

# The Serious Game: Towards a Hermeneutic Understanding of the Tarot.

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### **Abstract:**

The images of tarot cards are rich in symbols which invite interpretation and speculation. In this paper I explain the uses of the tarot cards. In parts of Europe the tarot is still played as a game; in Britain and the United States it is not. Particular attention is given to the writings of Antoine Court de Gebelin and Jean-Baptiste Alliette, in the eighteenth century turning points in the use of the cards from gaming to fortune-telling or cartomancy. As the practice of visual interpretation and disclosure of truth are central to divination with the tarot, I refer to the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer as an appropriate way of understanding the practice. I utilize Gadamer's notions of play, festival and symbol to explain the relationship between gaming and reading the cards. From this I am able to formulate an understanding of cartomancy as a practice related to but differing from game play in the nature of its encounter with the symbol.

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