
THE UNCONSCIOUS TAROT

A Mirror for the Journey Within

There are many ways to read tarot.

You can read it as divination.

As mythology.

As archetype.

As symbolism.

As intuition made visible.

Or you can read it as a **mirror**.

Not a mirror that tells you what will happen, but one that gives form to what is already happening **within you**.

This is where tarot becomes especially fascinating.

Because beneath the images, beneath the mythology, beneath the strange little stories we have inherited from centuries of symbolic tradition, there is another language speaking:

the language of the unconscious.

And suddenly the cards become less about predicting your future and more about asking better questions about your present.

What am I avoiding?

What am I repeating?

What am I attached to?

What part of myself have I abandoned?

What am I afraid to see?

What wants to change?

What is trying to emerge?

And perhaps the most important question of all:

Who am I becoming?

This is where tarot meets psychology.

Where symbolism meets self-discovery.

Where the Fool's journey becomes a map for **self-actualization**.

TAROT AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL MIRROR

Long before we had the modern vocabulary of psychology, humans told stories about transformation through gods, heroes, monsters, journeys, deaths and rebirths.

We externalized the inner world.

We gave our fears faces.

We gave our desires bodies.

We gave transformation a storyline.

Psychology eventually began doing something similar through a different language.

Freud explored the hidden forces beneath conscious awareness: instinct, desire, repression, conflict and the parts of ourselves that do not always behave according to the wishes of the conscious mind.

Jung went further into the symbolic territory, exploring archetypes, the shadow, projection, the collective unconscious and the lifelong process of **individuation** — becoming more fully who you are.

Tarot can be approached through this same symbolic doorway.

Not because Freud or Jung created tarot.

They didn't.

And not because the Major Arcana was secretly designed as a diagram of Freudian psychology.

It wasn't.

Rather, tarot gives us an extraordinary **symbolic vocabulary through which we can explore psychological ideas**.

The cards become images for inner processes.

The journey becomes psychological.

And the reading becomes a conversation with the parts of ourselves we may not ordinarily hear.

THE FOOL

Zero. Infinite Potential. The Beginning Before the Beginning.

The Fool is numbered **0**.

And zero is fascinating.

It is simultaneously nothing and everything.

An empty space.

A beginning.

A possibility.

A circle without a fixed endpoint.

The Fool stands at the edge of the known world with very little certainty about what comes next.

He is vulnerable.

Open.

Curious.

Perhaps even naïve.

And yet there is something profoundly important about this state.

Before transformation can happen, **we have to become willing to not know.**

We have to loosen our grip on the identity we already have.

We have to become curious enough to question our own assumptions.

The Fool doesn't possess the answers.

He possesses **openness.**

And that may be the first requirement of becoming.

You cannot discover a new version of yourself while being completely committed to protecting the old one.

So the Fool steps forward.

And the journey begins.

THE THREE LEVELS OF THE JOURNEY

One way I like to explore the Major Arcana is through three psychological movements:

THE EGO

Who am I in the world?

Consciousness.
Identity.
Family.
Culture.
Values.
Roles.
Relationships.
The physical world.

THE ID

What lives beneath the surface?

Instinct.
Desire.
Fear.
Shadow.
Attachment.
Compulsion.
Truth.
The parts of ourselves we have learned to suppress.

THE SUPEREGO

Who might I become?

Integration.

Conscious choice.

Liberation.

Purpose.

Meaning.

Self-transcendence.

Wholeness.

This isn't a traditional tarot doctrine or a literal Freudian map.

It is a **psychological lens**.

A way of asking what happens when the Fool moves from simply learning how to function in the world, to confronting what lives beneath the world he constructed, and finally toward becoming an integrated version of himself.

And suddenly, the Major Arcana begins to look less like a collection of random cards...

and more like a story.

PART I — THE EGO

Learning How to Be a Person

The first movement of the journey is outward.

We learn who we are.

We learn how the world works.

We learn what gets rewarded.

We learn what gets rejected.

We learn what our families believe.

What our communities believe.

What our culture believes.

And eventually we begin constructing an identity.

This is not bad.

The ego is not the enemy.

The ego is necessary.

We need an identity to navigate the world.

We need boundaries.

We need agency.

We need to learn how to choose, act, communicate, create and participate.

The problem begins when we mistake the identity we constructed for the entirety of who we are.

THE MAGICIAN — I CAN

The journey begins with agency.

The Magician takes what exists in potential and brings it into form.

Thought becomes action.

Desire becomes behaviour.

Idea becomes creation.

This is the beginning of conscious agency:

I think it.

I choose it.

I do it.

The child discovers:

I can affect my environment.

And this becomes the foundation of identity.

The Magician teaches us that we are not merely passive observers of life.

We participate in creating it.

But agency without awareness can also become compulsive acquisition:

I want it, therefore I must have it.

And eventually we have to learn the difference between **creation and consumption**.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS — I NOTICE

Then something changes.

We begin to notice that there is more happening inside us than what we can immediately explain.

Thoughts.

Feelings.

Intuition.

Contradictions.

Inner knowing.

The High Priestess sits behind the veil.

She represents the threshold between what is consciously known and what remains hidden.

At this stage, we can observe our inner world...

but we haven't necessarily learned how to enter it.

We know there is something behind the veil.

We simply aren't ready to lift it.

THE EMPRESS — I FEEL

The Empress introduces receptivity, creativity, embodiment, sensuality, nourishment and the generative feminine principle.

She reminds us that consciousness isn't purely intellectual.

We experience life through the body.

Through emotion.

Through relationship.

Through creativity.

Through nature.

Through pleasure.

Through attachment.

The Empress teaches:

I am alive, and I experience.

THE EMPEROR — I STRUCTURE

Then comes the Emperor.

Structure.

Boundaries.

Discipline.

Authority.

Reason.

Order.

The capacity to organize our inner and outer worlds.

Where the Empress generates, the Emperor contains.

Where she nurtures, he structures.

Psychologically, these archetypes remind us that becoming requires both:

receptivity and agency.

intuition and reason.

creation and containment.

We need both.

THE HIEROPHANT — I LEARN

And then society gets involved.

We go to school.

We inherit religion.

We learn traditions.

We learn morality.

We absorb family expectations.

We learn what it means to be "good."

Normal.

Successful.

Acceptable.

We inherit beliefs before we are old enough to question them.

The Hierophant represents the structures of meaning we are given.

And this stage is necessary.

We need teachers.

We need traditions.

We need frameworks.

But eventually comes the uncomfortable question:

Which of these beliefs are actually mine?

THE LOVERS — I CHOOSE

The Lovers is much more than romance.

It is choice.

Values.

Union.

Relationship.

The meeting of opposites.

The moment when we begin choosing what — and who — we will align ourselves with.

We discover intimacy.

Partnership.

Desire.

Connection.

And we begin building a life around our choices.

THE CHARIOT — I BECOME

And finally, we learn how to move through the world.

We build the life.

The career.

The relationship.

The home.

The identity.

The reputation.

The accomplishments.

The version of ourselves that makes sense to everyone around us.

We learn how to steer the chariot.

We become functional.

Capable.

Independent.

Successful.

And this is where many people stop.

They arrive at the conventional definition of a successful life and assume they have arrived at **themselves**.

But sometimes the most uncomfortable question appears precisely here:

What if the life I built isn't the same thing as the life that is calling me?

THE MIDDLE OF THE JOURNEY

The Chariot can take us very far.

But eventually we reach the edge of the map.

Because a life can look perfectly functional from the outside while feeling profoundly unaligned from within.

And this is where the Fool faces a choice.

Turn around.

Go backwards.

Keep acquiring.

Keep achieving.

Keep changing relationships.

Keep collecting identities.

Keep looking outside yourself for the thing that will finally make you feel whole.

Or...

keep going.

The next movement requires something much more frightening than building an identity.

It requires questioning it.

PART II — THE UNCONSCIOUS

Into the Shadow

The second movement takes us inward.

This is where the journey becomes uncomfortable.

The unconscious contains what we have not fully seen, processed, integrated or accepted.

Desires we don't want to admit.

Fears we don't understand.

Patterns we keep repeating.

Parts of ourselves we rejected because they didn't fit the identity we were trying to become.

This is where Jung's concept of the **shadow** becomes particularly useful.

The shadow isn't simply "the bad part of us."

It is often everything we have pushed outside the boundaries of our acceptable self.

The angry part.

The ambitious part.

The needy part.

The sensual part.

The rebellious part.

The powerful part.

The grieving part.

The part that wants more.

The part that wants less.

The part that never got to speak.

And sometimes...

the part that knows the truth before our conscious mind is ready to admit it.

STRENGTH — I CAN MEET MYSELF

The first question is:

Who's in charge?

Are you directing your thoughts, feelings and impulses?

Or are they directing you?

Strength is not about suppressing the lion.

It is about developing a relationship with it.

The goal isn't to destroy instinct.

It is to develop enough awareness that instinct no longer has to control the entire story.

This is psychological strength:

I can feel something without becoming it.

I can experience anger without becoming destructive.

I can experience fear without allowing fear to make every decision.

I can experience desire without automatically obeying it.

The lion doesn't have to die.

It has to become integrated.

THE HERMIT — I GO WITHIN

Then comes solitude.

Not loneliness.

Solitude.

The Hermit turns inward with one small lantern.

No crowd.

No institution.

No algorithm.

No partner.

No teacher telling him what to think.

Just the self and the truth.

This is where we begin moving behind the veil.

The questions become deeper.

Why do I keep doing this?

Why does this bother me so much?

Why do I keep choosing the same kind of relationship?

Why does this person affect me so deeply?

Why do I sabotage what I say I want?

Why do I keep recreating the same circumstances?

The Hermit teaches us to stop searching for every answer outside ourselves.

Sometimes the next piece of the map is inside.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE — I PARTICIPATE

The Wheel introduces the reality that life is cyclical.

Expansion.

Loss.

Beginning.

Ending.

Luck.

Chance.

Change.

We are not in control of everything.

But we are participants in what happens next.

The wheel turns.

We cannot always choose what happens.

But we can develop a relationship with what happens.

Do we resist?

Collapse?

Blame?

Repeat?

Adapt?

Learn?

This leads directly into the next lesson.

JUSTICE — I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Justice is not punishment.

It is accountability.

And accountability is not the same as blame.

We are not responsible for everything that happens to us.

We are responsible for what we **do with what happens to us.**

That distinction matters.

Trauma is not a moral failure.

Misfortune is not proof that you deserved it.

Other people's choices are not yours to own.

But our choices have consequences.

Our patterns have consequences.

Our avoidance has consequences.

Our attachment has consequences.

Our willingness — or unwillingness — to change has consequences.

Justice asks for radical honesty:

What is mine to carry?

What is not mine?

What can I change?

What must I accept?

THE HANGED MAN — I SURRENDER THE OLD LENS

And then...

everything turns upside down.

The Hanged Man is the psychological interruption.

The pause.

The suspension.

The surrender.

The moment when the old way of seeing the world no longer works.

The beliefs inherited through the Hierophant begin to crack.

Not necessarily because they were all wrong.

But because they were never entirely yours.

You begin seeing your life from another angle.

Your values.

Your relationships.

Your identity.

Your definition of success.

Your spirituality.

Your story.

Your wounds.

Your patterns.

The Hanged Man asks:

What if I have been looking at this completely differently than I need to?

This is one of the great thresholds of becoming.

DEATH — I LET IT END

And then comes the card people fear most.

Death.

But psychological death is not physical death.

It is transformation.

The death of an identity.

The death of an attachment.

The death of a story.

The death of a coping mechanism.

The death of the version of you who needed the old life to remain intact.

This is where **ego death** can become a useful metaphor.

Not destroying the ego.

Not becoming nobody.

But loosening the belief that:

I must remain who I have always been.

Something has served its purpose.

Something has completed its cycle.

And if you refuse to let it die...

you remain psychologically attached to a life you have already outgrown.

TEMPERANCE — I INTEGRATE

And finally, something begins to settle.

Temperance.

Integration.

Alchemy.

The opposites begin learning how to coexist.

Mind and body.

Masculine and feminine.

Shadow and light.

Reason and intuition.

Desire and discipline.

Past and future.

Earth and Ether.

You no longer have to choose one side of yourself and exile the other.

You begin learning how to **hold complexity**.

This is important.

Because self-actualization isn't becoming perfectly spiritual, perfectly healed, perfectly positive or perfectly disciplined.

It is becoming **more whole**.

And somewhere in the distance...

there is light.

PART III — THE SUPEREGO

Beyond the Self We Were Taught to Be

Now the journey enters its final movement.

And here I would slightly expand the Freudian language.

In classical psychoanalysis, the superego is not simply our "highest self." It is the internalized voice of rules, morality and ideals.

So the psychological tension becomes fascinating:

How do we move beyond the rules we inherited without simply replacing them with another rigid identity?

This is where the tarot journey moves toward something closer to Jung's **Self** and individuation.

Not perfection.

Not social approval.

Not becoming the "best" version of yourself according to someone else's definition.

But becoming increasingly **whole, conscious and integrated.**

And the journey begins with a confrontation.

THE DEVIL — I SEE MY CHAINS

The Devil is everything we have become attached to.

Addiction.

Compulsion.

Fear.

Shame.

Control.

Possession.

Status.

Approval.

Trauma bonds.

Unhealthy relationships.

Unfulfilling careers.

Identities we cannot imagine living without.

The fascinating part of the Devil card is that the chains are loose.

There is possibility.

But psychological freedom requires something more than knowing you are trapped.

You have to be willing to leave.

And sometimes we cling to the cage because the cage is familiar.

Familiar does not mean safe.

Sometimes what we call comfort is simply what we have learned to tolerate.

THE TOWER — I LET IT FALL

And then...

the structure collapses.

The Tower is the destruction of the architecture that could no longer hold the truth.

A relationship ends.

A career collapses.

An identity dissolves.

A belief system shatters.

A carefully constructed life suddenly doesn't make sense anymore.

The instinct is to run around collecting the bricks.

To rebuild immediately.

To restore the old normal.

To say:

"How can I make everything go back to the way it was?"

But the Tower asks a different question:

What if the collapse is the liberation?

The Tower is not necessarily punishment.

It can be revelation.

It removes what can no longer remain standing.

And sometimes the only way forward is through the rubble.

THE STAR — I HEAL

After the Tower comes tenderness.

The Star.

Hope.

Healing.

Restoration.

Faith.

Not blind faith that everything will magically become perfect.

A quieter kind.

The faith that says:

I can begin again.

This is the sacred pause after destruction.

You don't immediately need another identity.

Another relationship.

Another career.

Another belief system.

Sometimes you simply need to heal.

To grieve.

To breathe.

To remember that there is still something alive beneath the ruins.

THE MOON — I MAKE THE UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUS

And here we meet one of the most important cards in the entire journey.

The Moon.

The hidden.

The symbolic.

The ambiguous.

The dream.

The fear.

The projection.

The unknown.

The things that emerge when the conscious mind loses its certainty.

This is where the unconscious refuses to remain unconscious.

And this is where Carl Jung becomes especially relevant.

The famous line often attributed to Jung is:

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

Whether or not one treats that sentence as a precise quotation from Jung's published work, it captures a central Jungian idea beautifully.

What remains unconscious can continue to influence us.

We repeat the pattern.

We recreate the dynamic.

We choose the familiar.

We project our unresolved material onto other people.

And then we wonder:

Why does this keep happening to me?

The Moon answers:

Look closer.

What keeps repeating may be trying to teach you something.

What keeps provoking you may be touching something unresolved.

What you repeatedly encounter may be revealing a pattern.

This does not mean that every painful event is something you caused.

It means that our inner world influences how we interpret, respond to and participate in the outer one.

This is where **shadow work** begins to become a practice rather than merely an idea.

The mirror becomes unavoidable.

THE SUN — I SEE

And when we stop running from what the Moon reveals...

the Sun rises.

Clarity.

Vitality.

Confidence.

Joy.

Embodiment.

The return of life.

The child on the horse reminds us of something we may have forgotten:

becoming conscious doesn't mean becoming heavier.

Awareness can create freedom.

Integration can create joy.

Healing can create play.

We don't do shadow work so that we can spend the rest of our lives staring into darkness.

We go into the darkness so that we can eventually see more clearly.

The Sun is not the denial of the shadow.

It is light that can finally reach it.

JUDGEMENT — I REMEMBER

Then comes the call.

Judgement.

The awakening.

The trumpet.

The moment when something inside you says:

This.

This is what matters.

This is what I am here to do.

This is the life I can no longer pretend I don't want.

This is the work.

This is the calling.

This is the truth.

And notice what happens here.

Purpose doesn't necessarily arrive because someone handed you an answer.

It emerges after the layers have been removed.

After the inherited identities.

After the compulsions.

After the projections.

After the attachments.

After the collapse.

After the healing.

After the unconscious has been brought into consciousness.

Purpose begins to feel less like something you invent...

and more like something you **recognize**.

THE WORLD — I BECOME WHOLE

And finally:

The World.

Completion.

Integration.

Wholeness.

The end of one cycle and the beginning of another.

The extraordinary thing is that we return to where we began.

Zero.

The Fool.

Infinite potential.

But we are not the same Fool.

At the beginning, the Fool walks toward the edge because he doesn't know what is beyond it.

At the end, the World dances within the circle because she has learned how to exist inside uncertainty without being consumed by it.

The journey was never about becoming someone completely different.

It was about becoming **more fully yourself**.

You began with potential.

You moved through identity.

You encountered instinct.

You confronted the shadow.

You questioned the beliefs you inherited.

You released what could no longer come with you.

You survived the collapse.

You brought the unconscious into consciousness.

You discovered your own inner authority.

You found meaning.

And finally...

you became more whole.

And then the circle begins again.

Because becoming has no final destination.

The World becomes the Fool.

The Fool begins again.

Zero becomes infinity.

Infinity becomes experience.

Experience becomes wisdom.

Wisdom becomes possibility.

And the journey continues.

THE FOOL'S JOURNEY IS THE ARCHITECTURE OF BECOMING

Perhaps this is the deepest reason the Fool's journey continues to resonate.

It is not simply a story about a character moving through twenty-two cards.

It is a story about **becoming conscious**.

About leaving what is familiar.

About constructing an identity and eventually questioning it.

About discovering that beneath the person you learned to be is a deeper psychological landscape waiting to be explored.

About meeting the parts of yourself you rejected.

About recognizing your patterns.

About taking responsibility for your choices.

About allowing old identities to die.

About integrating what once seemed contradictory.

About discovering what matters when the noise falls away.

And ultimately, about becoming capable of participating consciously in your own evolution.

The Fool begins with no map.

The World does not give him one.

Instead, the journey itself becomes the map.

Every encounter changes him.

Every loss reveals something.

Every threshold asks something new.

Every ending creates another beginning.

And perhaps this is the heart of self-actualization:

not becoming perfect, but becoming increasingly conscious of who you are, why you are, and who you are capable of becoming.

The goal is not to arrive at a final version of yourself.

It is to become someone capable of continuing the journey.

THE TAROT AS MIRROR

This is where the cards become most powerful as a psychological tool.

They do not need to predict your future to tell you something meaningful.

They can simply give the unconscious an image to respond to.

A figure.

A landscape.

A conflict.

A death.

A beginning.

A shadow.

A choice.

A possibility.

And suddenly something inside you responds:

I know that feeling.

I've been there.

That's what I've been avoiding.

That's the pattern.

That's the part of me I haven't wanted to see.

The card has not told you who you are.

It has given you something to look at.

And what you recognize in the mirror belongs to you.

This is why tarot can become a practice of inquiry rather than prediction.

Not:

"Tell me what will happen."

But:

"What is this showing me about myself?"

Not:

"What does this card say I must do?"

But:

"What does this bring to my awareness?"

Not:

"Who am I destined to become?"

But:

"Who am I becoming through the choices I am making now?"

The cards remain the mirror.

You remain the one who chooses what to do with what you see.

THE JOURNEY NEVER ENDS

The Fool does not reach the World and become finished.

The circle opens again.

A new chapter.

A new question.

A new threshold.

A new version of the self waiting to emerge.

This is the paradox of becoming:

The more conscious you become, the more you realize there is still more to discover.

The more you understand yourself, the more willing you become to question yourself.

The more whole you become, the less you need to pretend that you are only one thing.

And perhaps that is what the Fool knew all along.

He didn't need to know where the road ended.

He only needed enough courage to take the next step.

You don't have to know who you will become.

You only have to become willing to meet who you are becoming.

The Fool steps forward.

The mirror waits.

And the journey begins again.

Bohemia Collective

