The Rod of Asclepius: Two of Cups

"What can you give away, but not sell?"

Between us is a snake.
(We are drinking, always drinking.)
Between us, two snakes.

Two snakes between us, wound 'round a staff.
(We undress. We entwine.)
The snakes are pythons, whom Apollo killed.
The snakes are lovers, whom Tiresias killed.
They are of Hermes: traveling, commerce, communication.
They trade in things we understand.

We don't know much Apollo, though. We don't know Tiresias at all.
We know health insurance companies. We know the US Army Medical Corps.
We get it twisted:
We mismeasure the snakes. We confuse their spots.
How would we know the difference between a python and an asculapian, anyway?
We mistake two snakes for one.
We look for medicine in our mercantilism.
(We look for healing where our hearts should be.)

from the Rider-Waite Tarot

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Jonathan Penton founded *www.UnlikelyStories.org* in 1998, and has run it as a journal of literature, art, and sociopolitical content since. He expanded with Unlikely Books, which produces single-author tomes with the *Unlikely Stories* aesthetic, in 2005. He has provided technical and management expertise to arts organizations including the New Orleans Poetry Festival, MadHat, Inc., and *Big Bridge*. He lives in Louisiana.