

## ON THE SUN...

There appears to be a concerted effort to move us away from *Natura's* natural cycles. Witness the increased push, across various regions of the world, to alter the seasonal calendar to a six-fold version. In Australia, this has now become so ingrained that it is difficult to open discussion as to how this came about. The care taken to politicise the calendar has been well and truly implemented, taking refuge in indigenous aboriginal local recognition of seasonal fluctuations, and standardising these to a six-fold pattern grafted onto our secular ('common') calendar. In India, the process is similarly gaining ground. And I have recently been told of a similar move in parts of Europe - especially based on ancient Greek poetic interpretations.

In each case, the care has been to capture any disenchantment with any aspect of our current cultural systems (and there are many), somehow connect the push to an 'earlier' calendar (in each case an exaggeration at best), and progressively replace the one for the other.

Still, the four points, marked by the Earth's Solar annual orbit, remain. Even if we become increasingly disconnected from the Earth's natural cycles, even if artificial city lights prevents many from seeing daily movements of the Sun's rise and fall on the horizon, and the monitored and unchanged ambient temperature makes the seasonal fluctuations virtually undetectable, there does remain an inner body clock that responds to the Earth's annual cycle.

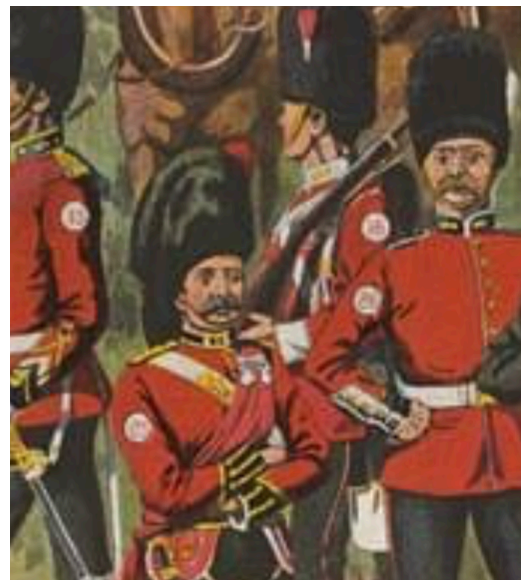
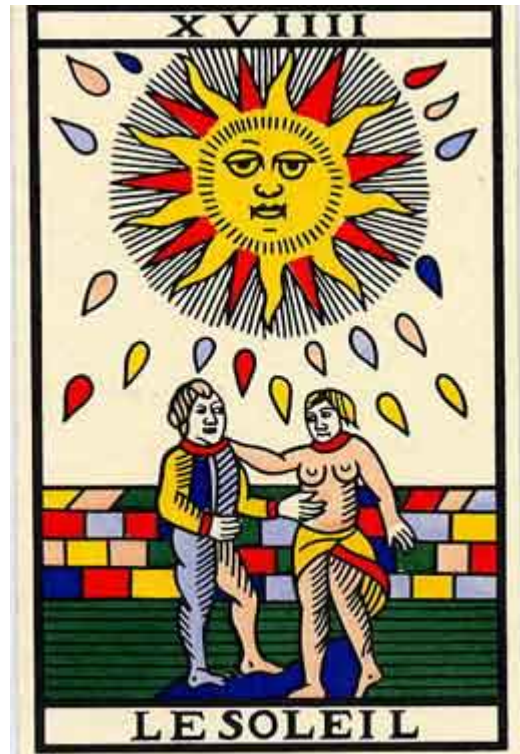
In Australia (and New Zealand and, for 'practical purposes', South Africa), the official start of the four seasons begins with the first of the month. Hence, Winter is officially designated to start on the first of June and, correspondingly, Spring on the first of September, Summer on the first of December, and Autumn on the first of March - recalling that these three countries are all in the Southern Hemisphere.

How it all came about is a simple practical solution that weaved unconsciously into officialdom. Posted in Sydney during Australia's penal colonial days, the British army sweltered in their winter uniforms and begged the Governor to be permitted to wear Summer Dress, even though prior to the Solstice and therefore prior to the official beginning of Summer. The Governor, agreeing to allow Summer Dress as of the 1st of December, inadvertently instigated Australia's declaration of Summer before the Solstice: 'Summer Dress' rules soon merged into official Summer start. So the consequence of Australasia's British military dress code became its official seasonal date change, irrespective of the Solar passage across the Earth's horizon and the solstitial times - yet quite apt to alter one's clothes given the Sydney heat compared to Liverpool or London!

## RECONNECTING TO THE ANNUAL CYCLE...

Even a few decades ago the connection to the Earth's annual cycle was more easily felt by all. Unless living in the tropics or in the polar regions, the daily dawning of the Sun's rise (and setting) on the horizon would be easily observed and at least semi-consciously noted, even if taken for granted.

How many amongst us take notice of the Sun's daily rising and setting shift as it moves North and South through its annual journey upon the Earth's horizon. Of course, it does require that we are in the same location and not shift our own location of observation from week to week, or month to month. If observant, we see that, as it reaches its northerly and southerly extremes, for some near twelve days, the Sun appears to repeat at the same point its rising (and setting): it (the Sun) 'stays still' ('Sol-Stice'). Three months hence, it crosses a direct easterly point as it journeys through towards its other extreme north and south - in March and September, as days and night reach equal length for but a day or two as the Sun's position on the horizon accelerates its daily change.

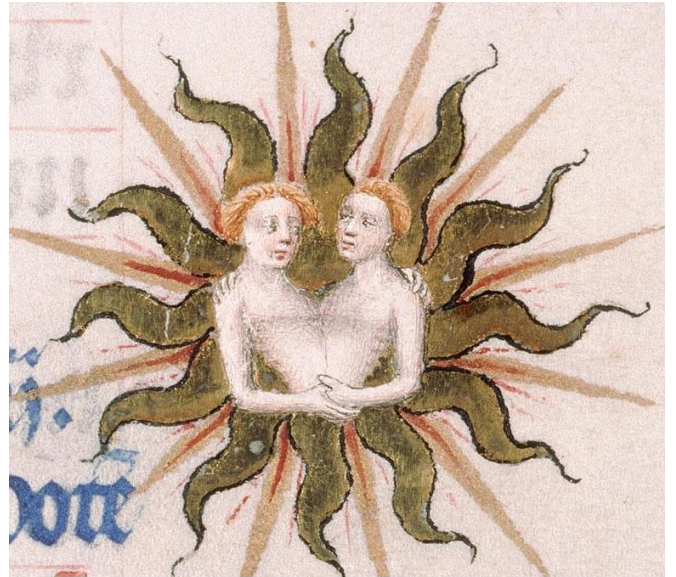


## THE SIGN OF THE JUNE SOLSTICE...

From what is referred to as a Tropical perspective, the horizon at the time of the March Equinox defines the beginning of Aries. However, due to the precession of the Equinox, we have been, for approximately 2000 years, in the Age of Pisces (ie, the sign that the Sun is in front of as seen from the Earth is not Aries, but Pisces). We will enter the Age of Aquarius, when the Sun enters that star constellation at the time of the March Equinox, in 2375 A.D., in other words, in close to 350 years time.

We are, therefore, very much still in the Age of Pisces, though the *dawning* of the Age of Aquarius is on the horizon: 350 years in the context of 2160 years (the duration of each Age) is equivalent of the pre-rising dawn - approximately the equivalent of a few hours before Sunrise, the time in the 24 hours when yogis rise and practice depth of meditative movement.

At the time of Tarot's creation in the 16th century, as it is now, the Sun, at its solstitial peak, gives us the longest day of the year. In the Northern Hemisphere, this is of course at the June Solstice, with the background star pattern (ie, the astrological sidereal sign) of Gemini. It is therefore entirely appropriate for Tarot to depict the Sun above Gemini.



## PARADISE ON EARTH...

So the Sun card is, in my view, clearly 'linked' or depicting an aspect of Gemini - both in terms of the Sun's solstitial point given our current Age of Pisces, as well as depicting an aspect of paradise by having the couple within a walled garden.

As I write in my book *Reading the Marseille Tarot*,

It is the Noblet, however, and other decks more closely akin to its image, that appear to better 'justify' the wall behind as that of a garden wall, above which the Sun sheds its benign influence. And it is this wall, which in many ways is in itself perhaps the least important of the three key parts of the image (with the Sun and the human couple of more import) that nonetheless provides a central interpretative pointer to the image's likely intent.

Here, it is Paradise that seems depicted – whether as lost, or found again, or as future state, or as heavenly realm – but paradise, and with it, a realm of idealised human interaction and freed pleasure. We can sense into both its aspect for a nostalgic past and hopeful future that, within a Christian context, begins with its loss in Genesis, and attains its possible redemption by the death of Christ.

Taking into account the sequence with the ensuing card of Judgement makes this image all the more poignant and pregnant with hope and salvation to mediæval (and later) Christian sensibility.

Even depictions of Hesiod's 'Golden Age', in the following example by Lucas Cranach (the Elder), circa 1530, bring to light how not only this more general sense of the card image may have been seen far more 'naturally' than for us, but also how innocence itself, yet obvious sexual intimations, are juxtaposed.

If the idea of the pair within the garden brings forth this aspect as edenic and paradisiacal, its innocence similarly brings forth its very opposite.

