



Figure 10. The Magnetic Oracle. This exhibit showcased a collection of fortune-telling, spiritually magnetic compasses. Some pointers were human and held spindles. Others were animals, with the spindle being the point of a beak or the tail of a crocodile. Needles sometimes pointed to emotions, astrological signs, or runes. The instructions read: “The visitor is invited to ask some questions about signs of the zodiac, planets, winds, or the system by which the date of Easter is calculated. The operator then moves the pointer T to cause the magnet S to revolve, in turn causing the figures in the globes to point to the answer.” A large, spinnable bar magnet was concealed within the obelisk, which Kircher said was a “spiritual needle” pointing to heaven.