

CHAPTER 1



Tarot Analytics

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

TAROT IS A PRACTICE rich with history and cultural knowledge. It is a science of the mind.

Through its development, tarot cards have absorbed the wisdom, the narratives, the philosophies, the cultural anthropology, and the moral lessons of many societies, many religions, and many schools of thought. It represents the spectrum of human archetypal conditions and personalities, which can be used by the modern day practitioner for psychological projective evaluation. Tarot helps us look within ourselves to understand our emotions, the reasoning behind our words and conduct, and the source of our conflicts.

This book will present tarot as a holistic tool that can help us mine our own unconscious¹ to find answers. You can learn to use tarot to make informed decisions and improve your future. The cards do not tell us what to do. Rather, they help us think about our problems from a different perspective and, like a diagnostics tool for decision-making, help chart a road map for the solution. Most people's typical analytical process incorporates rational and emotional intelligence. By learning and applying tarot, one can add a third dimension: that of spiritual intelligence.

I do not support fortune-telling and I do not believe in future-telling. My approach to tarot is not predictive. It is analytic. The signs and symbols of the cards facilitate retrieval of information from the unconscious and move it to the forefront of the conscious plane of the mind, which can then help us form creative solutions, present a different angle to a problem

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that we have been looking monotonously at, or offer the breakthrough that allows us to move forward. I call it “tarot analytics.”

When we study the imagery and symbols on the cards in a tarot spread, we activate our imagination. That imagination then activates our intuition, which is often the only instrument we have that channels a clear path for us to the truth of a matter. That truth is often found in the unconscious. Tarot analytics can extrapolate what is otherwise latent in the unconscious archives of our mind and raise our truths to the surface of our consciousness.

If I ask you, “What will happen when I put my hand into the fire?” and you answer, “You will burn yourself,” are you predicting the future? In one sense, yes, you are. What you’re doing is tapping into your conscious knowledge to access information that will provide you with insight into the most probable outcome of my contemplated action. Tarot operates in the same way, albeit for more complex human inquiries. Tarot helps you tap into your unconscious knowledge, raise it to the surface of your conscious mind, and access otherwise latent information—in either the subconscious, personal unconscious, or even collective unconscious—to help provide insight into the most probable outcomes of your contemplated actions.² When people lack understanding of this, they might become superstitious, and infuse tarot with mystical powers that it does not have, either viewing it as a tool of the gods or a tool of the demons. I assure you that it is neither. As with any instrument, you can use tarot for good or with ulterior motives.

Tarot analytics is about using tarot to empower, and to help you confront the most probable outcomes of your actions so that you may rectify any missteps today to ensure a better tomorrow.

Skeptics will say that there is no objective truth to the tarot, only the subjective. We project our personal stories into the card meanings and make that our truth. That is exactly right. And that is exactly how it helps people gain insight into situations that otherwise seemed hopeless—because stress, frustration, and everyday worries clutter the consciousness and obstruct their view of the solution. We reconcile our personal story with the narrative of the cards and through that process begin to see our own situation through new perspectives and from different angles. Forks

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in the path that can positively change our outcome are illuminated. We begin to see our options. That is how tarot analytics can help. It is subjective, because it cannot tell you anything you don't know already. It tells you exactly what you know, but have not yet permitted your conscious mind to confront. It is about accessing the unconscious, the same theory behind psychoanalysis and modern-day psychology.

The tarot is our counselor. We consult it for the same reasons we consult our mothers, our best friends, confidants, grandfathers, spiritual leaders, holy books, inspirational and motivational literature, mentors, and teachers: we seek understanding through the wisdom that others have acquired so that we may in turn nurture our own wisdom.

Throughout the ages, the greatest leaders of human history have sought out oracles for counsel, especially in their most uncertain times. In an oversimplified comparative explanation, tarot analytics can serve as an oracle, but that's not what it is. The comparison doesn't completely explain its function. Tarot is a mirror. It reflects back who you are. It shows you your strengths and weaknesses. It makes you confront the decisions you have made in the past, your attitude, both good and bad, and how these components have affected your life. It's uncanny how, with tarot, just the right archetypes are always drawn to help you understand what you need to do to move forward. I have no concrete explanation for why exactly it works, though this book will offer a few theories.

In April 2013, a Vatican circular quoted Pope Francis: "In order to solve their problems many people resort to fortune tellers and tarot cards. But only Jesus saves and we must bear witness to this! He is the only one."³ Of course, "only Jesus saves" is open to a myriad of interpretations. Using any object, even tarot, for fortune-telling cannot solve problems. In fact, I believe it creates more problems, because fortune-telling manipulates our expectations.

Tarot analytics is not fortune-telling. This book will not teach you how to use tarot to locate your future husband or predict how many babies you will have. While some people do attempt to use the tarot for fortune-telling—the same way they use tea leaves, coins, crystal balls, a bamboo container full of sticks, or reading palms to attempt divination—fortune-telling and divination are far from the objectives of this book.

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Rather, tarot analytics applies tarot in the same vein as mind-mapping, a method for better visualizing viable solutions to a present problem. It provides a way of reflecting on the events and people in your life, along with your dominant personality traits, in order to better gauge exactly what you must do to overcome your obstacles. It is problem-solving in the form of analysis, not problem-solving by invoking the counsel of spirits. Tarot should not be used for flirting with our insecurities and telling us what to expect. So do not read this book if your objective is to learn fortune-telling. There are other texts out there that can help you with that. In tarot analytics, you need faith only in your own ability and tenacity to walk the path of your own choosing.

There is no contradiction between the belief that “only Jesus saves” and applying tarot analytics to chart out career goals. Any predictive attribute of tarot analytics is like checking the weather forecast for the weekend before a planned road trip. The forecast helps in your preparation only. Based on a meteorologist’s analysis, a most probable weather outcome is offered, but other unpredictable factors can change that outcome at the eleventh hour.

Having grown up in the Chinese/Taiwanese culture, I was routinely exposed to East Asian fortune-telling practices: face reading; palmistry; Ba Zi, which is the practice of revealing your destiny through date and time of birth; and many more. What I have learned is that fortune-telling is a rudimentary understanding of the cosmic forces that govern us.

While I acknowledge that we are each predisposed to a particular path, no one, no destiny, no pattern of constellations can make us walk any one path. There is no such thing as inevitability. When I see chocolate bonbons, I am most certainly tempted to eat a few, or all of them, and chances are I will eat a few (or all of them). What it takes for me to resist chocolate is a far greater exercise of effort and personal willpower than it would be for, say, my sister, who dislikes chocolate. Thus, when it comes to chocolate, she and I walk different paths. While I am prone to eating every piece of chocolate in sight, she can demonstrate remarkable restraint. Nonetheless, it remains fully within my control not to load up on sugar. If I make the effort to set a greater goal of personal health, I might harness

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from within what it takes to not eat the entire offering of bonbons. That is how disposition affects, but never determines, our future.

Likewise from an early age, everyone around me, including myself, observed in me a natural inclination toward the arts. That natural inclination is of no relevance if other factors aren't present, such as luck, study, or active pursuit of my arts-related dreams. As it turned out, my studies, active pursuits, and even the disposition I developed took me on a different path: one in lawyering. We do not have predetermined fates; rather, we have dispositions. From there we walk a garden of forking paths,⁴ and the forks we choose are what determine our future.

Talk to ten practitioners of tarot and you will get ten different answers about what tarot is, how it works, and even what the cards mean. That's because tarot has never been a formalized practice, and many approaches have emerged over the centuries. Most books try to respect the different approaches and offer an over-broad explanation of tarot, which generally leads to even more confusion as to what tarot is, how it works, and even what the cards mean. Here, I acknowledge up-front that there are countless approaches and interpretations of tarot, and even countless uses for this inanimate object, from a European card game to fortune-telling and divination, to integration into alternative religious practices, to my use, which I call tarot analytics. I will outline how the everyday student or professional might use a deck of tarot cards to set goals, to understand where they are in their lives and the direction they'd like to move in, and to use tarot analytics to help *make* business or personal decisions, *not* to foresee what will happen to their business or in their personal lives.

Throughout the text, "practitioner" refers to the tarot reader and "Seeker" refers to the one requesting the consultation. "Practitioner" is fitting because it suggests an active engagement with the tarot. "Tarot reader," a more frequently used appellation among the tarot community, denotes one who has a more passive relationship with the art. Art, which is what the tarot is, should be an active engagement.

"Seeker" is used for the same rationale: it suggests an active engagement, one who is taking spirituality into his or her own hands. "Seeker" is capitalized as a capitonym throughout the text in deference to the spiritual

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significance of seeking answers from the tarot. Note that the traditional moniker would be “querent.”⁵

Case studies are also provided, based on actual individuals and readings, though names and identification information have been changed. The purpose of the case studies is to show by example how the principles discussed in this book can be applied. As you review the case studies, place yourself in the position of the practitioner and note how the conclusions you reach echo or differ from the conclusions provided in this book. By noting specifically how your conclusions differ, you can begin to tailor your own interpretive method in tarot analytics, which is exactly what this book hopes to encourage. Your approach must be personal, intuitively attuned to you, and not parroted from texts, other practitioners, or purported standards.

NOTES



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1. The term “unconscious” as used throughout this book will refer to the processes within the mind that a human individual is not aware or conscious of. It will refer to a plane in the mind that registers all that we do and perceives at depths and with breadth beyond the present cognitive. From the vantage points of the metaphysical and metaphysiological, the unconscious of one individual can connect to, and thus share information with, the unconscious of another individual, and every unconscious of every individual is interconnected to form a singular unconscious plane called the collective unconscious. Contrary to the common view that the unconscious is a shadow of the cognitive mind, and therefore does not serve cognitive functions, some psychologists now contend that the unconscious can in fact carry out any of the high-level cognitive functions we would ordinarily attribute to the conscious mind. See Hassin, Ran R, “Yes It Can: On the Functional Abilities of the Human Unconscious,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8:2 (March 2013): 195–207. See also Chapter 3, note 11 below. The use of the term “unconscious” herein is based in small part on that modern view, and on the contention that the tarot can facilitate the high-level cognitive functions of the unconscious. This book does not attempt to inform the reader on psychology. The terms as used throughout this book that may have been borrowed from psychology are used only to propound the author’s theory on how the mind works metaphysically and metaphysiologically, in turn for the purposes of understanding how tarot works.
2. Throughout this book, “conscious” and “consciousness” are not used as a term from psychology or neuroscience, but rather these terms will refer to the plane in the mind consisting of information and knowledge that we are aware of, manifested from our physical reality. There is full cognition and intentional action. The conscious mind encompasses our intellections and our emotions. Herein reside the memories available at instant recall. The “sub-conscious” refers to unintentional cognition and action, though still manifested in the physical reality. These are memories from the present life that

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are not readily available at instant recall. Cultural knowledge, evolutionary influences, norms, and values that are affecting an individual's behavior and physical reality but that the individual may not be conscious and aware of will also be placed here under the term "subconscious." Sometimes, information and knowledge from the conscious mind is pulled into the subconscious as a defense or coping mechanism. Other times information and knowledge from the unconscious is pulled forward into the subconscious. The "unconscious" as used herein can be further subdivided into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The "personal unconscious" is a systematic record of all cognitions of an individual soul from the space-time continuum. It includes past-life memories and also information that was perceived from the physical reality but never registered in the conscious, and so it passed into the subconscious and, due to dormancy there, subsequently passed into the personal unconscious. The "collective unconscious" is the systematic record of all cognitions of all souls encompassing the entirety of the space-time continuum. It is likened to the Eastern notion of the Akashic records, or the monotheistic singular God concept.

3. "Pope Says Only Jesus Saves, Not Sorcerers and Fortune Tellers," *Vatican Radio*, April 5, 2013, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/04/05/pope_says_only_jesus_saves,_not_sorcerers_and_fortune_tellers/in2-680059.
4. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," in *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 119.
5. Contemporary texts on tarot relied heavily on the groundwork paved by the Golden Dawn and Hermetic tradition, which synthesized tarot and astrology. Thus, much terminology from astrology was borrowed for tarot, such as the term "querent." In classical Western astrology, a querent is the person who is propounding an inquiry on the astrologer and desiring a resolution. The term was likely transferred to nineteenth- and twentieth-century tarot practice, to refer to the one who consults a tarot reader with an inquiry. I prefer the term "Seeker." William Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1852), 75–76.

CHAPTER 2

1. Catherine Perry Hargrave, *A History of Playing Cards and a Bibliography of Cards and Gaming* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 6.
2. W. H. Wilkinson, "Chinese Origin of Playing Cards," in *The American Anthropologist*, Vol. VIII, January 1895, 61–78.