

Dale Pendell:

Excerpt from

The Language of Birds:
Some Notes on Chance and Divination

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The serpent in the tree, offering knowledge.

Mercury's snakes, the Hermetic power: hermeneutics, the interpretation of signs, poisoning Single Vision.

The Dragon kild by Cadmus is ye subject of our work, & his teeth are the matter purified. Democritus (a Graecian Adeptist) said there were certain birds (volatile substances) from whose blood mixt together a certain kind of Serpent (♀) was generated wch being eaten (by digestion) would make a man understand ye voyce of birds (ye nature of volatiles how they may bee fixed)

St John ye Apostle & Homer were Adeptists.

Sacra Bacchi (vel Dionysiaca) instituted by Orpheus were of a Chymicall meaning.

--Isaac Newton

The serpent as the bearer of telluric power. Both Cassandra and Helenos received their prophetic gifts from a serpent that licked their ears, enabling them to understand the language of birds. Siegfried ate the heart of a dragon.

Hebrew prophecy came from snakes: נחשת Nehushtan, the bronze serpent that Moses affixed to a cross.

נחש נחשת

nâchâsh n^echôsheth, serpent of bronze.

Both words from נחש *nâchash*,
"to hiss, whisper, to divine."

נחש = משיח = 358

Nâchâsh = Mâshiyach: the Serpent is the Messiah.

*Guard the Mysteries!
Constantly reveal Them!*

--Lew Welch

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The art of reading signs is one of our most ancient traditions, and a specialty of our Guild. It is not the path to happiness, they say, but what are the choices?

The basic question is whether there is meaning to coincidence.

The basic question is whether chance is blind. The basic question, the question, is that of divining, glimpsing, seeing forms in chaos.

The matter of augury.

The whole outward world with all its being is a signature of the inward spiritual world.

--Boehme

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<i>Aeromancy:</i>	<i>divination by weather or by throwing sand into the wind</i>
<i>Alectryomancy:</i>	<i>divination by roosters pecking grain</i>
<i>Aleuromancy:</i>	<i>divination by flour or messages baked in cakes</i>
<i>Alphitomancy:</i>	<i>divination by barley</i>
<i>Ambulomancy:</i>	<i>divination by walking</i>
<i>Amniomancy:</i>	<i>divination by the caul of a newborn infant</i>
<i>Anthracomancy:</i>	<i>divination by watching a burning coal</i>
<i>Anthropomancy:</i>	<i>divination from human entrails</i>
<i>Anthroposomancy:</i>	<i>divination from facial or bodily characteristics</i>
<i>Arithmomancy:</i>	<i>divination by means of numbers</i>
<i>Armomancy:</i>	<i>divination from the shoulders</i>
<i>Astragalomancy:</i>	<i>divination by knuckle-bones or dice</i>
<i>Astromancy:</i>	<i>divination using the stars, astrology</i>
<i>Austromancy:</i>	<i>divination or soothsaying from words in the winds</i>
<i>Axinomancy:</i>	<i>divination by heating or throwing an axe</i>

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Divination forms a continuum, but we could say that at one pole there is "possession," and at the other "reading." By possession we mean that a god or some other spirit enters one's body and takes control--voice, gestures, words--all belong to the god. Reading is interpretive--that all the flowing occurrences of this world are a stream of messages. Somewhere in between, half possessed by fire, half swimming in a sea of total significance, there is inspiration.

Thus the seduction. Thus we eat. Thus we drink our mantic syrups. Nanabozho in the forest. Charlie Parker. Eric Dolphy. Tung Shan's Bird Path: extended hands that leave no trace.

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A fork in the path: one way leads to an image of the world as a book, as a riddle, written in code, each occurrence a presage and glyph of the whole. The other way leads to randomness, mere chance, forever beyond our grasp, casting a shadow of nihilism on an accidental universe. Either way, theology is unavoidable. But in the latter case the language is geometry and statistics, while in the former it is luck and power.

Or is that backwards?

A fork in the path: one leads to, well, not clear, but along the way we dismiss accidents without ado.

. . . were I superstitious, I should see an omen in this incident, a hint of fate . . . Of course, I explain the incident as an accident, without further meaning.

--Sigmund Freud, Psychopathology of Everyday Life

Thus spake the great seer.

The other way is through the grove of Fortuna, first-born of Jupiter, the goddess of chance who keeps her own counsel. The other way. The other way leads to the Pythoness, the Oracle.

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The full text of *The Language of Birds* will be released soon as a fine press book by Three Hands Press