



Divination for Beginners: Reading the Past, Present & Future (For Beginners (Llewellyn's))

By Scott Cunningham

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Anyone can practice divination. You don't need to be psychic, or believe that a higher power controls the cards. Anyone can learn to predict the future using the methods described in this book. Learn how to choose the methods that works best for you, and ask the right questions so you get accurate answers. Discover the secrets of a wide variety of methods, from Tarot cards and the I Ching to crystal gazing, palmistry, and even reading signs and omens in the world around you

The real value of divination is in planning and prevention. If you like the answers you receive, continue on. If it looks like trouble ahead, adjust your course of action and see how your new plan affects the outcome. In this way you can use divination to fine tune your future and start living the life you've always dreamed of.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Scott Cunningham practiced magic actively for over twenty years. He was the author of more than fifty books covering both fiction and non-fiction subject matter; sixteen of his titles are published by Llewellyn Publications. Scott's books reflect a broad range of interests within the New Age sphere, where he was very highly regarded. He passed from this life on March 28, 1993, after a long illness.

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Part I Aspects of Divination

Beginnings

*The earth, the air, the chaos and the sky,
The seas, the fields, the rocks and mountains high
Reveal the truth.
- Lucan*

Divination is the practice of determining the unknown by the manipulation and observation of tools recognized by their users as possessing the ability to provide such information.

The ancient art of divination has never lost its popularity. Even today, in our largely materialistic world, we perform age-old rites to discover the shape of the future. In its many forms, divination is as much a part of our lives as it was in the ancient world.

The practice of foretelling the future through the use of tools predates history and so we have no record of the first culture that acted upon its desire to peer into tomorrow. Perhaps the earliest forms consisted of gazing into lakes, watching the smoke rising from cooking and heating fires, and observing the shapes of clouds. In preliterate times all such phenomena were invested with spiritual energies, and it seems logical that it was to these that our ancestors turned for glimpses of tomorrow.

In the great cultures of the past, divination was usually linked with religion. The deities, it was believed, were willing to provide hints of the future if they were given the opportunity to do so. This was provided to them by the presentation and use of specific tools, which the deities manipulated to provide specific responses. The earliest diviners thought that divination revealed the will of the deities. The future, they thought, was unchangeable.

After many centuries of practice, however, it became obvious that this concept could easily be challenged. Why did some events revealed in predictions never occur? Weren't the deities in total control of human life? Some cultures answered such questions by altering their definition of divination. Rather than revealing a fated future, divination provided glimpses of possible future events. The future could be altered by human action. Thus, divination provided a window into potential tomorrows?not of fate. Negative messages were now considered to be useful warnings, not inescapable messages of future doom.

Today, divination is often defined as a branch of magic. This is untrue. The two practices are entirely

different. Divination attempts to discover the past, present, or future, while magic is an active process by which the future is thought to be changed. Though magic and divination can be used together, they are in no way related. Those who claim that they are one and the same have no understanding of either practice, or have their own axes to grind.

How It Works

There are many theories that attempt to explain the mechanism at work during divination, some of which are applicable only to specific forms. In general, however, it is believed that our actions and thoughts produce nonphysical waves of energy that extend into the future, and thus shape it to a certain extent. They produce a map of tomorrow based on our current speed and direction, but many destinations lie upon its surface, and we can change course at any time.

Divinatory techniques examine these energy waves—which may not be consciously known to the diviner—and, by taking them as well as other forces into account, paint a picture of the future—if things continue on the present course for some time.

The tools reveal the unknown information in a wide variety of ways. Some of these (the use of the pendulum or sand divination, for example) seem to rely on the subconscious mind, in which we become aware of these streams, to produce the response.

Others techniques are completely free of our conscious or subconscious control, relying on other forces to manipulate the objects and to produce the prediction. In these forms, which are usually the most reliable, we simply present the tools and allow them to do the work.

The Major Types of Divination

By studying the hundreds of techniques used in cultures throughout history, scholars have divided divination into two basic forms: operational and natural. Operational divination consists of the manipulation of tools (smoke, oil in water, eggs, dice, pieces of paper, knives, stones, and so on) to determine the future. Such tools are used in specific ways for this express purpose. These represent later developments of divinatory technique.

Natural divination consists of the observation of occurrences in the natural world. A specific time and place is set aside for the express purpose of asking that omens derived from natural physical phenomena present themselves to reveal the future. The casual observation of omens that may unexpectedly occur at any time isn't true divination. Omens must be preceded by a request for information in order to be classified as divination. These are known as provoked omens.

Such omens are created by the world around us. The flight or appearance of birds, the behavior of animals, observation of the stars and clouds, the wind's activity, and the sudden appearance of meteors and lightning are some popular forms.

The Divinatory Response

Messages received during divination are known as responses. They usually take one of three forms. The nature of the technique determines the message's form.

The first form produces so-called binary responses. The techniques that create binary responses are the easiest to perform and often produce the clearest answers. Questions are asked that can be answered with a yes or a no; hence the term binary. Occasionally, a third option, "maybe," "perhaps," or "no answer" is also included.

The second response consists of the creation of symbols or images. These forms are termed symbolic. The divinatory tools (particularly crystal spheres, clouds, fire, smoke, and oil dropped into water) produce symbols that are interpreted in conjunction with the diviner's question. Forms that produce such responses aren't limited to answering specific questions; they can be used to determine the general future. The symbols thus produced are interpreted to provide information such as "it will be a prosperous year," or "expect losses," and so on.

Symbolic responses rely both on the diviner's powers of observation as well as on her or his ability to unlock the symbols' inner meanings. Generally speaking, only symbols familiar to the diviner will appear, and this enhances the probability of a successful interpretation. (See Chapter 4, Symbolic Thought.)

The value of techniques that produce binary responses is obvious: no such interpretation is necessary. Both of these forms, however, can produce satisfactory results if used with the proper attitude. (See Chapter 3, The Fine Art of Divination, for further information.)

The third type of divination produces what we may term selective responses. A number of likely future events are written on pieces of paper, leaves, stones, or on other tools. These are then manipulated (placed in a windy spot, chosen at random) to provide the most likely prediction.

Divination Isn't Psychic Awareness

Many of the processes at work during divination are little understood. However, one fact is clear: true divination doesn't consist of the use of psychic abilities. It doesn't rely on a person's ability to tap into a bank of knowledge usually unknown to the conscious mind. Because of this, anyone, psychic or not, can successfully practice divination.

It can certainly be argued that our psychic minds may be at work during some techniques—that they examine waves of future energy and then relate them (through symbolic responses) to our conscious mind. No such awareness can be at work during techniques that produce binary or selective responses, yet all three systems can produce insightful answers.

Some diviners still believe that higher beings manipulate the tools or, alternately, place symbols within them for us to see. This, the ancient view, may or may not be accepted according to the diviner's spiritual beliefs. Such a belief isn't necessary, for even nonreligious persons can satisfactorily perform divination.

Why Is the Past of Importance?

Some question the need to examine the past to discover the future. This is based on the assumption that we know everything about our pasts because we've lived them.

Why, then, do so many divinatory techniques focus on both the past and the future? Most Tarot spreads (see Chapter 18) include a placement for a card that symbolizes the past as well as the future. Magic mirrors and other tools are used to illuminate the past, especially to see the circumstances surrounding a crime that has been committed at an earlier time.

The fact remains that divination has always been used for this purpose. The explanation of why is rather simple: every day, we're building our futures. Every decision that we make affects tomorrow. When we're faced with a difficult situation, we may ask ourselves, "Why?" The answer often lies in the past.

Though most of us can remember our pasts, we may not be able to make the conscious connection between past and present. We're incapable of seeing that we reap the fruits of our actions. If, yesterday, a man

decided to sit on train tracks for twenty-four hours, and is then run over by the train, he's feeling the effects of his past decision.

If we make unwise choices we'll suffer because of them. Deciding not to take an important medication may result in a severe relapse this week. If we allow another person to steer us away from our goals and dreams, we may find ourselves living an unfulfilling experience bereft of happiness. Moving to a town that's flooded every year during heavy rains will probably make our shoes wet. Though these are simple examples, the fact remains that many of us are simply unable to link past actions and the present state of our lives.

The past also affects the future, for the streams of energy not only follow us, they race on into the future, continuing to mold our lives. Becoming aware of these past streams can not only answer questions concerning our present lives, but can also provide hints of the future. Therefore, examination of the past can be of great importance in divination.

Divination remains a mysterious art. Perhaps this is part of its appeal. Scientific inquiry and education have largely stripped our lives of mystery. Though the purpose of divination is the clarification of the future, the manner in which this is achieved is highly romantic and evocative. This may explain why divination has never lost its popularity during the 5,000 years of its practice.

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