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BODY:

According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, "occult" means "1: not revealed: SECRET 2: ABSTRUSE, MYSTERIOUS 3: not able to be seen or detected: CONCEALED 4: of or relating to supernatural agencies, their effects, and knowledge of them."

Satanism, while it is a small part of the occult, is not the part we are dealing with in these stories. (None of the occultists interviewed for these articles were satanists.) Serious occultists divide into two groups, those who follow the left-hand way and those who follow the right-hand way. The left-hand way ("left" in Latin is "sinister") use occult powers for bad purposes. Those who follow the right-hand way use it for positive self-development. Many people, of course, use some of these occult arts for harmless entertainment; if you've ever checked your horoscope in the paper, you're one of them.

One more thing must be said. Up until the 17th Century, much occult speculation was considered mainline science. A number of the people who ushered in the scientific revolution pursued various occult speculations. Issac Newton, for example, spent about as much time investigating alchemy as he did celestial mechanics. Obviously, as academicians would say, the scientific paradigm since has shifted.

Occult thought covers a wide territory, including metaphysics, reincarnation, lost civilizations (Atlantis and the antediluvian age), geomancy, numerology, palmistry, phrenology, alchemy, magic, sacred geometry, witchcraft and many other subjects.

Following are some of the most common forms of prognostication practiced by occultists. Competent readers in these arts do not want their clients to use their readings as a crutch, nor do they pretend to give more than a general guide to trends (clairvoyants excepted). Nevertheless, the following is offered without endorsement; let the buyer beware:

Astrology

No competent astrologer will pretend to tell you exactly what the future will bring you. What astrologers do claim to be able to do is to forecast trends. As with most occult divination, intuition plays a heavy role.

Astrologers split into two camps, those who follow sidereal astrology (an astrology based on the fixed positions of the stars) and those who practice tropical astrology (an astrology based on the zodiac.) Most astrologers follow the latter system.

To understand it, you must know that the zodiac is based on the apparent path of the sun, which describes a great circle--the ecliptic--tilted on an angle 24 degrees off the equator. Imagine two other circles, one above and one below the ecliptic. Divide the band that these two circles describe into 12

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equal rectangles and you have the 12 houses of the sun, each with its own constellation. Taurus, Libra, Sagittarius, etc., all are sun signs, and the sun spends 1/12 of each year in each of them. Thus a person born while the sun passes through Capricorn is said to come under Capricorn's influence.

The laughable simplicity and error in the daily horoscopes published in newspapers is due to the fact that they are written by astrologers who are taking only sun houses into account. A good astrologer will be able to intuit certain facts about his client's character and possible future trends in his life based not only on the individual's sun sign but also the relative positions of all the planets and the moon at the time of his client's birth. The angle formed by any two planets with the Earth is said to exert a particular influence. Influence varies with planets and angles.

What a client might experience at a given time in the future is determined by calculating the position of the sun, moon and planets for that time and by comparing them to the angles at his time of birth.

Tarot cards

Many claim to know the history of tarot cards, and accounts of their origins vary. Some say the gypsies brought them out of ancient Egypt and introduced them to Europe in the 14th Century. Others say the Knights Templar came upon them in the Middle East during the Crusades. Some say they are a pictorial encyclopedia of wisdom in which all the secrets of the world are hidden. Adherents of this theory say the cards originated in ancient Egypt and attribute their creation to the god Thoth.

The deck consists of three sets of cards. The first is the zero card, the Fool. The second is comprised of cards numbered 1 through 21, on each of which is depicted a figure. These include the famous Hanged Man, the Emperor, the Hermit, etc. This set, along with the Fool, is known as the major arcana. The third set is known as the minor arcana. It is composed of four suits--wands, cups, swords and pentacles--each of which has its own attributes. Pentacles, for example, are said to represent riches, but not just money. Cups represent love. Each of the cards of the major arcana also are given attributes, but good readers will intuit their own meanings for each.

Cards are shuffled before a reading and 13 are dealt out in a peculiar pattern. A preponderance of any one suit indicates to some readers that the attributes of that suit are currently active in the person's life. The presence of particular members of the major arcana indicate other influences or energies. What is difficult to understand, of course, is how so many divergent interpretations of individual cards could result in an accurate reading. At least one modern critic has invoked the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious to explain the cards' efficacy, but that notion rests upon a fixed meaning for each of the major arcana.

Modern-day playing cards are descendants of the tarot deck.

The I Ching

The I Ching, or Book of Changes, originated in China. Confucius, who lived approximately 2,500 years ago, valued the book highly and placed its origins in antiquity. It is an extremely difficult work to use, relying heavily upon the inquirer's intuition.

The work is based upon the two polar, but not contradictory, principles governing all manifestation--yin and yang. Yin is the feminine principle, dark, earthy, passive. Yang is the masculine principle, light, active, heavenly. The I Ching represents yin with a broken line, yang with an unbroken line. Varying combinations of these lines in groups of six are called hexagrams. There are a total of 64 hexagrams, including one whose lines are all yin and one whose lines are all yang. These hexagrams are taken to represent all possible given situations. Consulting the I Ching is a matter of

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throwing yarrow stalks or coins to determine which hexagram pertains to your current situation. To complicate matters, there are what are known as changing lines. These can be either yin or yang lines which must be changed to their opposite. The more changing lines that appear in your hexagram, the more change is indicated in your situation.

As indicated above, the difficulty in consulting the I Ching lies in the difficulty in interpreting the hexagrams, which are couched in language unfamiliar to Westerners. The mathematical aspects of the I Ching greatly intrigued the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, for they coincided with his own binary system of mathematics. In our time, the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung attested to its divinatory powers.

Clairvoyance

Psychic Wayne St. John says that "to learn psychic ability you have to go into deep meditation, into silence, and let the spirit come through. The spirit will come through with a small inner voice inside your inner mind saying things like names, giving feelings about things that will happen and occur unexpectedly and suddenly. The spirit will talk about the future, past, and present. Names will just come out of your mouth and you have to try to put this puzzle together that the spirit is trying to say. Sometimes it's mumbo jumbo and sometimes the spirit comes stronger within you and you get the message right.

"Let's say someone has an accident. They would see in their mind and in their soul a vehicle. They would see a color, or they would see an hour, or a time, which would represent a number. The gift, a feeling and buzzing in your ear. These are signs of how you develop your psychic ability. Now myself, I was born a natural psychic.

"The mediumship is very, very difficult. A lot of psychics go through a lot of very heavy karma, bad and good. Your true psychic, true reader, will suffer a lot and tell nobody of it. It's just like St. Bernadette, the one who saw the appearance of the Blessed Mother. She suffered, told nobody of it, and then at the end when she was going to die, she said she had the tumor in the leg. She had the leukemia in the leg, okay? Mediums, clairvoyants, things of this nature, they suffer in their own way. Everyone has a cross on this Earth to carry. Mediumship is very special. God uses us as his veins to help the people. You can learn to develop this psychic ability, but it takes a while. This practice is very, very deep.

"Listen to your dreams. Your dreams can be significant. . .Some people fear (their own psychic ability). This fear has to leave because it is negative. If they allow the positive and the Word of God and Jesus to come into their soul and mind, it (psychic ability) will come through with them."

HALLOWEEN'S ORIGINS

Halloween had its beginning in the world of the occult. For the ancient Celts, the year ended Oct. 31. According to pagan tradition, that is the day when the veil between this world and the spirit world is thinnest. Perhaps it is for that reason that pagans say the 31st--All Hallows Eve--is the best time of year for divination and that on that night all spirits walk abroad.

Jack-o'-lanterns were carved with hideous expressions in hopes of frightening the evil spirits. The habit of wearing Halloween costumes arose because people wanted to confuse these spirits. A rich man, for example, might dress in rags. Also on that night, pagans remember dead relatives and friends who died that year by setting out food for them at meals.

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