

Civilization in transition. The contemporary imperative for an active *unus mundus*

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Abstract: Jung's conception of '*unus mundus*' takes on new relevance. More than ever, the question arises of what we need today to come back into harmony with the creative and healing forces of the universe. Through synchronistic events, we experience connectedness and how the world as a whole affects us. With the help of the Tarot and the Chinese wisdom book *I Ching*, the spiritual dimension of *unus mundus* can be experienced. With the Hexagram '56 Lü – the Wanderer', as well as in the great *Arcano* 'the Sun' in the Tarot, and in the symbol of the snake, it is shown that one should be adaptable and willing to learn constantly. All archetypal images speak about the need to be aware, that periods of transition are dangerous and exciting. The important exercise here is to prepare oneself for the cosmic order of constant changes.

Keywords: *I Ching*, Tarot, the Sun, the Wanderer, *unus mundus*, *uroboros* snake

The concept of *unus mundus* becomes a reality and is one of the most important psychological, political, philosophical and cultural imperatives at this stage of civilization in transition.

More and more people are beginning to understand this, feel responsible and need to react. The global youth demonstrations for climate change are one example. It is also important to consider the enormous distrust in the traditional way of doing politics. There is an intense transformation in values, putting at risk traditional democracies in many countries. There is a strong split on the planet about the way of thinking related to politics and economics. We see more and more separation, tension, projection and rejection. There is an urgent need to meet the needs of the world in a responsible and collective way.

What humanity needs is a fundamental experience of being connected to each other, connected through the experience of the soul. We talk too much about soul, but we experience and realize it too little and therefore we lack respect for life and for the soul. In Jung's understanding of *unus mundus* everything is already summarized of what we need today to come back into harmony with the creative and healing forces of the universe. Feeling responsible for

the world we live in and understanding this as a collective and individual challenge for us and for everyone, becomes a great need.

To that end, Jung's concept of the *unus mundus* includes the consequent idea of exchanging and being in constant resonance with the processes of the psyche and the world around us.

Unus mundus and its ways of expression

C.G. Jung's concept of individuation is based on this idea of '*unus mundus*' and his work with Pauli and Richard Wilhelm was an ongoing experience with this fundamental concept. Jung speaks of the 'unification of the integral human being' (Jung 1955/56, para. 760) with the *unus mundus* and defines this as the unity of humanity with the world and the Cosmos.

What can help us to approach the *unus mundus*, are there philosophical and spiritual systems that could open up access to the all-encompassing idea of 'all in all' and 'as above so below'? We choose for that the *I Ching* and Tarot, two centuries-old wisdom systems, also oracle systems, which relate to the *unus mundus* on the basis of synchronicity. Can these two systems for a fundamental understanding of the *unus mundus* and its unifying forces help us to reconnect with the healing sources of a basically healthy, peaceful and constructive world order?

The *I Ching*, with its continuing tradition of more than 4,000 years, describes a detailed system of the processes and dynamics of *unus mundus* with their rhythms, constant duration in change and understanding on how to act appropriately inward and to the outside. More than an oracle, the *I Ching* has always been used as a source of wisdom for socially responsible people, for advice on political matters and philosophical questions. With the help of the *I Ching* and in a psychological point of view, we show that everything that happens in the world begins with our personal projection on to the other.

When this is understood as an individual psychological mechanism, we can become aware that the world's problems do not stop at national borders but have a direct impact on us.

The Tarot, more than an oracle, can also be considered as a system of psychological interpretation. Rather than predicting the future, it offers us the opportunity to connect our inner experience with the world. It can help us to change ourselves, to transform the images we have of others and our behaviour in relation to them.

But what are the characteristics and the genesis of the actual crisis?

Bill Plotkin (2008) speaks of an adolescent pathology in contemporary society that he defines as 'egocentric'. We are, according to Plotkin, moving from a self-centred, adolescent society to one based on the soul. Plotkin comments on the absence of initiation for young people towards contact with the soul and how the transformation process could occur from the current

egocentric society that is based on narcissistic principles. Plotkin also comments that contemporary society is very much focused on culture and away from nature.

According to Plotkin (2008) it is totally natural that each human being has a unique and mystical relationship with nature. In the same line of thought we can also find other authors such as Charles Eisenstein (2017) and David Abram (2012).

Erich Fromm's vision about the crisis of contemporary society is also interesting. He comments on the relevant discrepancy between the intellectual development of humanity and its emotional mental development, which 'holds one in a state of marked narcissism' with all its 'pathological symptoms' (Fromm 1964, p. 114).

According to Fromm (1964), humanity reaches full maturity when it completely comes out of narcissism, both individual and as a group. Fromm also wonders if narcissism is so deeply ingrained in humanity that it can never overcome its narcissistic core, as Freud thought.

For Fromm (1964) there would be a way to get out of the crisis if humanity could become the object of a group narcissism. That means that the individual could be considered primarily as a citizen of the world and pride of humanity. In this case, the narcissism would turn to an object.

It is also worth making a reference to Stephen Arroyo (1990, p. 63) when he writes 'that the possible connection, which can free humanity from the prison of the material world, is through the unconscious'.

Richard Tarnas (2006) speaks about the need for an epistemology that provides knowledge with a multidimensional perceptual scope. He comments that there is a problem of an empty soul. This empty soul is projected in the understanding of the cosmos, with the consequence that the emptiness of the soul is repeated in the cosmos and this leads to a feeling of being alone and not connected. This makes us feel lost from the experience of the *unus mundus*.

Tarnas (ibid., p. 83) speaks about an affinity between the Copernican revolution and the revolution of Deep Psychology. The Copernican revolution allowed the construction of the idea of a 'universe', and Freud continued this approach and adapted it to his concept of psyche, based on the idea that psychic motivation has its roots in an unconscious biological instinct. Freud started a transformation of the psyche: this meant the deconstruction of the inflated 'I'.

With Jung, depth psychology addresses an approach towards a spiritual expansion and finally to a larger and more mysterious inner world than Freud was able to recognize.

The origin of the current crisis arises from the scientific discovery that humanity is not the centre of the Universe. This discovery disconnects humanity from the Cosmos and begins with the focus on the individual. Humanity was no longer able to relate to the external world and people

started to feel lost in the universe. Cosmology was not understood anymore and there were no more ways to explain it. The consequence was the disconnection between humanity and the cosmos.

Until today in our contemporary society, the way in which humanity defines and prioritizes values is based on the idea that we are not part of nature. But nature is reduced down to serving us with material goods without meaning and limits.

Only the discovery of an inner experience, which is fundamental to finding meaning, can help us to discover the psyche and its deeper layers. Unfortunately, until now, humanity feels lost in relation to its inner world, its social life and its relationship to the cosmos. The required process of learning and discovering the unconscious has just begun and will only come to a meaning when we use this to become more conscious.

Before analyzing how the concept of *unus mundus* and the ancient systems of interpretation can help us understand the current crisis, it is worth making some comments about what *unus mundus* means.

Unus mundus: its symbols and synchronicity

An interesting way to approach the concept of *unus mundus* is through the image of the Mandala. Jung (1955/56, para. 661) comments that: ‘the Mandala symbolizes, through its central point, the ultimate unity of all archetypes and the plurality of the phenomenal world, this is why it constitutes the empirical equivalent of the metaphysical concept of *unus mundus*. The alchemical equivalent is the lapis philosophorum’. Jung states that the concept of *unus mundus* is also ‘equivalent to the fundamental principle of classical Chinese philosophy ... and at the same time the foreboding anticipation of that “tertium quid” which I have called “synchronicity”, on the psychological basis and on the results of Rhine’s experiments’ (ibid., para. 662).

Here we also find the concept of ‘Synchronicity’ (ibid., para. 662), which is for Jung a connection, or a sum of events that are connected by chance. ‘This points to the unity of causally unconnected events and thus represents a unity aspect of being, which may well be called the *unus mundus*’.

It is important to understand what Jung means by ‘events not causally connected’. He comments (Jung 1952, para. 819) that causality is the philosophical principle on which our conception of natural laws is based. In certain circumstances the linking of events is of a different nature than mere chance and requires a different principle of explanation.

The approach of natural sciences has as its object regular and reproducible events, so that ‘unique or rare events’ are not considered (ibid., para. 821).

This research principle is characterized by a one-sided view loaded with prejudices because it excludes all aspects that cannot be statistically understood.

For Jung, events can be related in non-accidental chains by a kind of transversal connection of meaning. He also links the phenomena of synchronicity to archetypal circumstances.

In our opinion the link between subjective and objective aspects is relevant, between an individual and collective mental state. And the question is how this connection is activated by the archetypal phenomena.

Jung says that Synchronicity is an unexpected content that refers directly or indirectly to an objective external event that coincides with a habitual state (ibid., para. 855).

Another quote where he refers to the *I Ching* and synchronicity is very interesting:

The Chinese spirit, unlike the western one of Greek education, aspires not to the understanding of the detail by itself, but to a conception that sees the individual as part of the whole. Such an operation of knowledge is, for obvious reasons, impossible for the pure intellectual. Hence, the judgment has to be based on the irrational functions of consciousness, that is, on sensation and intuition. The *I Ching*, that foundation – arguably experimental – of classical Chinese philosophy, is a very ancient method aimed at understanding the situation as a whole, thus placing the individual problem within the framework of the opposition between yin and yang.

(ibid., para. 863)

There is a strong discrepancy between the current understanding of contemporary epistemology that considers a strong disconnection between our internal world and the external, with the understanding of the Jungian concept of *unus mundus* and synchronicity, that it is based on an *a priori* sense in relation to human consciousness that seems to exist outside of humanity.

When we think about the crisis of contemporary society, we come to the core question regarding which method or system could help us to connect the individual with the unifying totality. Because, still today and this is the core problem, our planet and the cosmos, our psyche and the world, our life and the lives of others, are considered as ‘two distant worlds’.

Personal experiences with *unus mundus*

How can we in our psyches bring to life the archetype of *unus mundus* – which we define to be a dynamic quality of Connectedness, Resonance and Unity with the world, the Cosmos, the ‘Inner’ and the ‘Outer’ and with the ‘Above’ and ‘Beneath’? An understanding which Charles Eisenstein (2017) calls nowadays ‘One – Being’, and Orland Bishop ‘Oneness’ (see <https://charleseisenstein.org/orland>).

Of course, the dream images, spontaneous fantasy images and symbols are, as Jung shows, the vivid sources of the *unus mundus*, and are one way to reconnect. The answer to our question lies in the still unknown content of the unconscious. As many Jungians showed before, we know that dreams indicate a way out or an alternative path to the current identity crisis of contemporary society, which is the result of a one-sided cosmic vision. There are archetypal images of unity existing, such as Jung describes about the Mandalas. The question is how can dreams, spontaneous fantasies or questions to the Tarot and the *I Ching* reconnect us with the unknown potential of the unconscious? And furthermore, do these ancient systems offer a reconnection with a cosmology that can help us in the contemporary crisis to understand its meaning and its opportunities?

To go deeper with these questions and trying to find an answer we decided to work on the interpretation of two dreams, using the *I Ching* and the Tarot, with questions that referred to the actual crisis. We show this approach by reflecting this question with Hexagram 56 of the *I Ching*, a Tarot card, and the symbol of the snake. All these images occurred in a dream and can be used as an example of how to connect with collective contemporary challenges and the answer of the personal and collective unconscious on it. The dreams occurred in a situation where the COVID-19 health crisis opened up several questions for us including how to personally position ourselves to the new situation and adapt accordingly.

In the dream the number 56 occurred and we connected it with Hexagram 56 in the *I Ching*.

56 Lü – The Wanderer

The name of this Hexagram is: *Lü* – The Wanderer. The explanatory text says that we are in a state of transition in which the situation is not clear; therefore, our actions should be tentative and circumspect. The Wanderer holds that another cycle has already begun, and we must set out in search of something new (Balkin 2009, p. 539). The beginning of a new cycle is symbolized by the images of ‘Mountain’ and ‘Fire’, two qualities and energies that, according to the understanding of the *I Ching*, cannot stay together, since the energy of the Mountain moves downwards and keeps still and the energy of ‘Fire’ moves upward and away. As a consequence, these two diverging energies symbolize travelling and separation.

Consequently, our actions are attempts to move forward, but this is difficult. *Lü* shows that a new cycle has started, and we have to react by looking for something new. There is uncertainty and it is not clear how to fit into a world in transformation. A new identity has to be built. Dealing with the situation requires one to accept that the destination to where the development leads is not yet determined. It is a time to explore and gather new information, gain

new perspectives and experiment with new ways of living. The message of the Hexagram is not to be afraid to do something different. One should be adaptable and willing to learn. The Hexagram speaks about this proper situation, to be aware that periods of transition are both dangerous and exciting. The important exercise is here to prepare yourself for the changes. To learn to rely on oneself. And most important, to develop the resources to adapt to the new and to adjust to the unfamiliar, in the world and in oneself. *Unus mundus* means to recognize the quality of the present 'Now – Time', to connect with it and not to act against it. The complex situations in the *I Ching* illustrate, with the help of synchronicity, what quality lies in time and how best to tune into it. This is a possibility, an answer to the question of how to connect with the inherent harmonic order of the *unus mundus*.

Hexagram 56 speaks clearly about a process of transition. It is not about staying. It is about travelling, with 'light luggage' and an openness to meeting new people and having new experiences. Our cosmological journey is meant, where we possess inner values and enough self-esteem to engage with the unknown. In the current crisis, we are all subject to the interpretations of scientists, politicians and journalists. As a Jungian, it would be a matter of understanding the shadow of the crisis as the healing quality of what humanity obviously needs. This is the quality of wanderers; they make their own opinion based on their experience; on an objective experience, because they have seen, experienced and felt what they have integrated internally. This allows them to be flexible and to see things from many different perspectives. As wanderers they know the world, therefore they are versatile and tolerant. They know how to manage anxiety. As persons who move they know how to trust in the healing power of nature and the warm surprise of the unexpected. All these seem to be the qualities that the crisis teaches us to develop.

The Sun and the Tarot

We take a card, as in the dream, a Tarot card, and there is the Sun, *Major Arcanum* card number XVIII. The Sun is the symbol of life, of love, archetype of the universal father. Source of heat, light and life.

The sun (card) is an expression of life, warmth and trust. It invites us to bring to consciousness, the necessary light and clarity to overcome fears, worries and lack of understanding.

The sun is a symbol of youth and rebirth that highlights the luminosity of life. The sun invites us to face shadows and express our numinous nature.

It is an *arcanum* that allows us to bring our true being to light. The two children that are under the sun (depicted in this Tarot card) allude to a second birth.

The encounter of Hexagram 56 of the *I Ching* with *Arcanum XVIII* (The Sun) results in a journey towards something new, with clarity and inspiration. These are necessary to understand our fears and shadows. It is about avoiding resistance and integrating into consciousness the content that is required to overcome the current crisis.

The *uroboros*-snake, the symbol of *unus mundus*

When we look at the symbol of the snake, it can represent the vital energy that moves us. But what can the snake bring to light in the current context of the crisis of contemporary society? It could be important to look at the snake and learn to live with it.

In this moment of great transformation, we should have a look at what the snake represents – because it is important to investigate our unconscious with attention and respect.

Also, the symbol of the snake shows a way to move forward with a new perspective. It can illuminate something that exists but cannot be seen.

It is an aspect of both the individual and the collective; the subjective and the objective, it represents both an internal and external perspective. The snake refers, at the same time, to something dark, demonic, but also to knowledge and creativity. The snake is closely associated with the female and mother archetype. It brings consciousness, it is related to the idea of immortality, transformation and cure. It is also compatible with water and the moon.

The snake is related to the image of the *uroboros*. It is about death and rebirth, it is beginning and ending, it is a circular idea and with a concept of time and space. The *uroboros* refers to an image of a great snake that embraces the planet, why not all the planets, or the universe? We can imagine that the *uroboros* embraces not only the world but the totality.

The snake with its ability to shed its skin and adapt to the environment is a symbol of the ability to adapt and renew. As in Hexagram 56 of ‘the Wanderer’, it is a matter of always being ready for change and at the same time remaining oneself. The snake is the special symbol for this. It is an animal and therefore belongs to the instinct level and beyond that it is not influenceable, it does not belong to the life world of civilized people. It adapts itself optimally, but it always remains wild and untameable. This also corresponds with the image of wanderers, who always have to be ready to set out again and always remain themselves. This ultimately always brings renewal and new knowledge; the snake also symbolically stands for this and also it would again be an answer to the challenge of this current crisis: to be ready once more, to be open to new knowledge, to adjust to it and to remain oneself.

Jung saw nature and the environment that surrounds each one of us as a living matrix of potentially synchronous meaning, capable of illuminating the

human sphere. We are connected by an archetypal pattern. The current, universal crisis is the pathological shadow of the *unus mundus*; it is the paradox of what we described above, since the universal pandemic confronts us with our disconnectedness, inconsideration, lack of understanding about the interconnectedness of all life. 'Inter-Being', to quote Charles Eisenstein again (2017, p. 29), is needed. The symbol of the Corona, the crown, often occurs in the iconography in connection with the snake. Inasmuch as the serpent is the symbol of *uroboros*, the crowned serpent signifies the newfound awareness of experience with a collective challenge. A crown ennobles. The crown is an expression of lordly dignity, power and consecration. Because it is worn on the head, it has a meaning that exalts the person and points to the transcendent. The wearer is thereby legitimized as a superhuman being, connected with the higher, spiritual world.

The COVID-19 crises force us to be open-minded. To be humble, because we are part of the world and of a wise wonderful system that we have ignored for decades. Instead of accepting natural limits and exploring the thoroughly holistic interaction of natural processes, we react to symptoms. If we understand *uroboros* and *unus mundus* in their soul and cosmological meaning, then the healing poison of the *Aesculap* snake becomes medicine – for this realization, the crown stands.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

La conception de Jung sur « l'*unus mundus* » acquiert une pertinence nouvelle. La question se pose plus que jamais de ce dont nous avons besoin aujourd'hui pour retrouver une harmonie avec les forces de guérison créatrices de l'univers. Par les événements synchronistiques nous faisons l'expérience de l'interdépendance et de

comment nous sommes affectés par le monde en tant qu'unité globale. A l'aide du Tarot et du livre de sagesse Chinoise - le Yi King - nous pouvons faire l'expérience de la dimension spirituelle de l'*unus mundus*. Avec l'hexagramme 56 « Liu – le voyageur » comme avec l'arcane majeur « Le Soleil » dans le Tarot, ainsi que dans le symbole du serpent, il est montré que l'on devrait être adaptable et disposé à apprendre continuellement. Toutes les images archétypales parlent du besoin d'avoir conscience que les périodes de transition sont dangereuses et excitantes. Ici l'exercice important est de se préparer soi pour l'ordre cosmique de changements continuels.

Mots clés: unus mundus, Yi King, le Voyageur, Tarot, Le Soleil, le serpent *ouroboros*

Jungs Konzeption der '*unus mundus*' gewinnt eine neue Relevanz. Mehr denn je stellt sich die Frage, was wir heute brauchen, um wieder in Einklang mit den schöpferischen und heilenden Kräften des Universums zu kommen. Durch synchronistische Ereignisse erfahren wir Verbundenheit und wie die Welt als Ganzes auf uns wirkt. Mit Hilfe des Tarot und des chinesischen Weisheitsbuches *I Ging* wird die spirituelle Dimension der *unus mundus* erfahrbar. Mit dem Hexagramm '56 Lü – der Wanderer' sowie im großen Arkan 'die Sonne' im Tarot und im Symbol der Schlange wird gezeigt, daß man anpassungsfähig und ständig bereit sein sollte zu lernen. Alle archetypischen Bilder sprechen von der Notwendigkeit, sich bewußt zu machen, daß Zeiten des Übergangs gefährlich und aufregend sind. Die wichtige Übung dabei ist, sich auf die kosmische Ordnung ständiger Veränderungen vorzubereiten.

Schlüsselwörter: unus mundus, I Ging, Der Wanderer, Tarot, die Sonne, Uroboros

La concezioni junghiana di '*unus mundus*' assume una nuova rilevanza. Sorge sempre di più la domanda su ciò di cui abbiamo bisogno oggi per tornare in armonia con le forze creative e curative dell'universo. Tramite eventi sincronistici, sperimentiamo la connessione e come il mondo nel suo insieme ci influenza. Con l'aiuto dei Tarocchi e del libro di saggezza cinese *I Ching*, la dimensione spirituale di *unus mundus* può essere sperimentata. Con l'Esagramma '56 Lü - "il Viandante"', così come nel grande Arcano "il Sole" nei Tarocchi, e nel simbolo del serpente, viene mostrato che si deve essere versatili e disposti ad imparare costantemente. Tutte le immagini archetipiche parlano del bisogno di essere consapevoli che periodi di transizione sono pericolosi e stimolanti. L'esercizio importante qui è prepararsi per l'ordine cosmico di cambiamenti costanti.

Parole chiave: unus mundus, I Ching, il Viandante, Tarocchi, il Sole, *uroboros*, serpente

Концепция Юнга «*unus mundus*» вновь приобретает актуальность. Сегодня, как никогда ранее, важен вопрос о том, что нам требуется, чтобы вернуться в гармонию с творческими и целительными силами Вселенной. Благодаря синхронистическим событиям мы ощущаем взаимосвязь и влияние на нас мира в его целостности. С помощью карт Таро и китайской книги мудрости И-Цзин

можно ощутить духовное измерение *unus mundus*. На примере гексаграммы «56. Люй – Странник», а также с помощью Большого Аркана Таро «Солнце» и символа змеи демонстрируется, что человеку следует уметь адаптироваться и стремиться постоянно учиться. Все архетипические образы говорят о необходимости осознания того, что жизнь в переходные периоды опасная и интересная. Важным умением здесь является подготовка к космическому порядку постоянных изменений.

Ключевые слова: *unus mundus*, И-Цзин, Странник, Таро, Солнце, змей уроборос

La concepción de ‘*unus mundus*’ de Jung cobra nueva relevancia. Más que nunca, emerge la pregunta acerca de que necesitamos hoy para volver a estar en armonía con las fuerzas sanadoras y creativas del universo. A través de eventos sincrónicos, experimentamos un sentido de conexión y de cómo el mundo como totalidad nos afecta. Con la ayuda del Tarot y del libro de la sabiduría China, *I Ching*, la dimensión espiritual del *unus mundus* puede ser experimentada. El hexagrama ‘56 Lü – El Andariego’, así como el Arcano Mayor ‘El Sol’ en el Tarot, y el símbolo de la serpiente, muestran que deberíamos ser adaptables y dispuestos a aprender constantemente. Todas las imágenes arquetípicas hablan de la necesidad de estar conscientes, de que los períodos de transición son peligrosos y emocionantes. El importante ejercicio, aquí, es prepararse uno mismo para el orden cósmico de cambios constantes.

Palabras clave: *unus mundus*, *I Ching*, el Andariego, Tarot, el Sol, *uroboros*, serpiente

转型中的文明。对活跃的唯一世界的现代需求。

荣格关于心物一元 (*unus mundus*) 的概念有了新的意义。比起以往任何时候，我们都更需要探寻，我们如何可以恢复与宇宙的创造性和治疗性力量之间的和谐统一。通过共时性事件，我们体验到被联结以及世界作为一个整体如何影响我们。在塔罗牌和中国的智慧之书《易经》的帮助下，我们可以体验到心物一元的精神层面。在第56卦“旅”，以及塔罗牌中的伟大的阿卡诺“太阳”，以及蛇的象征中都表明，一个人应该具有适应性并愿意不断学习。所有的原型意象都谈到了，我们需要意识到过渡时期是危险和令人兴奋的。这里，重要的实践是为不断变化的宇宙秩序做好准备。

关键词：心物一元，易经，旅，塔罗牌，太阳，乌罗波斯蛇

A concepção de Jung de ‘*unus mundus*’ assume nova relevância. Mais do que nunca, surge a questão do que precisamos hoje para voltar à harmonia com as forças criativas e curativas do universo. Através de eventos sincrônicos, experimentamos a conexão e como o mundo como um todo nos afeta. Com a ajuda do Tarô e do livro de sabedoria chinesa *I Ching*, a dimensão espiritual de *unus mundus* pode ser experimentada. Com o Hexagrama ‘56 Lü - o Andarilho’, bem como no grande Arcano “o Sol” no Tarô e no símbolo da cobra, mostra-se que se deve ser adaptável e disposto a aprender constantemente. Todas as imagens arquetípicas falam sobre a necessidade de estar

ciente de que os períodos de transição são perigosos e emocionantes. O exercício importante aqui é se preparar para a ordem cósmica de constantes mudanças.

Palavras-chave: unus mundus, I Ching, o Andarilho, Tarot, o Sol, cobra uroboros
