

# The Scroll of Set

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## [1] The Science of Divination

- by Michael A. Aquino VI°

Divination, by one definition, is the explanation of the present or the prediction of the future by recourse to a device or machine. By this definition both a crystal ball and an electronic computer with a social forecasting program are divination devices.

Obviously we don't think of the two as similar. The computer's program offers us an objective way to extrapolate trends, cross-reference and weigh various social developments, and come up with a composite picture. Nor is this "rational" means of prediction limited to computers; futurologists employ many similar techniques to approach valid forecasts. The best basic text on this subject I have encountered remains #21H on the reading list, and the World Future Society in Washington, D.C. can offer many more resources for the interested Setian.

Scientific forecasting, whether modest or exhaustive in scope, falls into the category of Lesser Black Magic (LBM) to the extent one employs its revelations to accomplish something. Is there a Greater Black Magic (GBM) counterpart?

Indeed there are several supernatural [or at least super-rational] devices reputed as means of divination. The simplest - and superficially the least impressive - are "windows" of one sort or another: pools of black ink, "shew-stones", witches' mirrors, and of course the crystal ball. The more impressive devices are ones which convey the impression of an intricate and complicated "machinery" behind them - Tarot, astrology, and the *I Ching*.

Certainly divination in general has had a bad press: There is no other field so readily associated with crankdom. The tabloid headline "World's Leading Psychics' Predictions" has long since become a bedraggled cliché. Yet many people still study and play with divination devices either for simple entertainment or because such devices serve, in Anton LaVey's words, as "God in sports clothes" - a means of reaching out to the mystery and glamor of the metaphysical unknown without having to involve oneself in the tedious mumbo-jumbo of religion or the brain-strain of higher philosophy. Peering into a crystal ball or dealing out some Tarot cards is about as intellectually demanding as turning on the TV set so that **it** can "think" for you.

The Temple of Set opposes the "glass teat" mentality in any form of magic or philosophy. There is **no** free lunch, and you cannot expect to just "plug in" to some stimulus and have it make you into a magician. You have to do it **yourself**, and you have to know exactly **what** you are doing and **why** it works either in whole or in part. So let us try to come to grips with how, if at all, divination devices work:

By themselves, as with all accouterments of magic, all divination devices are inert. They possess **no** intrinsic power. They are "triggering" mechanisms affecting the thoughts and perceptions of the operator and/or observer(s). In an LBM context, a carnival crystal ball reader may observe the "body language" responses of the client to suggestive phrases and will color the "reading" accordingly. Any good manual on stage-magic mentalism will expound upon this.

In a GBM Working there is no conscious intent to deceive or manipulate a person or a situation. Rather the desire is to understand something or to acquire some information that is not normally accessible. ESP experiments such as those of Priest Neilly's Metamind Element and the Stanford Research Institute's Remote Viewing project come to mind.

As I wrote in the *Cloven Hoof* a decade ago, the electronic impulses by which the brain thinks are too weak to travel through the bone of the skull, much less jump vast distances. And Rhine's ESP experiments concluded that success or failure in ESP did not seem to be a function of the physical distance between sender and receiver.

If ESP works, it must be through a medium whose existence is not yet established through known laboratory means. C.G. Jung suggested a sort of "objective psyche" common to and accessible by all individual psyches:

The "absolute knowledge" which is characteristic of synchronistic phenomena, a knowledge not mediated by the sense organs, supports the hypothesis of a self-subsistent meaning, or even expresses its existence. Such a form of existence can only be transcendental, since, as the knowledge of future or spatially distant events shows, it is contained in a psychically relative space and time, that is to say in an irrepresentable space-time continuum. - *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*

Hence the individual psyche might be pictured as a sort of extension or branch of this "objective psyche". For the most part the individual psyche is independent and consciously unaware of the objective psyche, but under certain conditions - such as a GBM divination working - it can "tap into" the objective psyche and hence into all of its other

“extensions” as well. [A technical definition of Set in this context might be “the self-created and conscious objective psyche, which is capable of producing temporary, individually self-conscious extensions”.]

The concept of the objective psyche would also serve to explain why, though individual psyches appear and disappear, the life-force which energizes them is immortal. After “extending” for awhile, so to speak, you “retract” back into the objective psyche.

In the ongoing Metamind experiments, for instance, someone like Magistra Sinclair or Priestess Geske reaches back into the objective psyche in a search for the “extension” called Priest Neilly. Simultaneously that “extension” is also reaching back in a search for Sinclair and Geske. To the extent that a connection is made, knowledge is communicated.

Something like Jung’s “objective psyche” has been conceptualized in one form or another from ancient times to the present. It is never synonymous or even harmonious with the perceived universe, but is rather something which flows in and out and through it. It has been called the Tao by Lao-tse, and the Force by George Lucas. It does not entirely control its human extensions, nor is it entirely controllable by them; it partakes of them and they of it in a relative sense - usually non-conscious but occasionally, in the case of initiates, consciously. [In this context one might define “initiation” as a degree of awareness of, sensitivity to, and control over the objective psyche.]

Jung argues the necessity of the existence of the “whole” (OP) from the existence of its “parts” (IP) and from the limited evidence of connections between them which are otherwise impossible to explain. This is inductive logic on Jung’s part, so it is not conclusive.

Scientists prefer deduction, in which testing can be conclusive. The Carl Sagens of the world are justifiably suspicious of claims concerning phenomena which can’t be reliably reproduced or calculated. But this is not a valid argument against the existence of the phenomena *per se*. Gravity and magnetism are two phenomena which can be calculated, but whose existence itself cannot be explained. They exist because their effects are seen to exist. The OP’s effects are just as evident: As Pogo might say, “Us are it”. But they won’t be demonstrable in the laboratory until the psyche can be mapped, and that is a science that has fallen into neglect since ancient Egypt, Pythagoras, and Plato.

GBM divination should now be somewhat less mysterious. It is a type of ritual magic which seeks information, rather than a type which seeks to “do” something. In computer terminology it “accesses

the data bank” of the OP. It cannot predict the future in the sense that the future is somehow “destined”. Theoretically, I suppose, it could tap into all other IPs whose decisions and intentions will influence the resolution of a particular problem. The resulting synthesis of information could give the enquiring IP a rough idea of what will happen in that particular situation. But it strikes me as requiring extraordinary mental effort and coherence.

Is there anything to be said of the apparent complexities of the Tarot, *I Ching*, etc.? Does it mean anything that you deal a card and it’s the Tower rather than something else?

Crowley & Co. suggest that there is an “angel” manipulating either the deck or [unconsciously] your handling of it, directing that certain cards will appear. If you postulate an OP with sufficient conscious interest in your personal problems to play hide-and-seek with you via a deck of cards, I suppose Crowley’s explanation is possible. I confess that I prefer a more “Occam’s razor” approach, in which the appearance of cards is truly random. Since each card has a variety of meanings, however, your mind can use it to “trigger” almost any significance or association. The issue is whether that significance is a lazy, TV-set image from a crutch like the *Book of Thoth* or whether it is the result of the psyche’s intuitive reach back into the OP. In the former case you have a fantasy; in the latter case a magical reality.

Happy skrying!

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## [2] Book Review:

### ***Legion* by William Peter Blatty**

- by Michael A. Aquino VI°

When William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist* came out, it was fashionable for sophisticated Satanists to speak condescendingly of its simplistic, medieval-Catholic premises of “demonic possession”. This didn’t prevent us from trying to capitalize on the notable success of the novel and then the overwhelming success of the movie. Yet the feeling remained that *The Exorcist* was little more than a boogy-man scare story, and that Blatty’s contribution to Satanic philosophy was nil.

Hollywood’s *Exorcist II* movie did nothing to dispel this notion. A confusing, ill-edited attempt to serve a second dish of pea soup, it flopped badly at the box office and relegated poor Pazuzu to the murky mists of Mesopotamian mythology whence he came. And that seemed to be the end of *The Exorcist* as well.

But nothing is certain in this world, and now Blatty has popped up with *Legion*, a sequel to the original story which delicately avoids reference to the ill-conceived *Exorcist II*. Regan and her mother

do not appear in *Legion*; it is essentially a story involving some of the more peripheral characters of *Exorcist*, notably Police Lieutenant Kinderman. The search is on for a sadistic murderer prowling the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C.

As detective stories go it is awkward and unrealistic. One doesn't quite understand how Kinderman gets from point A to point B. The surprise discovery is pleasantly nostalgic, after which the novel ties up its loose ends and draws to a back-to-normalcy close.

If that were all there were to *Legion*, I wouldn't advise your buying it, at least not in hardcover. But there is more to it. Probably as a consequence of criticism concerning the lightweight, medieval theology of *Exorcist*, Blatty has read some books and done some thinking on cosmology. He has made a careful and introspective attempt to understand the rationale for the existence of God and Devil, and through the mediums of Kinderman and the other actors of *Legion* he offers his conclusions. Particularly interesting is Kinderman's dream of the initial estrangement of God and Satan in a sequence suggestive of George Gamow's "Big Bang" theory.

*Legion's* cosmology is still far too primitive to compare with that of the Temple of Set. But it's a step in the right direction for Blatty, whose view of the cosmos has gone beyond that of the Jesuits. Perhaps the Prince of Darkness quietly decided to show the author of *The Exorcist* that things are not as simple as the *Holy Bible* would have him believe. There are a few moments of old-time demonic possession in *Legion*, but one suspects Blatty inserted them so as not to disappoint panting readers who got off on Regan's crucifix-masturbation scene.

I don't think *Legion* is a classic, nor do I think that your personal library would miss the hardcover edition. Its philosophy makes the eventual paperback a good buy, however. If Hollywood makes a movie of it, I predict you'll see the splatter and possession scenes as ghouled-up as possible, and that if the cosmological philosophy appears at all it will be simplified to a token level. And that will be a shame, since the philosophy's the true merit of the book.

Good for you, William Peter Blatty!

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### [3] Council of Nine

*The Scroll* is pleased to announce that the Council of Nine has confirmed the nomination of Magistra Lilith Sinclair to a new nine-year term of office as a member of the Council. Her term will expire on June 30, XXVII (1992 CE). The Council has also confirmed the nomination of Magister James Lewis to a second one-year term of office as Chairman of the Council. His term as Chairman will expire on June 30, XIX (1984 CE).

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### [4] Notices

Congratulations to Priest Dennis Mann, who has just been promoted to the rank of Major in the Army Reserve.

Priest Robert Menschel, who advertised in a past issue for Setians interested in computer-assisted magical research, has received responses from Magistra Wendall and Priestess Geske. During the next few months they will be roughing out their experimental methods. Setians who are interested in the project should contact Menschel, Wendall, or Geske either directly or c/o the Temple office. Owing or having access to a computer is not a requirement, though of course familiarity with computer concepts is helpful.

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### [5] Editorial

- by Margaret A. Wendall IV°

This issue of the *Scroll of Set* involves a change in Editorship and changes in publication procedures, so it's short. The next issue will be back to normal length, and those of you who've sent articles this month can look forward to them in October, along with artwork and the calendar.

This is first and foremost your publication. The only real factor in determining the length of each issue will be the amount of material there is to put in it. I have some things to contribute too, but I don't want to dominate the pages.

One feature that was in the *Scroll* when I was Editor [It seems so long ago!] was "Forum", in which all initiates can express themselves on any subject - magical or mundane - that affects us as Setians. There's a good article to start "Forum" in October, and if you like the idea, we'll continue it. Other than this there are going to be very few changes. Magister Robert Moffatt, with Priestess Moffatt's assistance, has done such an excellent job that it's very hard to beat.