

The idea of the rogue psychic with magical influence has been around since Svengali and Rasputin, who used their apparent psychic ability for betterment. We can all opt to have readings done but most psychologists will counsel that it's done with a hefty dose of salt. Dr Brendan Purcell is a senior lecturer in philosophy at UCD and a Catholic priest. He is bemused that anyone would be interested in fortune telling when we can choose our own destiny.

"Going back to Confucius and Greek and Roman philosophy, we all have freedom, which is what makes us human beings. If you discover that you're free how can you be dependent on the movement of the planets and astrology? There's no real philosophical argument for getting your tarot cards or astrology

chart done and yet Aristotle, one of the biggest players in early philosophy, believed the planets could influence our lives. Allowing external factors to affect your behaviour puts you in danger of losing your freedom."

Most of us will be able to make our own mind up about what we get from astrology or palm reading without turning into a lemming. People tend to think of slightly hippy-ish or gothic people having a penchant for it but in fact, it's much more indistinguishable than that. "It's hard to generalise but people who are vulnerable, going through change or very uncertain about the future might be more drawn to it," says Catherine Keers. Stark words but fear not, it's not just us mere 'civilians' at risk of losing the plot. It's said that Nancy Reagan consulted an astrologer regularly about

her husband's political career. Football manager Glenn Hoddle, Cherie Blair and the late Princess Diana have all dabbled with fortune telling and predictions.

But perhaps we may be missing the key point – surely the fact that people are looking to make positive changes about themselves is healthier than them bottling things up? Problems only arise when people use readings instead of proper support. In the course of researching this feature, I had my palm read (see report). About 80% of what I was told seemed very accurate. However, Dr Paul O'Donoghue offers an explanation for what might have actually been going on. "When someone is doing a reading on you, they can become very acutely aware of your reactions. Even when you think you're not reacting, they can read a lot from your reactions and this is called 'cold-reading.' It's something you can learn. We give out a lot of information about ourselves without realising it."



## SYLVIA LEATHAM

**Type of medium:** Tarot reading and aura photograph with Keith Kavanagh.

**Location:** House of Astrology, Parliament Street, Dublin 2.

**Price:** €35 for one hour (including cassette recording of reading).

**What happened:** Firstly I got my aura photographed and read in ten minutes. This was done in front of a screen using Live Aura technology where you put your hand on sensors. It changed colour at first and then settled down and he took my photo. The aura is divided into seven colours, which breaks down into seven different personality types. My aura was mainly bright red with some orange and he described what a bright red person is like so it was very general and not necessarily personal. With the tarot reading he asked me to pick three areas of my life and he drew cards and did the reading that way.

**What they predicted:** He said that my colour aura shows a passionate and practical approach to life but all the other colours could equally have applied to me. Some of the characteristics applied to me but most of them didn't but he did say that red aura people are quite sceptical and would need to have tangible proof of a spirituality before believing it, which is true! With the tarot he looked at three areas of my life. With work, about 50% did not fit in with my experience and the recent past and present didn't make sense to me at all. With relationships, he asked if I was in one and then worked from that. He said I will settle down in about three years time, be very financially secure and will definitely have

children. That could be true, I don't know. The last area was health and he was accurate about a health problem from the past and the causes associated with it and he predicted I'd have good health in the future.

**Verdict:** If you're into this kind of thing, it's fine. It didn't convert me and it wouldn't do anything to dispel my scepticism. I didn't feel he was particularly psychic or had a gift but he knew the cards inside out. He was able to interpret the cards but there was no psychic undercurrent. The aura reading was 50% accurate. Any colour could really have applied me. I don't think there really could be anything of meaning gained from studying auras. I don't think you can tell a person's personality from their aura. It was 40 minutes in total and it's a load of rubbish.



## KARLA FORNALL

**Type of medium:** Personal astrology consulting session with Pemo Theodore.

**Location:** 3 Hatch Street, Dublin 2.

**Price:** €80 for one hour (including cassette recording of reading).

**What happened:** She started with the birth (natal) chart and discussed what was happening with the stars when I was

born. She talked about my childhood, what's happened in the last year and what will happen in the next year. From the outset she said she was more interested in empowering people and working with their opportunities, than telling their fortune.

**What they predicted:** She talked about a lot of transition in my life which is right. She predicted that I'd be laying new foundations next May, which is very pertinent to plans I have for my life at that time next year. She also said I'd be travelling in December and January which is true. Her other main prediction was that I'll have an opportunity to discover and develop my creative self and that I will ultimately be very successful in my career which will have a basis in creativity but

that it won't happen until my late 30s.

**Verdict:** She had strong guidance skills but this was largely based on things I said as opposed to predicting things outright. She got a lot of general stuff right but wasn't very specific very often. It seemed like she had a good idea of what was going on with my life. She veered between things I told her and what the stars were telling her to get a sense of who I am. I'm a very intuitive person who already knew a lot of the things she had to tell me and she also recognised this. She pointed out characteristics about myself that were spot on but she had a tendency to be repetitive. It was more like a therapy session with a counsellor than an astrological prediction. ►

