,500 - $19,999
   h. $20,000 - $24,999
   i. above $25,000

8. What is your present religious preference? ______________________

9. In an average month, how many times do you attend church?
   a. never          d. three times a month
   b. once a month   e. four times a month
   c. twice a month  f. five or more times a month

10. Other than going to church, how religious minded would you say you are?
    a. not religious minded at all
    b. not very religious minded
    c. somewhat religious minded
    d. fairly religious minded
    e. very religious minded
11. What is the strength of your present religious affiliation?
   a. very weak
   b. fairly weak
   c. middling
   d. fairly strong
   e. very strong

12. Do you classify yourself as
   a. devout
   b. moderately devout
   c. inactive

13. How would you describe your political views on this continuum?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
   very moderate very
   conservative liberal

14. Do you use any of the following drugs?
   a. tobacco
   b. alcohol
   c. caffeine
   d. marijuana
   e. cocaine
   f. "ups"
   g. "downs"
   h. heroin
   i. others (specify) ______________________

15. How long have you lived in the Valley area? ___years ___months

16. Where did you live before you came to the Valley area? ________
17. Do you have any children?
   a. no
   b. yes
      If yes, how many? _____
      Are your children presently living with you?
      a. no
      b. yes

18. What is your present marital status?
   a. never married (skip to question 23)
   b. divorced (skip to question 23)
   c. widowed (skip to question 23)
   d. presently married for the first time (go to question 19)
   e. remarried (go to question 19)

19. How many years of "formalized schooling" has your spouse completed?

   | 4 5 6 7 8/ 9 10 11 12/13 14 15 16/17 18 19 20 |
   | Jr. High  Sr. High  College  Grad. School |

20. What is your spouse's occupation? ________________________________

21. What was your spouse's personal income last year, before taxes?
   a. less than $5,000
   b. $5,000 - $7,499
   c. $7,500 - $9,999
   d. $10,000 - $12,499
   e. $12,500 - $14,999
   f. $15,000 - $17,499
   g. $17,500 - $19,999
   h. $20,000 - $24,999
   i. above $25,000

22. What is your spouse's present religious affiliation? ____________
23. With whom did you spend the majority of your growing-up years?
   a. mother and father
   b. mother and stepfather
   c. stepmother and father
   d. mother only
   e. father only
   f. other (specify) ______________________________________________

24. How many years of "formalized schooling" did your father complete?
   4 5 6 7 8/ 9 10 11 12/ 13 14 15 16/ 17 18 19 20
   Jr. High Sr. High College Grad. School

25. What is/was your father's occupation? ___________________________

26. What is/was your father's religious affiliation? ________________

27. How many years of "formalized schooling" did your mother complete?
   4 5 6 7 8/ 9 10 11 12/ 13 14 15 16/ 17 18 19 20
   Jr. High Sr. High College Grad. School

28. What is/was your mother's occupation? ___________________________

29. What is/was your mother's religious affiliation? ________________

30. Are any members of your family involved in occult/esoteric/
psychic activities?
   a. no
   b. yes - if yes, who? (circle all that apply)
      a. spouse       f. grandmother(s)
      b. daughter(s)       g. grandfather(s)
      c. son(s)       h. uncle(s)
      d. mother       i. aunt(s)
      e. father       j. cousin(s)
      k. others (specify) ____________________________
PART II

1. What is the average number of hours per week that you spend on
   a. readings (for money) ____
   b. readings (not for money) ____

2. Where do you do your readings?
   a. home
   b. office
   c. church
   d. bookstore
   e. other (specify) _____________________

3. How much do you charge for a reading? ____

4. What is the average length of time it takes you to do
   a reading? _______

5. Which spreads do you use in your readings?

6. Which tarot decks do you own?

7. Which tarot decks do you use for readings?

8. What type of client usually requests your services (e.g., age,
   sex, SES)?

9. What type of questions are most frequently asked of the tarot
   in your readings?

10. What, to you, would constitute an "ideal" querent (client)?

11. What was the "worst type" of client you've had?

12. Do you read the tarot cards for yourself?

13. Do you ask others to read tarot cards for you?
   If so, whom?

14. What is your estimate of the number of tarot readers in the
   Valley?
   Non-professional?
15. Do you associate with other tarot readers
   professionally? _____
   socially? _____

16. Do you use tarot cards for any purpose other than divinatory readings?
   If so, what?

17. Basically, what is your philosophy regarding the cards (and readings)?

18. How did you first get involved with reading tarot cards?

19. Have you ever had any out-of-the-ordinary psychic experiences?
   Please describe (i.e., type, intensity)

20. Are you a member of any occult/psychic groups?
   If so, which?

21. Do you practice any of the following: (circle all that apply)
   a. witchcraft     f. mediumship
   b. alchemy        g. scrying
   c. numerology     h. tea leaf readings
   d. palmistry      i. others (specify) ______________
   e. astrology

22. Do you employ any of the above practices in your tarot readings?
   If so, which?
APPENDIX B

ESOTERIC COMMUNITY SURVEY FORM

NAME: ________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS: ___________________________________________________________

PHONE: _____________________________________________________________

1. Basically what are your beliefs? (Supplementary: which of the following terms best describe the beliefs of your group—spiritual, psychic, occult, metaphysical, esoteric?).

2. Is your group/organization/church a charter or affiliate of any larger (national) organization?

3. When do you meet?
   a. time  b. type of meeting  c. average attendance  d. cost
   _____   ________    _________    _________
   (1)     (2)         (3)         (4)

4. Do you have any leaders? Are they paid? ______
   a. name  b. title  c. degrees, etc.
   (1)     (2)         (3)

5. Is your group/organization/church affiliated with any local groups (such as SAC, Omega, APRC, etc.)?

6. Any other relevant information:

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To all who read these letters, greetings:

By authority of the Regent and upon recommendation by the College of Counsellors,

The Reverend Danny L. Jorgensen

is hereby ordained Minister of The Spiritual Church of Meditation with all the honors, rights, and privileges thereunto appertaining.

Ordained July 17, anno Domini 1978.

Sister Mary
W magna Scriba
APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SAMPLE TAROT CARD READINGS

Part 1

H: //So stir 'em up, get your hands all over 'em, mess 'em into a big mud pie. After you've done that, shuffle 'em for a while til they feel right. ---------Ah, m'y I ask what that is for? You're not taking my picture, are you?

L: Umah, I'm taking a photography class and I have to//

H: not taking my picture//

L: You don't want me to?

H: I would prefer not

L: Okay, can I take his picture?

H: All you want

D: Do you have a particular reason for that, just out of curiosity?

H: Yeh, ah, I really do---I've had some rather undesirable experiences ah with photographs, one of which once caused ((cost)) me a divorce. I just (as soon not have)((shuffling of cards)) people people that I do not know coming up and snapping my picture for the hell of it. And I'm aware that it once in a while happens and there is not anything that I can do about it//=

D: emhum//=

H: I really can't imagine why anyone that I do not know would want my picture//=

D: m'picture//=

H: and I see it as sort of invasion of my privacy ((yes, and)) as that's the way I am

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L: I can appreciate that—most of the people around here seem to really enjoy it though

H: Aw, sometimes pictures get taken that get used out of context/

L: em-hum/

H: I just really don't have a good feel about it myself=If it feels right cut em, if it doesn't don't

D: I think they're Okay

H: Fine——

Sometimes I use a significator, sometimes I don't, it doesn't seem to make a whole lot of difference as far as the reading is concerned. What this is is a (cut with a cross) with a horoscope around it. So much for the first installment of the tarot ( ) ((laughter))

L: Oh, I've never seen this set-up before

H: What, well the cross is a basic tarot spread (clears voice) with the horoscope around it just adds amplifying information gives you a way of structuring it if you want to

L: umhum

H: And, the thing that I'm getting here is a period of ((clears voice)) a lot of change some of it rather sudden ah some of it rather drastic but all rather good about the time you come out the other side—so I feel kinda good about that except you may sometimes feel over the next three or four months that 'bout every time you are taking a couple of steps forward something is happening to put you over here you sorta have to turn around and get your bearings for a bit, I see two-three months, and yet the for the most part pretty good since I really like the Tower when he's upside down ((sniggers)) I would see here—(( )) very close to you in time the beginnings of a greater degree of financial stability than you may have had ah in the past months or past years or something I guess that's okay, ah what's a-----I don't know if you're doing this now or if its something you're going to be doing in the not too distant future but ah------I would see either—building a house or adding something to a house or at least some thought given in that direction—I'm vague on that one—I'd see a fair amount of disappointment of one or more people that you have been associated with, this may already be existing and a feeling on your part that you may really have been shafted in some way, so do as the good book says and do unto others first ha ha okay, ah, ((clears voice)) I look at these two cards together this time and see you apparently moving out of a period of some uncertainty and ah moving into a period in which some doors are fairly wide open
for you and I'd have to feel good about that, and over here—I would see sorta of a combination of psychic and spiritual experiences of some sort popping up into the future, I really don't like giving spiritual readings but I see it so, whatever that's all about good (anyway) I feel pretty good about it—I don't think you're gonna see a bright light and fall on the road to Damascus or anything like that, but you may be some pretty neat experiences coming and I would feel for some reason that one of these might occur on the evening of the 16th and I haven't the foggiest notion what you're gonna be doing on the evening of the 16th, but it seems to be there, so—I would see in that card some sort of unexpected expense about to pop up with something that goes wrong or gets broken at home, and it may be your TV will flip a lid or something of this sort, that will pop up--------------
Some person that you know or that you are about to know is going to be getting into a marriage that you're going to consider to be a real bummer, and you're gonna think well ah just where the hell did he or she pick up this turkey. You'll be very much against it and yet it's a frustrating situation because there's nothing you can do about it whether the marriage actually will be a problem I don't know but in your opinion it most certainly will be. Okay ((clears voice))—then I would feel that it'll seem to you that other people are going to be kinda crowding you or trying to in a few weeks and there may be just a little bit of resentment on your part because of this an you're gonna have all kinds of suggestions laid on you that you will not particularly appreciate and so on and so forth, so, I guess if it gets heavy enough you'll cut it off------------------
I see a hell of a nice trip coming up for you that I think is going to last perhaps three to five days, it could just be a weekend thing or there's no very big deal about it except that you're gonna have a hell of a lot of fun and enjoyment when you do and I don't feel that there's a whole lot of distance involved here presumably its some place that you can drive to in a day or so a it just really looks good. Have you had anything ripped off lately?

D: Not that I know of

H: Stand back (sniggers) I think you are about to, what I don't know, I hope it isn't too much. This bugs me because ah I've had possibly three or four times in the last month when I felt that somebody was about to have something stolen and two occasions when I got some feedback on, it happened within a day, so keep your car locked up, etc., etc.---hope for the best ((clears voice)) Al: If books on the tarot say death isn't a card of death, this is a card of major transformation and all that sortathing. It damn well may be but I happen to see this one as a card of death and I think that within the next few days unless this has just happened like yesterday or this morning you're gonna hear about the death of some person that you know, so//
H: It could be a family member, it could be a friend, it could be the dirty ole man across the street that you just see once in a while, and yet ah it will touch your life in some way -- so -- that seems to be it -- ah -- ah -- ah -- I'm trying to get a feel for something more about it -- only damn thing that I see in connection with this death -- sorta blonde hair that I would call brittle, ya know how somebody's hair is if they've plastered about a half a can of spray on it ((laughing)) and let it dry for a little while, that texture, for some reason, I feel most likely to be an older female but I may damn well be wrong, okay ------- I feel that you're gonna get blamed for something of money matters in the fairly near future or may be some unwise spending or stewardship ((laughing)) as the good Methodists say, I don't know I feel you're gonna get chewed out ( m ) bottom line in the matter, and I feel that it is at least in part kinda a bum rap, so I try not to take things like that so I hope you won't -- I also feel ah you might have a wee bit of an unexpected problem ah with a car so maybe you're gonna get a flat tire or the damn thing won't start it doesn't seem to be a big deal like an accident or anything like that and I don't feel there's a whole lot of money involved so --- This I would feel is coming in ab:::out seven days but then I could be wrong on this because I'm not sharp on time unless I actually see the date, okay------------ I think you're gonna have a kinda weird dream ah that turns out to be prophetic in some way if your mother appears in this dream whether to tell you something er maybe she plays some sort of a role in the dream ah I don't know but she's there -- and the damn thing seems to come true and I feel that this is very close to you in time. Do you normally remember your dreams?

D: Sometimes, sometimes not

H: I would feel that it would be an awfully vivid one for some reason ah it seems important for me to ask if you dream in color----------

D: ((clears voice)) ((may have motioned with body in some manner))

H: Because, there is apparently a lot of orange in the dream, what that has to do with anything I don't know, it is there------okay -------I see a hassle coming up with a female, because of something that you want to do for fun, perhaps a movie that you want to go to and she doesn't or something of this sort -- I think you're gonna lock horns over that one and I think you're gonna lose, sorry about that (laughingly) okay-------ah I see here some advice you're gonna get about a health matter which I think that you're gonna totally ignore--whatever that's all about, it probably won't kill you-- most people live through such things--------------
There's gonna be a little worry—at some point between now and summer time about a possible legal matter—ah the thing that comes to my mind is that I wonder if for some reason you'd be sweating a tax audit or if you're gonna screw up the form, IRS'll send it back to you with a nasty note or something of this sort, I can't see any loss associated with this thing, so you may get shook up about a bureaucratic message of some sort (laughingly)

D: Could it involve a child?

H: It could, except that I didn't flash on anything with a child, so if something comes up about a child okay ah but ah I wasn't getting anything----------------------I'm seeing here what looks like a screwup of some kind which has to do with insurance—maybe All State will jack up your rates er screw up your name on the computer or something of this sort, again I'm not feeling this as a loss of money, but I'm seeing it as a, some sort of a paper work hassle----------------------Here's a guy, hair coloring probably about like mine, and hopefully without the gray----probably living at some distance, who is gonna prove to be very helpful to you at somethign, the month that I get with this is August—and I feel that he's going to be instrumental in opening up some kind of opportunity for you, perhaps that might not otherwise be open to you, okay. I'm ( ) here ((clears voice)) I'm seeing a legal hassle which could cost you a little money----that perhaps could involve some sort of a family matter, so if we wanted to really stretch a point it could conceivably involve a child, although I have not got the feeling one way or another, except I do feel that there may be some aspect of this situation which either is unfair or you would consider to be unfair at the time its happening---------------------I'll read this card with it and say that whatever this situation is there will be a delay of some kind ah before it is resolved---------and------------------------some person close to you is going to spend two or three days in the hospital this year, possibly not immediately, maybe late in the summer and this is something that will probably scare the hell out of you, but it will turn out to be virtually nothing at all, stir you up some----------------------

L: Do you want to go to the Criswell thing, honey?

H: Don't wanta hear Criswell?

D: Maybe when we get finished here---I'm more important than he is at this point

L: Yeh, really-------------------------------
Would you walk a mile for a camel?

H: Well, I probably couldn't walk a quarter of a mile after I'd smoked a camel (laughs)
L: Right (laughs)

H: I believe in reincarnation so it really doesn't matter what kills me I'm gonna come back and get another shot at it anyway. Would you walk a mile for a camel?

L: No, thank you, I've got my own cancer sticks here, no ah, that reminds me of Jane Roberts where she says in her book that she knows she shouldn't smoke but Seth said she wouldn't die of cancer so she does it anyway------thank you

H: If we don't die, in a metaphysical sense, what the hell difference does it make ((general laughter))

L: ((laughing)) I'll agree with that

H. Okay, sort of a good generality, second half of the year is gonna be a hell-o-a lot better for you money wise than the first half will be, so, that's all to the good--------( ) are coming up damn soon ah a little bit of financial strength, financial pressure and yet I don't think its particularly long lasting ah--------ah------you're gonna change your residence coming ( ) in the not too distant future whether its one you're aware of now, I don't know but I feel pretty good about it, I don't feel good about moving day but then I never feel good about moving day ((laughingly))

D: Can you tell if its gonna be a long distance or a short distance?

H: What I get is a short one, not very long but that's the thing I feel about it, hope it helps--------I feel there is a lot of work possibly connected with it in a way, but in another way it represents ah pretty much of a step up ah I'd have to shuffle ( ) a ( ) or something like that but after it does occur I feel pretty damn good about it------------------There is an improvement in finances very shortly after this move, now whether the one has anything to do with the other I don't know, but ah----when the move comes I just hope ( ) the money's gonna be a little better too, so that's kinda nice, ah ---there is-----okay--here's a sequence that I'm looking at--which involves a younger person, possibly a child, I suppose the reason child is sticking in my mind now is because you put it there, but ah there is a disappointment at first its as if a door gets slammed in your face some:::how and ah---that seems to be a temporary--may be three, four, five months later whatever that situation is all about changed--once you hear something that is, from your standpoint, pretty good news, that's the best I can do there, here's------a hell of a lot of happiness in a relationship or marriage or something of that sort. I guess I shouldn't say "relationship" because relationship by my definition is a dirty weekend, not everybody's definition, that seems kinda nice and
you're probably gonna be luckier than most people are most of the time----------------------------------late August maybe

September seems to be just a very important period for you----the feeling that I'm getting here is that a lot of pressures are comin off at that time a lot of things bein made possible for you just one right after another with perhaps other things ( )----the beginnings of some really solid feelings that you have just really got it made, so whatever you're gonna be goin at that time I guess you're doin it right ( ) ok, I'm getting something here about writing; do you write ( ) something that you write you're gonna write right and that apparently is coming up in the fall, either you'll write it on the fall or hopefully an editor will write the right thing and mail it back to you----I feel very nice about that------------------there is something about the writing project--again I'm reading these two cards together--and you're gonna write something and then be really worried about some part of it, so if you think you blew it after you already have it in the mail and its too late, you'll luck out and apparently the thing you thought you coulda done better skates through just fine so, whatever that is all about it seems kinda ( )------------------coming back to August again some sorta worry seems to be lifted from you about that time, what I don't know, and this seems to be followed up fairly shortly after by a chunk of money of some kind which is usually what I see the Ace of Pentacles as, though not always (laughs) and it seems damn nice, followed by a variable whirlwind of activity in which you're gonna wish to god that you could be in seven different places at once because that's what your scheduling will seem to be like, and yet I feel very very nice about it---------This is not to suggest that you're not a feeling person now cause I'm sure that ya are, and yet for some reason over the fall and winter you're gonna become much more so and yet in a very good way, not in a way of being supersensitive to anything and anybody that wants to growl at you about ah I would also see you during the fall and winter as looking at a whole lot of things with through different eyes than perhaps you have in the fall. Its gonna be ah ( fall ) than you have earlier, it would seem to be very much ah rejuvenating, almost a rebirth time for you of some kind, looks damn good ( ) ah-----1978 for some reason should be a hell of a year for you moneywise ah and I really feel that you've just got handfulls and handfulls of it ----and very definately a midas touch or so it would seem. I feel real good about that, I also feel very early in 78 you're gonna feel that you can afford to do a bunch of traveling perhaps you might not of been able to swing before for some reason and that feels nice-------I would see you as being very much of a competetor in 78 for some reason but in a very positive way and feeling very good about yourself and feeling right on top of it like you're two steps ahead of everything that's happening you're just coverin every damn base there is and I guess that this is a pretty nice way to feel ah-------------------some kind of an association with a
younger guy in 78 I don't think ya know em now, ya'll know em then, who's gonna be very helpful to ya in the sense of serving as a sounding board for ideas that you might have and ah he's apparently gonna have a real knack for picking up on important things an feeding them back to you whether this will be any kind of a formal working association or just a friendship I don't know, but this guy seems to be one of the best things that could happen to you about that time, this probably quite early in 78--now I would see, probably around June of next year the death of some older woman that you know, it could be a relative it could be a friend, ah what ever it is I don't know, its gonna be a death that I think you're gonna feel quite deeply but ah I don't know what in the world you could do about it because it just seems to be there. Now for some reason I'm also seeing and don't ask me which card cause I'm seeing them spread out all over the layout a white dog with some small black and brown spots, and I don't know if this is one that you're gonna acquire or one that you are going to chase away or what, but I just see em as there, so ah also at some point in the next couple of years, it could be now or it could be two years from now I see you spending some time in a rural area, the only reason that I can tell that is because I'm seeing a dirt road that has got to be so infrequently traveled that there is grass and weeds growing in the middle of this damn thing and I'm seeing the kind of beat-up white mail box that I would expect to see right outside of a farm somewhere that (____) that seems to be a I don't know much else about this area except that a either right there or very near to it there is a river which can not possibly be in Arizona because its got water in it ((laughing)) this is just a big kosher river just like down home and apparently its gonna be a fairly important place to you cause you're gonna spend some time there and that seems to be about what I do with a short reading except giving people a shot at asking a question or two. If I can answer it I will but if I can't I won't bullshit you about it. 

D: I don't think I have any questions, I've asked you some during the reading and you've answered them

H: Hope it works out, I've been told I have a reasonably good batting average most of the time

D: Well, if I can I'll get back to you and let you know what happens

H: Okay, write the great American novel and I'll go buy it

D: Okay

L: Okay, ah, shall I switch places

II: Yeh, what deck are we gonna use with you, we cannot use this deck
This transcript is interesting because it has been purged of every­thing but basic content by the transcriber.

I: You start off romantic affairs very early.

D: You mean age?

I: In age. Yes. Unusual. I guessed it should have lasted. You probably are flirty somewhat. The reason I don't think anything would last on that level. Was this woman a little older than you were?

D: No, she was the same age.

I: All right, there is a trip or a change that we were talking about before we turned this card over that's gonna come up pretty soon. And it's either moving from where you are or traveling. We don't know. We would say that it's move traveling than moving, but it looks like its moving from where you are.

D: In the near future?

I: Yes. Within the next few days, or three weeks.

D: Will I be returning?

I: Oh, yes. Don't you know anything about it?

D: I was planning on leaving town this weekend.

I: One thing that you may not be praying for, be prepared for, some­thing is gonna be in this trip that's gonna call for the keeness of your mind. It can be pleasure but keep your mind because some­thing is gonna come up. You should have some interest in music and is this trip gonna have anything to do with it?

D: No.

I: I told you keep that purely. So keep your eyes open because some­thing will call for a decision. That is gonna come up, but you can handle it because you have an unusual good mind. Let's move to negatives. You don't have too many negatives here.

D: On that trip, are there any particular precautions I should use?

I: Be sure you don't force anything. Whether its romantic or what­ever it is. Be sure you don't force anything.

D: Should I refrain from anything that might alter my perception?
I: You don't get drunk, do you?

D: Yes.

I: Well, we didn't feel that was a problem. You mean to the point that you don't know what you're doing?

D: No.

I: This year is going to be an unusual year. You'll have an influence on business changes that is going to be very good for you. It will be a good year for business or things in that area. Your whole life is gonna be changed this year. You'll look toward life and life to you. Which is again unusual and very good. The girl that you are going with now, you are to use wisdom because either you are not being true with her or she isn't being true with you. It could be both of you are not really on the level with each other. I know you are not. And she seems to react and get all emotional over things that you do but I don't blame her, really. Boy! You gotta a line, I'm telling you.

D: What's that?

I: I mean you got a way of making her feel that's not true with that line. Now those are the negatives. If you want to ask anything about them, you may. At the end of the reading I'm gonna give you a chance to ask about anything.

D: What is the biggest negative I have going there?

I: The trip.

D: The trip? Would it be wise possibly not to go on the trip?

I: No, you can go on the trip, but if you don't go you won't be losing anything.

D: Okay. What about the negatives and the relationship with the girl?

I: But that thing is over it seems like.

D: Is this negative relating to my most recent relationship then? Because I probably haven't been telling her the whole truth?

I: But I mean its nothing bad here, I guess it would be bad for the girl. If I was a girl I wouldn't like it, but I would not consider it bad if I was doing it. I believe that though you ought to start curbing because you're gonna find somebody and I don't know when you are going to find that person. You are going to find that person, that if who did that the thing is gonna turn and hurt you more than anything else. But its going to hurt you
very terribly cause you're gonna love this one.

D: Then its not going to work out?

I: If you pull off those things you are doing new she'll just walk out on you and leave you hanging. You are the kind of person that is super at handling things but you can go way down, too. And its not good for you to be way down. And this hasn't even come up yet. See what I'm talking about. I would kinda curb and I would think of myself sometime. How would I feel if I were in her shoes? Its not bad. You have some very good positives here. Some money that was due to you is coming to you that seemingly at the time it was withheld or you didn't get it but I don't think it could have a tendency to have been legal, not legal in a sense to be in court or anything. Do you know anything of that?

D: There's a guy I loaned money to.

I: Don't worry about it because I do not see that it is in the court but there's something legal about it. I don't know if you had him sign a paper or what.

D: No, but I pushed the legalities—fair deals in business.

I: That's always good to do. At the present time, justice and maturity are coming to you but it is also being revealed to you.

D: What do you mean by justice?

I: Justice means something that is good and should be done. It looks like where you're working or someone you're dealing with. That's happening. That justice is coming to you. Not that loan you made. Somebody's thinking the way they should think of you in a situation. This surprises us somewhat because you give the impression of being tough and rough but I already told you I felt you must watch out because you could get low down. You have a tendency to let people walk over you, take advantage of you. Also you look like you're nice and I'm sure you are but when people do push you too far or situations it can really be something you get tired of and if you get tired of it you have a terrible temper. You must watch out for that.

D: I never thought I really was one to let people walk over me.

I: I'm sure you probably would do that but its a thing you that really don't—most of us when people take advantage of us we don't know we're being taken advantage of. The thing of it is to be more aware. All that anger carries around with it a lot of fighting.
D: Physical fighting?
I: Yes.

D: I haven't had a physical fight in years.
I: In years?

D: It's been a year. I did punch a guy in the mouth once who ran me off the road.
I: I'm not surprised at that. You may think because a lot of times we are not conscious of our own lives in the depths. A lot of gossip is going on about you.

D: Recent gossip?
I: The gossip really has no danger of fundamental (foundation) but there's too much of it. But you need not pay it any attention. I already warned about the wisdom. You may not be aware of—we deal with many lives. What we see here covers more than this lifetime.

D: So it covers future lives?
I: Past also. Must know of the past to understand the future. We have to wait on the future. That turn—the things are really going to put you where you want to be. You like a lot of money, huh? Well, who doesn't, but in your case you got excessive, a lot. And you will have that. Its business or something of that type. Let's get back to the religious side of you. In a past lifetime you've been a monk. And so that sometime in the near future, say three months, four months from now you will look at that—at something unconsciously from a religious point of view. And you may not believe it as such but it will have that background because you went through a very serious self-sacrifice—being alone and seeking out truth and that is still with you. I don't think the aloneness is with you although it can tire you. I don't mean physical tired, I mean mentally.

D: Boring.
I: Yes, boring. And comes near the end of this here. What is it about the end of this month you're concerned about?

D: I don't have a particular thought, because the pressure's been off me pretty much.
I: No, this is not pressure. This is something that is going to be again something physically manifesting.
D: I tried to find myself a steady girlfriend.

I: That's the time to be careful.

D: Now you are referring back to cautions with them, of telling the truth and being considerate.

I: I don't mean that you're not going to look at any other girl or that you're not going to fool around ever or anything of this nature. That's the time to begin to be more serious. All right. We were talking about the end of the year and also gives us the end of the month which is very good. It will be very good. But at the end of the year we are sure of this we don't ( ). There is a balance, a maturity but a small balance that comes along with balance is maturity. And physical, material more than physical, a material thing is coming.

D: At the end of the year?

I: Yes. But the source said the end of the month, but when I went to say the year, they said the month. I believe its monetary.

D: Could that relate back to the idea that somebody is going to cover the debt?

I: That could very well be confirmation.

D: Could sure use the money.

I: No, you don't. You could use but you don't need it. There is something hidden, something good hidden about you. Were you in the Catholic Church?

D: No.

I: Did you ever think about becoming something serious like a priest or a minister or something of this nature?

D: No.

I: You could be going back to something. I'm not sure a previous life where you were a monk.

D: Can being a monk in a previous life have any effect on this life, so I'm like making up for lost distance?

I: Yes. All right, we went through this. I don't mean we did not tell you the truth about everything here, we went through this, but you know the time elements and I always feel its necessary that people ask what they want to ask irregardless to what we tell them. So now we gonna leave a time period for you to ask
about anything. It does not have to be what we've talked about.

D: Do I have any type of a future in law?

I: Yes, I will answer the question. By nature, this lifetime, you're gonna make a success, the world will come at your feet. Now you'll have to watch it because if you don't you'll, whether you believe in this type of thing or not, you'll be right back again and you'll have a very rough time when you come back again to this planet Earth.

D: What kind of precautions should I take?

I: Because you are going to have the world come to you, the world, there will be many people climb around you and for all kinds of things. And wealth is gonna be dumped on you. If you don't use it the right way, if you take advantage of people, if you see a situation and you overdo it, that's what we're talking about. And this is leading into your question about your life. We do not feel that the lawyer things are of your system. It may seem to you that it is. I think that you're gonna really give it up and look at it. We feel you're gonna go back. We say go back. The medical thing.

D: That I'll go back to medicine?

I: Yes.

D: My father's a doctor. He made me a real interesting offer about medicine, but I couldn't get into the cutting up.

I: You mean you're too soft.

D: No. Actually, I'm too emotional.

I: However, I think that your healing, your medical thing can be something different by the time you get to it. I don't think its gonna have too much to do with surgery.

D: Could it be anything like medicine and the law? Like malpractice attorney?

I: Yes. We did not see wholeheartedly the surgery thing in here.

D: But it looks like I'm gonna succeed at what I try.

I: That's right.

D: What does it look like in the future, like marriage, children, things like that?
I: Yes, I can see that married life is very fruitful for you. I don't understand you turning it off at times. At the beginning that's why I told you to be careful with how you romantically relate to this girl. Cause I feel some big hurt. You are going to be hurt because you are going to say, "I don't deserve this" and in effect you will deserve it.

D: Am I going to live a long time?

I: You will live a reasonably long time. One reason I didn't speak too much about this weekend is because there's an accident in it. This trip, it isn't going to cause a death. Or has it just happened?

D: Recently I was in a very serious car accident. I thought I was going to die. The memory of it has stayed fresh in my mind for a very long time.

I: I would not worry. I would not be overly concerned about the length of your life. It doesn't show here that it's going to be cut off soon. This thing here about this card, they think about this card being a physical thing. That's that new thing that's going to happen to you. That opening up. So I would go along and be careful as possible, especially these days when people drive like they're crazy. So I don't see any shortness of life.

D: Can you see in the cards changes in my family or very close friends?

I: Yes. The family. Somebody's eyes are very sick now or will become very sick.

D: Will they overcome it?

I: The chances are that they are coming close to it, but that they might not. You know of any sickness now? I think the person that is sick is a female. I think they're not telling.

D: Close friends?

I: I would prefer not commenting on that.

D: Professionally, will I be a mobile type person?

I: Oh, yes. You will become very mobile and you will use it as, now I'll be very frank with you, you will have the tendency to use your professional life as a stabilizer for family life, religious life and for anything else. You gonna put you into it. That's tendency; I did not say the actuality because it is possible with the wisdom and knowledge that this marriage and this girl will also be the same way. That you'll find your happiness your stability.
That doesn't mean you aren't gonna do your work, however. But it is very clear to us that this could be.

D: What do you mean by "us?" Are you in touch in someone else?

I: Yes.

D: Is there anything else in the cards I should be aware of?

I: No. I believe I've told you everything. You may develop a naive as you go on in life—when you are older, sixty-five, there will be a tendency then to be naive. And to think that you are being kind—you've got some of that in you now. Just because you are kind and you do this thing you think that everybody else will do the same thing unto you. Another thing you got to watch out for. But that's not gonna hurt you. I don't see anything else.