

Notes on Various Aspects of Esoteric Spirituality and Parapsychology**Psychic Phenomena and the Mind****ESP and Psychokinesis**

Research in to psychic awareness over the past 100 years suggests that psychic awareness is a normal natural human ability which everyone has - unconsciously for the most part.

Psychic ability manifests primarily in three different ways:

- 1) telepathy/clairvoyance, which is awareness of what others are thinking or of some event or object distant from you in space;
- 2) precognition, which is awareness of (primarily) an event which has not yet happened;
- 3) psychokinesis, which is the ability to affect the world in some way, e.g. green fingers in which plants grow more readily, or healing in which a person can be helped to become healthier spiritually, mentally, emotionally or physically.

These three basic attributes manifest in many, many ways such as seeing apparitions, or experiencing a haunting, poltergeist activity, or talking with those who have recently died (mediumism) or with spirit (channelling). They can occur spontaneously as in a precognitive dream, or can be used consciously as in divination techniques.

Research into ESP

The basic research of this sort was done by J. B. Rhine starting in the 30's and using specially designed pack of cards called Zener cards which had five symbols on them. Nowadays experiments use video clips which the sender watches whilst the participant relaxes, as in Ganzfeld experiments, and talks out their thoughts; or is sleeping and records their dreams; or, as in remote viewing, the participant tries to see where the agent has gone to, or the place that has been chosen at random from a grid reference. These experiments have been consistently successful, and nowadays the research is concentrating on trying to understand exactly what is going on, rather than on whether or not ESP exists.

The primary finding from the past 50 years of research is that if one believes in psychic awareness, and especially that you can be aware at a particular time, then you are more likely to have a psychic experience (known as psi hitting), and if you do not believe in it then you won't (known as psi missing). The psi missing can be so extreme that one can tell that the person is in actual fact very psychic, but they are using their belief system, and defence mechanisms, to produce an equal but opposite result. A clear example of this is guessing heads or tails on a coin toss. By chance in 100 tosses you will get 50 correct. If you get 80 correct either you are very psychic or the coin is fixed! If you get 20 right you are equally psychic, but something in you is making you guess it wrong all the time. This we normally call luck, or bad luck, and the suggestion is that luck, or bad luck, may be our psychic ability working unconsciously in our everyday life affecting our actions and behaviour.

A second finding is that even when we are not consciously aware of psychic information, our bodies react, and this reaction can be picked up using a lie detector (which measures the skin's electricity), or plethysmograph (which measures blood flow in the fingers). This finding has been the basis for research into healing and is thought to be the mechanism underlying dowsing.

Research into Psychokinesis

This began with research into mediums in the 1800's, but started in earnest with J.B. Rhine, the founder of parapsychology in the 1930's in Durham, North Carolina. He had people try to influence dice which were shaken by a machine and then rolled onto a board. There are six dice and in the first try you would be aiming for them to show a one. The odds are that one dice will show a one out of the six. Roll the dice five times and by chance you will have five ones. Any more or less than this and if you do it often enough you are affecting the dice with your mind. Then roll the six dice five more times trying to get twos; then threes and so on. By doing this thousands of times, Rhine showed that people could affect the dice. Nowadays people use sophisticated computer equipment and Random Event Generators but the basic idea is the same. Some of the most impressive work of this sort has been done at Princeton Engineering Laboratory by Robert Jahn and colleagues.

Psychic Healing

Research into healing has been going on in laboratories since the 50's with very impressive

results, using everything from tissue culture cancer cells, through algae, enzymes, blood cells, plants, crystals, animals and humans. Some of the best work has been done by Braud and Schlitz. They have found that people can influence living things and people from a distance and call their work bio-PK or DMILS. In the basic design they would have someone (the participant) sitting in a chair wired up to a lie detector (skin conductance meter) which measures changes in sweating in the palm of the hand which is related to emotional changes. The participant would be asked to relax, do nothing, not move. There would be a television camera monitoring them, and down a corridor several rooms away there is another person (the influencer) who is looking at the television monitor watching the participant relaxing. They would have a computer that would tell them - now I want you to make the participant wake up, or now I want you to make the participant relax, or now read a book and don't think about the participant. When the lie detector results were looked at later it was found that the participant relaxed when the influencer was thinking relax, or became more tense when the influencer was thinking wake up. In later studies they found that the influencer didn't even need to think about the participant, all they had to do was either look at the monitor or read a book, and every time they looked at the participant they would affect them. This is the power of remote staring that we all know about - ears going red because someone is talking about you!! - and it is the basis of psychic healing. We are incredibly sensitive at a physical level to other's thoughts and this is the basis for healing and for hex death. We should never underestimate the power of thought and the effect our thoughts have on others. This makes the Buddhist creed of right thought even more imperative, when just thinking about someone affects their body physiology. Next time you are angry with someone, be aware that you are possibly physically affecting them with your anger as well as psychically affecting them.

Altered states of consciousness

The second major finding in parapsychology is that an altered state of consciousness enhances one's psychic awareness. Thus regular practice in meditation or relaxation, using techniques such as hypnosis or the hypnagogic state (creative imagination), being aware of your dreams, all facilitate becoming aware of the information that is ever present in the unconscious and which we can learn to tune in to. It seems that at the mental level we are ever present psychically at the unconscious level, and we can learn to tune in consciously by becoming more aware of our subliminal mind in general.

The first research was done in the 60's at the Maimonides Laboratory in New York, in which they had people come in and go to sleep in the lab. When they started dreaming someone would use a random device to choose a picture to look at. The sleeper would then be woken and describe their dream. It was found that independent judges could tell which picture was being looked at out of a pool of pictures from the sleepers dream. This research was extended in the 70's using relaxation and meditation techniques, and then the Ganzfeld design was started which is still being used with great success. In this design the participant wears translucent glasses and relaxes in chair with waterfall sound in headphones. This sends them into the hypnagogic state, which is like when you are falling asleep and you are in half dream state. During the experiment the participant talks out their thoughts, images, half dreams, feelings. Meanwhile the sender is looking at a video clip, and it has been found that the participant can successfully pick up what is being looked at.

The theory behind this increased success in altered states is that psi is normally unconscious and when we reduce our sensory input and focus on our mind. When we start to think in primary process (dream type) thoughts, we can more easily connect with the subconscious which is where the psi information is to be found. My research suggests that when we go to sleep at night, our pineal gland, which is traditionally called the third eye or psychic chakra, makes chemicals which create a hallucinogenic state of mind, which we normally call dreaming. These chemicals are virtually identical with the active ingredients in an Amazonian shamanic tea called ayahuasca, which is considered by the shamans to take one out of one's body, into shamanic flight, in which one can see the future, travel clairvoyantly (in one's spirit body) and do psychic healing. We make this ayahuasca in our pineal gland every night. The night time is traditionally known to be the psychic time, when witches fly and the fairies dance, and perhaps this is the reason behind our folk lore.

Psychic Development and Intuition

The best method for developing one's own psychic awareness is by working with both the conscious and the unconscious minds simultaneously. Whether one develops clairvoyance (seeing psychically) clairaudience (hearing psychically), clairsentience (knowing psychical) or direct intuition is

dependent more on personality than any other factor. Some of us are stronger visually, and our culture is a primarily visual culture, others are stronger auditorally, particularly those who live in the jungle where a sense of hearing is the prime sense, some people just know, some people feel the answer.

In order to open the pathways between these two levels of mind, one can most easily open the gates by learning how to remember your dreams, and then working with them. By becoming familiar with dreams so one learns to understand the language in which the primary mind thinks, the language of myth and symbol. This is called the primary process mind and is that used in all the myths and spiritual systems around the world. At one level, the gods and goddesses are myths of the primary process mind. In the quantum reality, inner and outer are both attributes of the same reality and one can access the gods through archetypal mythic reality inside one's own being. This is a philosophy of both/and. The gods are both inner archetypes and the gods are the forces of the universe.

At the same time as learning to access this primary psychic reality through dreams, one learns to still the mind with meditation, yoga and any other method that is suitable for oneself, eg Tai Chi. These techniques teach us to strengthen our mental muscles. The mind is undisciplined - it is like a baby, all over the place, and so we have to learn the mental equivalent of hand-eye coordination, learn to mentally sit up and walk; train our mind to do what we want it to do rather than letting it run the show. With this one-pointedness, stillness, so one goes beyond thought into direct knowing, so one can then use will to focus one's intent to produce the desired results.

Ethically and morally one must be very pure when working in his way with one's mind. Remember what was said about the force of anger and its effects on those around. With a trained mind this force is increased. This is why working on opening up one's awareness, developing one's intuition and psychic abilities is best done within a spiritual system, so that one is developing the whole of one's being - becoming holy - and the mental psychic abilities are part and parcel of whole purification and development - else you run the risk of doing harm to yourself and others. This is why the yogis recommend following the spiritual path in which psychic development occurs as part and parcel of the process, rather than developing psychic intuition as an end in itself.

There are various very simple techniques one can use to train psychic awareness, such as guessing through a shuffled pack of cards. Start by shuffling the cards and holding the pack on the table with your left hand on it. Then with your right hand (or the other way round if you are left handed) write down the colour of the top card, then the one underneath it and so on, for the top 25 cards. Then check to see if you got them right. By chance you will have about half correct. When you are practised at this level, start trying to guess the suit of the card. Then practise precognition by guessing the order of the cards, and then shuffling them and checking to see if you got them correct.

Then cut out pictures from magazines, postcards, Christmas cards etc, and put them into plain envelopes in sets of four, labelling the envelopes a, b, c and d. Now use a relaxation or meditation technique and still the mind and ask to see the picture. If you want to use a visualisation exercise such as going into a cave and looking in a pool of water this can be a valuable method. When you have finished the exercise use a shuffled pack of cards and cut the pack. If you get a spade the target picture was a, if a heart the picture was envelope b, if a diamond envelope c and if a club, envelope d. Look at the picture and see how close you were to getting it. It is best to make at least twenty sets of four pictures so that you don't consciously know which pictures are in the set. These are simple but very effective techniques for checking your level of psychic development.

One's emotional state is important and so to be as calm and in as good a mood as possible helps. It is also useful to practise every day and see what changes there are, dependent on mood, menstrual cycle, phase of the moon, time of day, etc. Research in parapsychology has shown that these, and the earth's magnetic field are all factors to be taken into account.

Dreams

Most people who have a spontaneous psychic experience have it at night. If you are going to see a ghost or have a precognition, you are most likely to have it at night, and the precognition will probably occur while you are dreaming. Dreaming is a state of consciousness which is called primary process, because it is thought that this type of thinking is the most primary sort of thinking that humans experience, the sort that very young children have. It is the language of myth, of symbols, of our subconscious, the language of magic.

Everybody dreams four times every night if they have eight hours sleep, once every two hours, the dreams getting longer as the night goes on. Dreaming is also called REM sleep as your eyes move

about rapidly whilst dreaming though the rest of the body is paralysed, so that you do not act out your dreams. It is also called paradoxical sleep because the brain waves are as if you are awake (beta rhythm), yet ones attention is completely internal and concerned with internal processes rather than responding to external sounds, sights, etc. In some dreams these stimuli will become incorporated into the dream, for example, you dream you are wading through a very cold river only to wake and find your feet have come out of the bedclothes and become very cold. However this is an occasional rather than every night occurrence.

Most dreams are kitchen sink dramas dealing with our everyday lives and problems. I call them our own personal and free psychotherapy sessions because dreams are truth tellers and, when we can understand what they are saying, we realise they are telling us about our inner state of being and any problems, successes, anxieties, fears, and any other items that need dealing with.

Dreams are also places in which we are likely to have a precognitive experience. J.W. Dunne published a very famous book "An Experiment With Time" in which he details dreams and life occurrences and how the dreams related to life that is about to happen. Nancy Sondow in New York did a similar experiment in which she recorded 900 dreams over a three year period and found that 90 of them were precognitive; that is 1 dream in 10. Some people think that the common *deja vu* experience is one in which we have dreamed about a future event, forgotten it, and then experienced the event with that uncanny sense of having been there before. Once you realise that even if you do remember a dream every morning, and how many people do even that, you have forgotten three other dreams every night, and there is a possibility that one dream in ten is precognitive, then this makes this explanation even more likely.

Another aspect of dreaming are what I call the big dreams in which we link with spirit, however you wish to conceive of that, for major life transformation and healing. In ancient times in Greece there were temples in which people would go to sleep to dream having invoked a particular god or goddess for help, and they would stay there until they had the required dream. These dreams are archetypal in the Jungian sense, an example being one in which I was carried by an eagle who flew with me. There is no prosaic explanation for these sorts of dreams, they have a numinous quality and are complete in themselves, being a gift from spirit, which live on inside of one imparting a special feeling.

Dream induction is a technique one can do for personal psychotherapy type dreams, for creative dreaming for music, art, science or any other creative requirement one may wish to work for, or for big spirit dreams as in the ancient temples. All one has to do is make a regular practice of writing ones dreams down every morning (discipline is required for this) and then on the night of a dream induction to go to bed asking out loud, at least 23 times: "I am going to dream about . . . and I will remember and record my dream in the morning." In the morning write down your dream in the full knowledge that it addresses your request in some way, do not dismiss it, look at it and find how it has answered you. With practice and this full belief in the answers, the dreams get stronger and clearer. This is the same for all forms of divination. We must accept the answers we get, and with practice they become stronger and clearer. If we doubt the answers then they get more and more muddled.

Mind or Spirit?

One of the major questions which arises is whether or not the mind is totally linked with the body or whether it exists outside of the body as soul or spirit. Research into out-of-body and near-death experiences, together with research into ghosts, poltergeists, hauntings, mediumistic communications, children who remember previous lives and hypnotic regression, all point to the possibility of mind existing outside of the body, to communication with spirit from another dimension, or world, and to the possibility of memories from a previous life affecting the present life. Exactly what is going on here is a subject of much debate and there is no final resolution at present.

Out of Body Experiences (OBEs)

Research in parapsychology using questionnaires of people living within a town, or students at a University, in America, Australia and Britain over the past 50 years, have found that on average about one person in five has had at least one obe, and some people are able to go out of body at will. These experiences are normally very short, lasting less than a minute, the sort in which someone finds themselves on the ceiling looking down at their body, gets such a surprise that immediately they find themselves back in their body. The experiences are very much on his earth plane. People who have

experiences which go into dream like dimensions, other worlds, are said to astral travel rather than oboe.

People who have flying dreams, lucid dreams, mystical experiences, psychic experiences are more likely to have an oboe than are people who have not had these sorts of experiences.

Research has shown that people who claim to go out of body can read things which are up on shelves close to the ceiling which can only be seen from above (Charlie Tart with Miss Z), can affect the behaviour of animals who are in another room (Keith Harary with Bob Morris), and can affect piezoelectric strain gauges set up at the position of looking at the target picture. These are all abilities that could be clairvoyance, precognition or psychokinesis, but the person's experience is different in that they experience being out of their body. So it is just possible that something does leave the body during these experiences, that something being mind, or consciousness or spirit, which is able to affect sensitive psychic devices and see things at a distance.

The oboe is the classic shamanic experience called "spirit travel with spirit guides." Interestingly the chemicals made by the pineal gland which are so similar to the ayahuasca of the Amazonian shamans is used by these people to go out-of-body, to travel in the spirit world, for clairvoyance, precognition, guidance from the spirits and for psychic healing. It is just possible that when we are dreaming that we do go out of body, which suggests that we can have traditional shamanic experiences in our dreams at night. One of the methods for teaching people to oboe is through lucid dreaming which adds weight to this idea. Classic magical techniques to learn to go oboe at will use creative imagination, focused willing, and deep relaxation.

Mediumship and Channelling

Mediumship started in the mid 1800's with the Fox sisters and spread like wildfire, everyone wanting to sit in circle and hear the spirits talking through raps in the woodwork. Gradually over the course of time more efficient methods of talking with the spirits developed through first of all a circle of letters and asking the spirits to rap when the correct letter was pointed at, to developing a pointer on wheels (the planchette) to turning the pointer into a pencil (automatic writing), and finally to acknowledging that one member of the circle was the prime person through whom the spirits communicated (the medium), and that person going into trance and allowing the spirits to speak directly through them. This development was spread over about 30 years, so that by the 1860's there were circles with mediums who directly communicated with the spirits of people who had recently died, and spiritualism was born.

There are spiritualist circles all over Europe and America today and they primarily now perform an excellent bereavement service, connecting people with their loved ones who have recently died. Within the last 20 years this ability has spread to encompass not only connecting with the dead but connecting with "spirit" in a more general sense to receive wisdom teachings. This development started with Jane Roberts in the 1930's who contacted a "being" called Seth who dictated a number of books. Since there have been numerous books of channelled material this becoming very popular from the 70's onwards. At one time these beings were linked with aliens and with UFOs, but more recently people consider they are directly linking with spirit. The quality of the material channelled is very variable, the channeler rarely goes into trance and, as with all psychic phenomena, needs to be discriminated clearly. "A Course in Miracles" dates from the 1970's and is channelled material which aims to teach people spiritual principles for living their life. It is immensely influential to this day.

However, a lot of channelling is very patriarchal, e.g Ramtha, the Nine, and popular amongst the Theosophists and New Agers are the so-called Ascended Masters who were channelled initially by Madame Blavatsky and later by Alice Bailey. This has led to a cult group called the Ascension people who think that the earth is going to end and they will all leave their bodies and ascend to other dimensions - classic millennialist stuff.

The most important thing to remember about channelled material is that it might be material from the unconscious mind of the channeler and have nothing to do with so-called spirits. All such material needs to be looked at with a discriminating mind in order to ascertain whether or not the teachings are of benefit for oneself, not accepted hook, line and sinker just because the "author" says it is channelled.

UFOs, Ghosts and Other Apparitions

About one person in ten in Britain has seen a ghost according to the Gallup Poll. Even more have seen a UFO according to estimates by Hilary Evans in his excellent book "Visions, Apparitions, UFOs" in which he outlines how at one level all things seen or experienced which don't stay around to be boxed

and labelled in a museum have a similar sort of reality. Patrick Harpur labels this “The Daemonic Reality.” Our Western society says that if a thing has no physical existence that it does not exist. In this visionary apparitional world people have experiences of things that sort of exist physically. Thus a ghost can be heard as footsteps, can be seen as the turning of a door handle, can manifest violently as with broken clocks or crockery, but you cannot go to a museum and see a ghost, though if you get locked into the museum you just might see one at 3 am, but it won't hang around for the police to catch it. The same with visions of the BVM. Young girls see them, and as at Fatima the crowds experienced something, but no physical traces were left. People are profoundly affected by such experiences, their whole lives may change, and this is the essence of magical, mystical, psychic, spiritual experiences, which are totally accepted in most cultures, other than the modern Western one which says that as there is no enduring physical thing, the experience is invalid. I say that all experiences are valid – it's just the explanations that we are debating.

The characteristics of this reality share certain commonalities across all of the various manifestations, whether it is ghosts, apparitions of the dead, fairies, visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, UFOs.

1) They tend to be seen at night. Some are seen during the day, but mostly they occur when most people are sleeping, or doing a monotonous task such as driving, often being associated with the dream state, e.g. the apparition of someone who has just died appearing at 3 am, or the classic UFO abduction experience occurring when one is in bed.

2) They tend to be experienced when one is alone. Again there are times when several people have seen a UFO or a ghost together, but the general scenario is of a person on their own at night, e.g. a nurse in a hospital seeing a figure walking down the hospital corridor.

3) People get frightened. Though there are rarely cases of serious harm, there is an atmosphere of fear, of awe, even of terror that surrounds the experience.

4) Machines stop working. The classic is the clock that stops when grandpa dies, but also cars that stop when a UFO appears, or video recorders that won't work when investigating a haunted house, etc.

5) There are certain places which are more conducive to such experiences. In Britain, stone circles, long barrows and tumuli and other sacred sites such as churches and graveyards are full of folk lore about fairies, witches, apparitions, black dogs, and in modern times black cats, phantom hitchhikers and UFOs. Old houses which also have ghosts and other apparitions, such as grey or white ladies which used to be thought of as fairy women, are also places which are often linked with sacred sites.

One theory about this is that such experiences are affected by changes in the earth's magnetic field (GMF). Persinger has found that more UFOs are seen on the site of a geological fault just before and earth tremor. He has also found that more people see ghosts when the GMF is more intense than normal. UFO flaps in Britain were shown by Devereux to occur more frequently when there was an earth tremor due to happen. After the earthquake people stop reporting the experiences. It is during the build up of tension that they occur, the atmosphere of lightning, hair standing up on the back of your neck, the crackle of electrostatic in the churchyard.

Such experiences are linked with the primary process or dream state of consciousness, the shamanic trance state, the visionary state, which in our society is dismissed as just a dream, just an hallucination, just your imagination, but in other cultures is seen as a connection with the otherworld, the world of the dead, of fairy, of magic, of other dimensions, alien beings, and which needs to be treated with caution, awe and respect. The human imagination is our creativity, is our art, our music, our architecture, our technology, our culture; without it we are not human. And this faculty of dream, of imagination is what links us with this other reality.

Spirituality, the Mind & Science

One of the modern theories of psychic awareness is that of the holographic universe, which states that the universe can be conceived as a hologram, a pattern of energy in which every part contains the whole from the perspective of that part. This links with quantum theory in which the world is both matter (particle) and energy (wave) depending on how you look at it (measure it), and the act of measurement requires mind or consciousness or meaning (information). Thus the world is composed of matter, energy and mind and it is the interaction of the three that compose the universe as we know it. Change any one of these three and the universe changes. Thus we get the classic dictums of the Hermetic philosophy that humans are the microcosm of the macrocosm, and as above, so below, and the

New Age saying that we create our own reality, because the reality we experience depends on how we look at it. In this reality, there is no here and there, it is all one; there is no now and then, it is all one. So we are not conceiving psychic ability as requiring a transfer of information using waves or vibrations, but rather a shift of consciousness out of this explicate world of time and space into the quantum holographic universe where it is all one now, and we are connecting with the information that is according to our needs, wishes etc.

And this is where we once again encounter altered states as being the state in which we can best link in with spirit, or the holographic universe, or the implicate order, or other dimensions, or the otherworld, or whatever way you wish to understand this level of reality. Traditionally all cultures have used methods for shifting state of consciousness in order to connect with spirit, whether it is a shamanic culture using psychotropic plants, or the Oriental cultures using meditation, or the Western occult traditions using hypnogogic techniques, or the more modern monotheistic religions with contemplation and prayer, we all have a deep need to link with spirit, have peak and transcendental religious experiences.

In Braud's Conformance Theory, one can more easily influence something to change in accord with one's wishes if that thing is inherently movable (or labile as he calls it). Thus, it is easier to influence a rolling dice which is moving as in Rhine's experiments (see Psychokinesis), than it is to move a table as the mediums used to do (see Spiritualism). In divination, a shuffled pack of cards is inherently labile as it is being randomised and so the mind can influence it to conform to the querents problem.

Divination

Tarot

Tarot is probably one of the most popular of the divination procedures this century. Its origins are obscure, the first pack being from the Middle Ages in Europe (The Marseilles pack), and the modern development of Tarot occurring with A.E. Waite of the Golden Dawn in the late 1800's with the Rider/Waite pack. Crowley then developed his pack, with pictures drawn by a friend of his, and a book "The Book of Thoth" accompanying it as an advanced esoteric exposition of the Tarot. In the latter half of the 20th Century there has been an explosion of packs, Feminist packs, American Indian divination packs, Celtic packs, Arthurian, Tree oracle and so on. Every year at the moment sees yet another pack emerging.

All these different systems work on the same principle, that in life there are basic archetypes, love, death, rebirth, and as we grow through our lives so we encounter these. By following the basic idea of synchronicity, that through chance we can connect one happening in our lives with another meaningfully, so the shuffling of the cards creates that random event, which our focused mind with its particular question can then influence, so that when the pack is cut and the cards laid out they will mirror in symbol form the outer events in the universe we want to know about.

A traditional Tarot pack is divided into two parts: the Major Arcana which contain the major archetypes, e.g the Fool, the Magician, the High Priestess, the Lovers, Death; and the minor Arcana which are divided into four suits which are the origin of the four suits in a modern pack of cards, Cups (now Hearts), Swords (Spades), Pentacles (Diamonds) and Wands (Clubs). These four suits are the basic four elements of Hermetic philosophy:

Cups being the elements of water, emotions, love, the unconscious;

Swords being the element of fire, life force, spirit;

Pentacles being Earth, darkness, material;

and Wands being Air, mind, inspiration, new beginnings.

Different traditions have different correspondences, Swords and Wands often being transposed from the above definitions. Some people also connect these four elements with direction, so that Water is the West, fire the south, air the East and earth the north. Again different traditions ascribe different elements to different directions.

Just as in a modern pack of cards, there are 10 numbered cards of each suit and then King, Queen and Page, the traditional tarot also having a Knight, and some modern feminist packs having a prince and princess rather than knight and page. All of these have a minor archetypal meaning. For example, the five of pentacles shows some beggars outside of a brightly lit building and this is normally given to mean that one is going to be encountering hard times materially in some form or other; or the

three of cups shows people dancing in a garden which is a summer of love and contentment, and so on. (These pictures are from the Rider- Waite pack.)

There are several ways of laying out the cards. The most common is called the Celtic Cross in which the cards are laid out one by one, the first card representing the querent. Sometimes this is chosen beforehand by the person and withdrawn from the pack before it is shuffled, sometimes all the cards are shuffled and the top card represents the person asking the question, this card then itself being part of the reading. The next card is placed on top of this card and represents the situation in which they find themselves, the question they are asking about. This is crossed by the next card which represents the difficulty within the situation. Next a card is placed below and represents the foundation, the basis on which the situation rests; then a card is placed to the left and represents the influences which are behind the situation, which are passing away. The next card goes above and represents the ideal to which one is aspiring in the situation, and finally a card is placed to the right and this represents the influences which are going to occur in the forthcoming period of time being asked about. Some people lay these four cards in different order some going below - above, behind before, and so on according to their preferences. The important thing is that having decided on how one likes to lay them out one sticks to the same system all the time. There are then four more cards laid out in a column along the right side of the cross, starting at the bottom, the first card once again representing the querent as they're at present in this situation and so throwing light on the initial card, the next card is placed directly above the first and represents the environment in which the querent finds themselves and which influences the situation, the third card above this and representing the querents hopes and fears, and the final card which influences all the rest of the reading is the final outcome.

Runes

The runes are a northern system of divination originating primarily with the Teutonic people where it is called the Elder Futhark, but also an Anglo-Saxons version. The Elder Futhark was brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons, who gave us the Old English Rune Poem which was first written down in the 9th century. They are simple signs that some say came from patterns of twigs on trees or other natural objects, there being twenty four of these signs (and one blank rune), carved on stone or wood, and as in Tarot carrying archetypal meaning. Later on they became associated with a particular sound and were used as an early form of writing.

The simplest form of divination with runes is to have them in a bag which is big enough to allow you to put your hand in. Think of your question and pull out three runes. The first is for the past, the second for the present and the third for the future concerning your particular question.

I Ching

The I Ching is the Chinese system of divination. The basic philosophy behind it is that life is composed of two primary aspects: yang energy which is the active, creative, male energy and yin which is receptive, passive, female energy - not in gender terms but in basic universal energy duality concept. Everything is composed of these energies in different proportions and combinations. so when you are asking the universe about something it will look at the essential yin-yang energy around your situation and reply in these terms.

A reading is composed of hexagrams, which are six lines made up of either a straight unbroken (yang) line or a broken (yin) line. The 64 possible combinations of these six binary lines make up the readings. The foremost book of these readings is the Richard Wilhelm translation (ref) though recently there have been many other translations done. The readings are essentially Taoist with commentaries by Confucius, and once again are archetypal situations in which we find ourselves. However in the I Ching there is far wider scope for variation and subtlety because you can have what are called moving lines, in which a yang line can change to a yin and vice versa. This then gives you two readings and also a specific text for the moving line, which bears particularly on the situation you are asking about and the best way to deal with it and what will happen if you do so.

The manner of obtaining the readings is the same synchronistic, psychokinetic method used in both Tarot and runes. There are two variants. In one three coins are thrown, heads being for unbroken or yang energy and scoring three points and tails, for broken yin energy and scoring two points. The three coins together are then added up. If you have three yin you score 6 points and have a moving (old) yin line. If you score three heads and 9 points this is a moving (old) yang line. If you have two heads and a tail this

is a young yan which stays as it is, and if you have two tails and a head this is a young yin line which stays as it is. The lines are read from the bottom upwards so the first three coins thrown compose the first line at the bottom, then the next throw makes the second line one up from the bottom until all six are formed and you have the reading.

There is a more complex method using (traditionally) yarrow stalks. One holds a bundle of 50 sticks and puts one stick out - next to the candle or incense as this should always be done in a sacred meditational frame of mind. The remaining 49 sticks are separated into two bundles and one stick removed from the right hand bundle. Sticks are then removed from the left bundle until you are left with one to four sticks. These are placed with the one that was put to one side. Then you remove sticks from the right hand bundle until you are left with one to four sticks which are added to the ones put aside. This means you have five or nine sticks. These are left on one side and the remainder of the sticks picked up, separated into two, one taken from the right bundle, the left bundle picked up and four sticks at a time taken until you are left with one to four sticks which are put with the first, then the right bundle separated until you have one to four sticks which are put with the rest so you have four or eight sticks. This is then repeated a third time, once again ending up with four or eight sticks. This combination of three "throws" is equivalent to the three coins and makes a yang or yin, moving or still line. This gets repeated again and again until you have all six lines.

The reading thus obtained is composed of three primary parts. The first is the "judgment" which gives the basic information about the situation, then there is the "image" which gives details that clarify the judgement. and if one has one or more moving lines there are these which give finer detail about the specific situation.

Astrology

Western Astrology

There are several major forms of astrology all of which follow the principle that life on earth is influenced by what is happening in the heavens. Seeing as this is a common belief across all cultures in the planet there is possibly a good foundation of life experience behind it. Recent research by Gauquelin suggests that the planet that is rising or at mid-heaven when one is born, can in certain people who excel in their profession, be related to what they will do in later life, e.g. Mars rising relates to a future career as a soldier. This research is of course being questioned and requires further corroboration, but is interesting and suggests that we are influenced in some way that accords with the traditional meanings given to the planets.

Astrology not only ascribes influence to the planets but also to the constellations (Aries, Pisces, Taurus etc.) which form a circle in the sky along the path of which the sun, moon and planets are seen to ride. The constellations we use in the West were those mapped out by the Mesopotamians about six thousand years ago and a lot of the star names used are still Arabic.

The present Western astrological system is one that was codified 4,000 years ago, at which time the constellation of Aries was rising at the time of sunrise at the Spring Equinox - the Age of Aries. 2,000 years ago the constellation of Pisces was rising at the Spring Equinox sunrise, and at present we are on the cusp of the Aquarian constellation rising at this point, which is why it is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. This has caused considerable debate amongst astrologers over whether to use the movement of the planets in the constellation as one actually sees them in the sky, or whether to use the 4,000 year-old system which has symbolic meaning. Some people favour the first, particularly those using astrology for magical purpose or for gardening, whilst those who use astrology for personal psychology (relationships, personal growth, etc) tend to use the old system.

The primary basis of personal psychology astrology is the natal horoscope, the birth chart. A natal horoscope is that which is the pattern of the planets and constellations at the moment of birth. Thus someone whose birthday is from 21st March to 21st April has their sun in Aries as explained in the previous paragraph. Because the planet Mercury is so close to the sun, it is normally in the same sign (constellation) or one adjacent. Venus is also seen in the sky close to the sun, but travels further from the sun than does Mercury, so it can be as far away as two constellations from the sun. The outer planets though can be in any sign as they travel around the Zodiac, Mars travelling quite fast through the signs, through to the outer planets taking decades to travel through each sign as seen from the perspective of Earth. The moon though travels through each sign very fast because the moon circles the Earth every 25 hours, lagging behind and moving away from the sun by one hour each day, so it spends only two days on average in each sign.

The other factor used in a horoscope is what is called the ascendant. If one is born at sunrise this will be the same as one's sun sign, but if you are born at sunset then it will be directly opposite your sun sign because it is the constellation that is rising at the moment of your birth, so this changes every two hours through the day. and is the one most likely to be unknown or incorrect unless one knows accurately the hour of one's birth.

Whilst most people when they look at a newspaper horoscope only look at their sun sign, to a professional astrologer it is the mixture of all the planets in their signs that makes the accuracy of forecasting, the sun being merely one amongst many. Thus the sun is one's general personality, the ascendant is how you are seen in the world, the moon is your emotional state, Mars is you active level of being, Mercury communication skills, Venus relationships. These basic attributes are tempered according to the planet, so a Moon in Cancer person, where Cancer is a constellation connected with water and the sea, is someone whose emotional state is strong, the waters run deep, who will be happiest at home.

Astrologers add to this system something called the house, there being various systems for this. Basically the horoscope is divided into twelve parts, the first part starting at the point of one's ascendant and moving clockwise around the chart, so that in equal house astrology the second house starts 30 degrees after the point of the ascendant. Thus you have a planet in a sign in a house, and which house it is in determines and influences just as the sign influences the nature of the planet. Aries, because it is the traditional start of the horoscope year is at home in the first house, but of course if your ascendant is in Taurus then your first house will be in Taurus through to Gemini depending on which bit of Taurus your ascendant is in.

Chinese Astrology

In Chinese Astrology we still have twelve signs but these are all animal signs and each year is under a particular sign, so we have year of the rooster, or year of the tiger. There are also five elements, and these change every two years, so it takes 60 years to go through all the permutations. There are also animals for each hour of the day, these changing every two hours. The Chinese calendar is a lunar calendar, the new year occurring at dark of the moon in late January or early February.

Dowsing

Water or mineral divination

The original aspect of dowsing was anciently known as water or mineral divination and is a method of using the body's sensitivity to the earth and to slight changes in the earth's magnetic field, to discover whether or not water is flowing in measurable quantities underneath, or whether there are metal ores for mining. Traditionally a forked stick of hazel wood was used, which would twitch when one walked over the water or metal. Just recently a skilled German water dowser has been working with Water Aid agencies in Sri Lanka and Africa for digging wells for villages and has had a higher success rate than those agencies using only geophysical techniques which are machines which measure changes in the earth's magnetic field which signify the presence of running water in a geological fault below the surface of the earth.

It is well known that the human body, like other animals, is sensitive to changes in the earth's magnetic field, so this suggests that with training, one can learn to consciously become aware of this sensitivity to determine depth of water and rate of water flow, the dowsing rods being a biofeedback device telling the conscious mind what the body is picking up (see ESP section).

This sort of dowsing has also been used in archaeological digs because pots and other artefacts will have magnetic fields according to the earth's field on the day they were fired, and it is suggested that the dowser picks up these slight anomalies. It is also possible that the modern technique of dowsing "Earth Energies" at sacred sites, stone circles, crop circles, etc, could perhaps be using this subliminal body sense of ours, though exactly what people are picking up remains open to debate.

In addition to this possible physical dowsing there is psychic dowsing using either rods or pendulums.

Pendulum dowsing

In pendulum dowsing one holds a bob on a length of string so that it is free to swing. One then determines a code by which one sort of swing means one answer and another another. A classic code is a clockwise swing for the answer "yes," and an anti-clockwise swing for the answer "no" though there are

many variations on this with no swig, or backwards and forwards etc being used. The pendulum is a basic computer giving yes- no answers to questions. In parapsychology it has been found that even though the person may have no conscious awareness of picking up psychic information, very often the body does, e.g. the DMILS studies by Braud and Schlitz (see section on PK). Thus in pendulum or rod dowsing for finding lost objects, for example, the person has a question such as: "Is the object inside the house?" The pendulum is then allowed to move and, dependent on its motion giving a yes or no answer, the person moves on to the next question. One can extend this by using a map of some sort, such as a room that has been identified as containing the lost object, and holding the pendulum over different pieces of furniture or areas of the room and asking if the object is located there. In archaeology one can use grid references or go down the side of the map until getting a response, then along the bottom and where the two responses occur gives the grid marker for the archeological find. This method is also used nowadays for remote water and minerals dowsing, sometimes reputedly with great success.

Ritual Magic

The origins of ritual magic can be traced back to shamanic times, i.e. as early as we have records of humans culture, such as the cave painting at Lascaux which shows a man dressed up in an animal skin dancing. This is ritual. He has put on the skin of an animal in order to connect with the spirit of that animal to bring that spirit in to the dance so that magic can be worked, presumably in this case for successful hunting. Here we are talking about a hunter-gatherer culture which is totally dependent on good hunting in order to survive. All ritual has a primarily practical origin and is based on actions which have been found to work over the millennia that they have been used.

From these origins we have societies which then started to domesticate animals, which started to grow their own crops and the rituals developed accordingly. In agricultural societies the growing of the crops was of vital importance for their wellbeing so elaborate rituals developed around the ploughing, sowing of the seed, and harvesting - some of which are still performed to this day, such as the May Day celebrations in Britain with all of their fertility connotations. Fertility in the king was considered to be of supreme importance for fertility of the land and the people and so deep significance was given to the male creative act, the spreading of seed, ploughing the furrow, uprising of the sun are all terms which are used in old folk songs, which are the remnant of local ritual magic. The king was considered divine, he was the deity incarnate and all ritual magic involves invoking spirit in a divine form. Common rituals we all know are christening a new born baby, marriage, funerals. Other cultures include rites of passage such as puberty and menopause. There is the familiar ritual of church on Sunday, crossing one's fingers for good luck, touching wood.

Ritual magic in the West today is primarily a mixture of Egyptian, Greek and Roman influences. Thus some people honour deities such as Isis, Osiris, Horus from the Egyptian pantheon; people use astrology invoking deities such as Jupiter, Venus and Mars from the Roman pantheon, and the myths of the Greeks such as Hades, Persephone and Demeter and Pan are primary in our culture.

Creating a ritual

In a ritual the first consideration is the space which is created, often called the temple. This space will be created around the purpose of the ritual, using appropriate geometry, shape and dimensions. Number is considered very important ritually: does one use a square, a circle a pyramid; what are the appropriate colours, black and white is neutral, pink for love, purple for power etc.? An appropriate smell, a blend of incense created specifically for the purpose, is used; and the time of the ritual worked out according to the movement of the planets, so that one has cosmic influences that will benefit the working. I was told that John Dee worked out the date for Elizabeth the First's coronation that was a whole year after she became queen, this being the most propitious date for that most awesome of rituals, a coronation. And look how long her reign lasted!

Clothes are important in ritual, people will make their clothes specially for the occasion - such as a wedding dress - and this will only be used for ritual purposes, so that when one puts on the garb it has all the associations of previous times when it has been used, and gradually it builds up a certain power. Some people use particular instruments of magic, the classic being the sword, the wand, the cup and the disc; these corresponding to the four primary elements as in the Tarot (cross ref). As with the ritual robe it is considered best if one makes one's own because then it is all yours, designed by you, crafted by you

with all your own personal touches as well as the love and care you put in to the construction.

Some ritual is performed in a dramatic sense with particular actions, words and characters, some ritual is left spontaneous allowing the muse, the gods or goddesses, or spirit to work through the person who has prepared themselves appropriately. I feel that the new growing spirituality of the Aquarian Age is this more spontaneous form of ritual. Such a modern form of spontaneous ritual might take the form of going to a stone circle or other sacred site at the full moon in a particular astrological sign, sitting through the night watching the moon and the stars and allowing whatever happens to happen, oneself being in a deep meditative state that is in harmony, in tune with the energies of the place. Maybe one connects with the fairies, maybe with Pan, maybe one has a special wine made with local ingredients appropriate to that time, an incense made of the plants, roots etc, that grow in that place. Perhaps the ritual is for healing, but if done with full awareness and intent it is bound to have some effect on the person doing it at the very least, to effect their friends and family, maybe the community in which they live, maybe the larger community we call our culture, and on occasions even the nation!

Magic is said to be the ability to change consciousness in accordance with one's will, and from parapsychology we know that we can affect matter in accordance with our will, so the more one trains the mind to focus the more one is capable of affecting things and people outside of one, and all ritual does, at its essence, is assist in the focusing process so that one's intentions become more effective as one aligns oneself more harmoniously with the universe around.

Witchcraft

This is the craft of the wise, the ancient shamanic traditions of Britain, sometimes known as Wicca, though this is a more modern version.

It is a nature religion undergoing a revival at present as part of the neo-paganism that is occurring.

Traditionally witchcraft is known from the Period of the Inquisition and Puritanism in Europe in which thousands of people were tried and killed for witchcraft, which was essentially defined in those days as the art of divination, healing and mediumship as we know them now. The Christian church considered that the ancient horned god of Europe was the devil and those country people who still honoured the old ways and were versed in ancient healing knowledge of herbs, star lore etc, were also branded as witches. Witchcraft has always been feared because someone who is capable of healing is also capable of cursing, and human nature always uses all natural powers both with good and bad consequences. There have in all cultures been laws against using psychic abilities for harmful purposes, and the modern version of witchcraft acknowledges this by having as its central creed: "An ye harm none, do what ye will." It also acknowledges that if one sends harm to another that it will be returned threefold, which is a good caution to acknowledge.

There are various forms of witchcraft: the solitary witch who lives in the country, grows their own herbs, honours the festivals alone, and follows their own ways; those who follow Wicca in which there are covens, initiations, grades and the Book of Shadows; and those who form together in groups to celebrate the full moon and other special times but have no hierarchy. Within Wicca there are various traditions, the oldest of modern Wicca being Gardnerian, started in the 30's and becoming official after the repeal of the witchcraft in the 50's, and the Alexandrians who followed Alex and Maxine Saunders who started their version in the 60's.

The Festivals (Sabbats)

All witches believe that the moon is important for ritual which is normally performed at full moon or at dark of the moon. They also celebrate the eight festivals of the year, the four quarter days which are the two equinoxes and winter and summer solstice, these being the major turning points of the sun. Additionally the four cross-quarter days are celebrated, these being half way between the four solar festivals and marking the turning points of the season. The year begins at Hallowe'en (Samhain) when autumn is ending, the nuts and berries have been gathered, the cattle slaughtered and everything is ready for winter. A fire is lit at sunset to mark the turning into the dark half of the year. Midwinter is Yule when the sun is at its lowest and it is a ten day festival. Then Imbolc (Candlemas), at the beginning of February, marks the ending of winter and the beginning of spring with the first snowdrops flowering, lambs being born and the day noticeably starting to lengthen. The mid-point of Spring is Easter with eggs being laid, all the seed being sown in the grounds, and everything growing fast. On May Day, or Beltain, the turning into summer is celebrated, the days now almost at their longest, leaves on most of the trees and all that was sown in spring growing well. Midsummer in June is celebrated with festivals and the

tribes and clans coming together. Then the turning into autumn, the beginning of the harvest, is celebrated at Lammas or Lughnasadh, when the crop circles are at their finest and the harvest of the corn begins. Harvest festivals mark the mid-point of autumn when the produce of the year is gathered in.

Magic

Magic is essential to witchcraft, wise women traditionally being the seers and the healers of the people. Scrying in which one gazes into a mirror, crystal ball or pool of water to see the future; reading the Tarot cards or runes, or palmistry. We associate such skills these days with gypsies, New Agers and clairvoyants but they were traditionally the province of witches. Green fingers in which plants grow particularly well or psychic healing were feared because they could be used to blight the crops or kill someone, but nowadays healing circles and psychic healers are part of alternative and complementary medicine and well attested to by parapsychologists (ref. psychokinesis). Traditionally witches gained these powers through their relationship with a fair folk, and once again people are connecting with the daemonic reality (cross ref UFOs), and are having magical mystical experiences in which they gain psychic abilities. People are also practising meditation and other disciplines which enable them to grow and become aware of their psychic abilities as part of their spirituality, because the philosophy of witchcraft is that we all are enabled to connect with spirit, with the divine, that we all have these gifts as part of our birthright and it is only discipline and training that allows us to use them for the good of all.