

NCGR RESEARCH JOURNAL



Number 1, Summer 2010

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References to articles or essays should indicate the author, the title of the article within double quotation marks, name of the journal or publication in italics, the editor(s), number of volumes, place of publication and date, volume and page number. For example: Spottiswoode, S. J.P. "Apparent association between effect size in free response anomalous cognition experiments and local sidereal time," *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1997, pp. 1-17.

The Editors

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NCGR Research Journal

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Printed in the United States of America
Single Issue — \$10.00

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Editorial

Chris Brennan, Editor of the NCGR Research Journal

The collection of essays in this first issue of the NCGR Research Journal is based on a seminar that took place as part of an NCGR Conference in Cambridge, MA, on February 25, 2010, titled *Moving Forward, Looking Back: Future Directions in Post-Modern Astrology*. The concept of the symposium is based on an historical observation I made several years ago: the astrological tradition periodically goes through major transformations that involve the revival of older traditions, and their eventual synthesis with the prevailing astrological paradigm of the time.

The most prominent historical examples of this occurred at the beginning of the Hellenistic tradition in the first century BCE, in the early Medieval astrological tradition in the eighth century CE, and in the late Medieval tradition, with the reintroduction of astrology to Europe, in the 12th century. Each instance involved the transmission of older forms of astrology from different cultures and time periods, and then the fusion of those older methods with more contemporary techniques and concepts. The result was something that was not entirely new, since it was based on concepts that had been inherited from the past, but neither could it be said to be the same system, as definite changes were made to the techniques, concepts, and philosophy underlying the astrological system. Somehow, in tracing the genesis of their tradition, the astrologers of the Hellenistic and Medieval traditions were able to forge new and unique systems that represented a step forward in the development of astrology.

I believe that we are now in the midst of another pivotal period in the history of astrology, where older traditions are being revived and subsequently being merged with newer ones. Witness the revival of ‘traditional,’ pre-18th century astrology in the past 20 years. While this movement may still be in its adolescence, its impact can already be seen in the rise in the number of lectures on traditional astrology at astrological conferences, and an increase in ancient techniques that are entering the contemporary astrological discourse. The revival of the fourth branch of traditional astrology, horary astrology, is itself evidence that something important is happening, both technically and conceptually, in the astrological community. The older traditions of astrology are back again, and they are here to stay.

On the other hand, the systems of astrology that developed in the 20th century, which we will refer to generically here as ‘modern astrology,’ are still active and robust. From a technical, conceptual, and philosophical perspective, modern astrology has left on indelible impression on collective views and practices of the astrological community.

I would argue that traditional astrologers have just as much to gain from the study of the modern traditions as modern astrologers have to gain from the study of the ancient traditions. This is the task we have before us as a community, and we set out to address it with the seminar earlier this year, and now with the collection of papers presented in this first issue of the NCGR Research Journal. Before we can even begin to approach the task of reconciling the traditions, or somehow synthesizing them, we must first understand the unique contributions of each tradition. We should understand where each tradition comes from, the nature of its technical and conceptual framework, and the core philosophical principles it holds as being necessary, in order to understand the inner workings and purpose of astrology. It is only when we develop a nuanced understanding of each of the traditions, on all of these levels, that we can begin the dialogue that will eventually lead to the development of an astrology that aims to incorporate all of the diverse pieces. We are not doing this for novelty's sake, but for the sake of creating a more perfect system for studying the correlations between celestial and earthly events.

It was in this spirit that I invited nine astrologers, who represent each of the major ancient and modern astrological traditions, to the seminar in Cambridge. I asked each author to write a paper that provides an overview of their particular astrological tradition, and addresses four specific areas: (1) an historical overview of their astrological tradition; (2) statements about the philosophical or conceptual premises upon which their tradition is based, or advocates; (3) statements about important techniques or technical concepts that are unique to their tradition, or were unique developments at one time; and (4) statements about the technical, conceptual, or philosophical frameworks of their tradition that they feel should be included in any future synthesis of astrology, were such a synthesis to occur.

Each author was directed to create a succinct overview. As you will see, this does not hamper the quality or depth of the articles, which is quite an amazing feat, especially considering that the authors were able to cover over four thousand years worth of astrological traditions in a single, 96-page volume.

My hope is that the reader will glean a better sense of the scope of the astrological tradition as a whole from the journal, and will come away with some ideas about where we are headed. Since we seem to be at a critical crossroads in the history of astrology, we might also consider how best to proceed with the task that the community now faces. If we are successful, those who take up the astrological tradition in the future will look back upon us favorably, and say that we were able to affect the synthesis of the traditions that the times required. Having done so, we will have fulfilled our obligation to history; just as other astrologers have done many times before us.

Mesopotamian Astrology

Robert Hand

Abstract

Academic scholarship makes it quite clear that Mesopotamia is the birthplace of astrology, which developed in the Middle Eastern and Western traditions, as well as in India. What gives Mesopotamia priority is that the civilizations of this region were the first to develop theories of planetary motion. This enabled them to compute planetary positions and phenomena in advance, and to do so without actually observing such positions at the time of a chart.

There is no evidence in the historical records of any other civilization for the kind of systematic observation of planetary phenomena that one finds in Mesopotamia. All horoscopic astrology comes from Mesopotamian roots, therefore all other theories about the origins of horoscopic astrology are unsupported by evidence.

Historical Overview

It is common in astrological literature to find Mesopotamia and the Mesopotamian cultures lumped together as “Babylonians.” Ancient classical authors must take some responsibility for this error, because they usually referred to the creators of astrology as “Chaldeans,” which for the ancients meant what we call “Babylonians.”

There were two Babylonian empires in Mesopotamia. The first or “Old Babylonian Empire” lasted from the reign of Hammurabi, from ca. 1700 BCE until the sack of Babylon, anywhere from about 1600 BCE to about 1500 BCE, although historians differ on the precise dates. Then, after a considerable period of time, the Second Babylonian Empire arose and lasted from 612 BCE to 539 BCE. The most famous ruler of this period was Nebuchadnezzar II, of Old Testament fame. This empire is also known as the Chaldean empire, probably because of the tribe from which the ruling dynasty came. When most astrologers think of Babylonia, they have this empire in mind because, as we will see below, it flourished during a period of intense astrological activity. Even after the empire was overthrown by the Persians in 539 BCE, Babylonian culture continued to flourish until the time of Alexander the Great’s conquest in the fourth century BCE, and probably beyond.

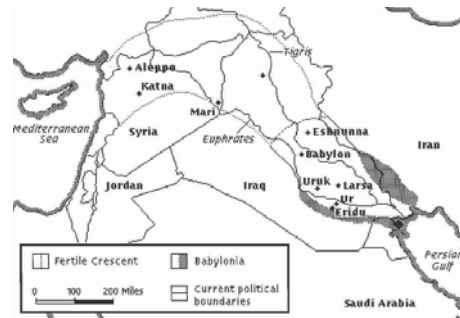
Despite the cultural dominance of the Babylonians, Mesopotamian astrology was the joint creation of a number Mesopotamian cultures, including Sumerians, Akka-

Robert Hand, “Mesopotamian Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 5–15, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

dians,¹ Kassites, Babylonians, Assyrians, and finally Persians. In fact, more of our evidence comes from Assyrian sources than from Babylonian. This is why the terms “Mesopotamian” and “Mesopotamia” are far more appropriate than “Babylonian” and “Babylonia.” The area of Mesopotamia coincides with modern day Iraq.

The major periods of Mesopotamian history:

- The Third to Mid-Second Millennium BCE.
- Later Second Millennium through Early First Millennium BCE.
- The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods.
- Neo-Assyrian – 911-612 BCE.
- Neo-Babylonian – 626-539 BCE
- Persian and Seleucid Periods
- Persian – 539-330 BCE.
- Seleucid – 330-63 BCE.²



Period I – The Third to Mid-Second Millennium BCE

This is the earliest period in which the Sumerian and early Akkadian peoples lived side by side. While there is little evidence for early forms of astrology (usually referred to at this stage as “astral-divination”), according to Koch-Westenholz there is at least one suggestive fragment.³ The Sumerian grain goddess Nisaba possessed a temple called the “House of the Stars.” He associated the “tablet with the stars of the heavens” with the remains of this temple. In an early Sumerian work known as the “Dream of Gudea,”⁴ Gudea is told to build a temple to Ningirsu using the material on the tablet. We do not know exactly what it meant to use that material, but it is likely that it had something to do either with properly aligning the temple (more likely), or choosing a time for the construction of the temple (not likely, given the early date). While astrologers and less rigorous historians of astrology often speak about observations in Mesopotamia going back to 3000, or even 4000 BCE, this is not supported by the evidence.

Period II – The Later Second Millennium through Early First Millenium BCE

There is more evidence for systematic planetary observations in this era. Unfortunately, the evidence that we have consists of much later copies, but there are internal indications that the material is from this period. What we have that probably dates from this period are the following:⁵

1. The oldest parts of the Enuma Anu Enlil omen collection
2. “Three Stars Each” lists
3. The Venus Tables of Ammisaduqa
4. The Mul.Apin

We will examine and discuss their significance in the next paragraphs.

Enuma Anu Enlil – This consists of a collection of star omens on about 70 tablets, incorporating 6500-7000 omens.⁶ They describe celestial events, and many add brief explanatory comments as well, which concern the interpretation of the omens for the benefit of the king. The opening lines of the Akkadian version are as follows:

When Anu, Enlil, and Ea, the great gods, by their decision laid down the design of heaven and earth, and assigned to the great gods their functions, to create the day, to renew the month for mankind to behold, they saw Shamash⁷ in (his) gate, they made him appear regularly in heaven and earth.”⁸

It is important to note that these tablets are evidence of astral divination, not early horoscopic astrology. There are no astrological charts of any kind, and divination is performed for the state as embodied by its ruler. There is no attempt to delineate a chart or make predictions for an individual, other than the king. Also, there is nothing like either a tropical or sidereal zodiac of twelve signs of thirty degrees each. The tablets refer to three bands of *declination*, called “the way of Ea,” “the way of Anu,” and “the way of Enlil.” There will be more about these bands of declination below.

“Three Stars Each” Lists – For reasons that are not clear to me, these lists are also known as “astrolabes,” a usage has little or nothing to do with the later use of the term. The lists are 12th century BCE enumerations of 36 stars, three for each of twelve months. It is unclear whether these have any connection to the later division of the signs into decans, but it seems unlikely. Each group of three stars consists of one star each from the declinations of Ea, Anu, and Enlil.⁹ This will be clarified below under Mul.Apin, although the fact that the three stars differ in declination rather than longitude suggests that there is no connection between these lists and the later development of decans in the signs. Besides, there is abundant evidence that the decans arose from Egyptian rather than Mesopotamian sources.

The Venus Tables of Ammisaduqa – These date from between 1651 and 1531 BCE. The name “*Ammisaduqa*” refers to an Old Babylonian emperor in whose reign it is believed that the tables were first compiled. The tables consist of observations of the phases of Venus with respect to the Sun.¹⁰ They are the oldest datable records of planetary phenomena, and represent the kind of activity that later enabled Mesopo-

tamian astrologers to compute planetary positions in advance of observation, which in turn was necessary for the beginnings of horoscopic astrology..

Here is an example from the text:

In month XI, 15th day, Venus in the west disappeared, three days in the sky it stayed away, and in month XI, 18th day, Venus in the east became visible: springs will open, Adad his rain, Ea his floods will bring, king to king messages of reconciliation will send.¹¹

Mul.Apin – This is a general compendium that deals with many diverse aspects of Babylonian astrology. It is in the tradition of earlier Babylonian star catalogues, the so-called “Three Stars Each” lists mentioned previously. However, it represents an expanded version, based on more accurate observations, likely compiled around 1000 BCE.¹² The text lists 66 stars and constellations and gives a number of indications, such as rising, setting and culmination dates, that help to map out the basic structure of the Babylonian star map. The cosmological arrangement consists of the same three bands of declinations mentioned above. Their descriptions speak volumes for the issue of tropical versus sidereal zodiacs.

From [month] XII 1 to II 30 the sun is in the path of Anu: Wind and storm.
From [month] III 1 to V30 the sun is in the path of Enlil: Harvest and heat.
From [month] VI 1 to VIII 30 the sun is in the path of Anu: Wind and storm.
From [month] IX 1 to XI 30 the sun is in the path of Ea: Cold.

I do not know from the source whether or not these four lines are contiguous in the original text, but they are all from the same text. As one can see, this is a description of a four-season year. The Sun is in the path of Anu around the spring and autumn equinoxes, in the path of Ea in the winter, and the path of Enlil in the summer. According to van der Waerden,¹³ the dates of the equinoxes and solstices are as follows: The vernal equinox is in the middle of month I (Note that it is not at the beginning.); This pattern continues. The summer solstice in the middle of month IV; the autumnal equinox in the middle of month VII; and the winter solstice in the middle of month X. This is a solar calendar consisting of twelve months, which is fixed with respect to the seasons. The year starts about two weeks before the spring equinox, but the months are numbered, just as we now number the signs, starting with Aries. Because the equinoxes and solstices are in the middle of months I, IV, VII, and X, the seasons start approximately at the following tropical solar longitudes and declinations.

Spring	15°≈00' roughly Feb. 5	Decl. -16° 35'
Summer	15°800' roughly May 5	Decl. +16° 35'
Autumn	15°000' roughly Aug. 5	Decl. +16° 35'
Winter	15°000' roughly Nov. 5	Decl. -16° 35' ¹⁴

The seasons in this arrangement begin on the “cross-quarter” dates, halfway between the equinoxes and solstices. This is the same approximate setup that characterizes the seasons of old Europe, where the seasons begin with Imbolc on Feb. 2, Beltane on May 1, Lughnasadh, August 2, and Samhain on November 1. These have been Christianized as Candlemas, May Day,¹⁵ Lammas, and All Hallows Day. We have no idea what the connection is, but there may very well be one. We also know that for civil and religious purposes, the Mesopotamians also used a lunar calendar, which survives to this day as the Jewish calendar. This calendar of Mul.Apin seems to have been used only for astrological purposes.

Period III – The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods

Most of the material for pre-Persian Mesopotamian astrology comes from these periods, as does the most complete version of the *Enuma Anu Enlil*. By the end of this time, planetary positions and phenomena could be computed in advance. This is the earliest that horoscopic astrology could have evolved, although there is no evidence that it had. This is the period where we stand at, but not past, the threshold of the birth of the zodiac of twelve 30 degree divisions. By the end of this period, this is the state of astrology:

- The practice consists of Astral Omens for the benefit of the state and king, not for individuals.
- There is no horoscope or birth chart of any kind.
- The zodiac of twelve signs has not yet developed, rather consisted of 17-18 irregular star groups.

The nature of the planets has not yet reached its later clarity.¹⁶ Here are some of their characteristics:

- The Sun and Jupiter are both called royal stars. Saturn is called the “Sun at night,” but is not malefic.
- The Sun, Moon, and Venus (Ishtar) are the dominant trinity of planetary gods.
- Mercury is not yet clearly defined.
- Mars is already becoming a malefic. Nergal (the name of Mars) was the god

of war and death

The following are the names of the planets and the gods that they were associated with in this period, and their Greco-Roman equivalents:

English		Akkadian ¹⁷		Greek		Latin
<i>Sun</i>	→	<i>Shamash</i>	→	<i>Helios</i>	→	<i>Sol</i>
<i>Moon</i>	→	<i>Sin</i>	→	<i>Selene</i>	→	<i>Luna</i>
<i>Mercury</i>	→	<i>Nabu</i>	→	<i>Hermes</i>	→	<i>Mercurius</i>
<i>Venus</i>	→	<i>Ishtar</i>	→	<i>Aphrodite</i>	→	<i>Venus</i>
<i>Mars</i>	→	<i>Nergal</i>	→	<i>Ares</i>	→	<i>Mars</i>
<i>Jupiter</i>	→	<i>Marduk</i>	→	<i>Zeus</i>	→	<i>Juppiter</i>
<i>Saturn</i>	→	<i>Ninib</i>	→	<i>Kronos</i>	→	<i>Saturnus</i>

In the pre-Persian era, the planets were not conceived of as the gods themselves, but were associated with the gods in some way, i.e., the movement of the planet said something about the intention of the god. This notion survived into the Greek era when (with the exceptions of the Sun and Moon) the planets were referred to as the “star of . . .” and Venus was the “Star of Aphrodite.” It was only much later on that the “star of” prefix was dropped.

Fate was conceived quite differently than in the Hellenistic era, as the planetary omens were negotiable. With the proper ritual or “namburba,” one could avert or alter the import of an omen, thus there was no sense of a mechanical and unalterable fate. Even the planetary motions were not seen to be completely pre-determined. Several omen texts refer to the phases of the Moon (in the lunar version of the calendar) falling on the wrong date, often by a span of several days. In reality, this could only happen if someone kept track of the calendar incorrectly.

Period IV – The Persian (539-330 BCE) and Seleucid (330-63 BCE) Periods

These periods can be combined for our purposes. Culturally speaking, the Greeks’ replacement of Persian hegemony did not disrupt cultural continuity. Here are some of the highlights of the development of astrology in these periods:

The zodiac of twelve signs as we know it came into existence. The tradition that made Libra the “claws” of the Scorpion survived to Ptolemy’s time (second century CE), but Libra as a set of scales was a Babylonian constellation.

Planetary computations improved further. Ptolemy and Hipparchus used observations from the earlier part of this period to develop more accurate planetary calculations.

Most important for our purposes, omens for individuals came into existence. Here we have the beginning of the development of the birth chart. This process, as we

shall see, began in the late Persian period and continued into the Seleucid times.

The planets assumed something like their later astrological significations, and they were divided up into benefics and malefics.

According to Rochberg (1988) the Babylonians passed on the following to the Hellenistic period from the late Persian: planetary exaltations, the micro-zodiac (dodekatemoria) or 2½ degree divisions of each sign; and the grouping of the signs into triplicities, as four groups of three, although not yet with their later associations with the four elements.

The Development of the Zodiac

With the advent of personal birthday omens, planetary positions began to be listed as so many degrees of a sign in a manner similar to modern practice. This required a beginning of the zodiacal circle so as to locate the first degree of the sign Aries, which did always seem to have been the first sign of the zodiac. This is important because when the zodiac came into being, the vernal equinox appears to have been in the middle of Aries, or perhaps even 10° Aries. Thus Aries began the year. This, as Cyril Fagan has noted, is the most compelling proof that the sidereal zodiacs of India are not all that ancient, because they all have Aries as the first sign of the zodiac. If Indian sidereal zodiacs really were dated from 10,000 BCE, as some have alleged, Leo or some other sign should be the first.

Various values were given for the location of the vernal point in the zodiac, but the two most common were 10° and 8° of Aries. This was a sidereal zodiac, but one has to wonder how meaningful this distinction was for a culture that was not aware of precession, and who originally measured star positions by declination (a tropical measurement) and used a tropically based solar calendar.¹⁸

One matter is of practical interest to astrologers who employ a sidereal zodiac. Today there are a number of different values for the *ayanamsha*, or correction factor, between the tropical and sidereal zodiacs. Several different values are still used in India. In the West, Cyril Fagan and Garth Allen came to the conclusion that in ancient times the brightest star in Taurus, Aldebaran, and the brightest star in Scorpio, Antares, had longitudes of 15°♄ and 15°♏, respectively in the Mesopotamian zodiac. As near as I can tell, they arrived at this value on the basis of their own research. However, quite independently, again as near as I can tell, one Peter Huber came to same conclusion in his paper entitled “*Über den Nullpunkt der babylonischen Ekliptik*.”¹⁹ His value for -100 (101 BCE) is 4°28'. Fagan's and Allen's value for the same date is 4°27'33". This means that the vernal point in the zodiac of the period was about 4°28' of the sign Aries, a very precise agreement.²⁰

The following table shows all surviving Mesopotamian birth omen tablets (in cu-

neiform, the writing system of Mesopotamia) are dated within the Persian-Seleucid period. The latest of these may even overlap with the first true “horoscopes,” i.e., charts having a computed ascending degree (or sign) and (presumably) houses. None of *these* birth charts have an ascending degree, which is why I refer to them as birth omen tablets rather than horoscopes. They are proto-horoscopic, not truly horoscopic. The illustration on the facing page from Rochberg shows both sides of one of the actual tablets.²¹

Dates of Surviving Cuneiform Horoscopes					
1	AO 17649	-409	17	BM 41054	-175
2	AB 251	-409	18	BM 35516	-141
3	BM 32376	-297	19	BM 81561	-139
4	BM 33382	-287	20	BM78089	-125
5	MLC 1870	-262	21	BM 33018	-124
6a	BM 47721	-258	22a	BM 41301	-116
6b	BM 47721	-250	22b	BM 41301	-114
7	BM 33667	-257	23	BM 34003	-87
8	BM 36943	-250	24	BM 77265	-82
9	NCBT 1231	-248	25	BM 42025	-80
10	MLC 2190	-234	26	BM 35515	-75
11	W 20030/143	-234	27	BM 38104	-68
12	BM 33741	-229	28	BM 37374	?
13	BM47642	-223	29	BM 64148	-368
14	BM 36620	-219	30	BM 33563	-292
15	BM 36796	-201	31	BM 34693	-213
16a	W 20030/10	-199	32	BM 34567	-114, -116, -153
16b	W 20030/10	-198			

The following is one of the original birth omen tablets, which actually gives zodiacal positions in degrees and minutes. The oldest of these only give the signs.²²

S.E. 48 XII.[23] = -262 April 4 Obverse [Front Side]

- 1 Year 48 (S.E.), Addaru, night of the [23(?)],
- 2 the child was born.
- 3 That day the sun was in 13:30 Aries,
- 4 the moon in 10° Aquarius,
- 5 Jupiter at the beginning of Leo,
- 6 Venus with the sun,
- 7 Mercury with the sun,
- 8 Saturn in Cancer,
- 9 Mars at the end of Cancer,
- 10 [Gem]ini(?), Aries, and Aquarius: house of his

- 11 [(month name) (?)I, Abu, Arahsamna
sarnna, and Sabatu: the house(?) of his
- 12 [...I was born
- 13-16 (too damaged for translation)
- 17 [...I love(?)
- 18 he will return (?) [to?] his place [...]



Reverse [Back Side]

- 1 [...] they made.
- 2 He will be lacking property,
- 3
- 4 His food(?) will not [suffice(?)] for
his hunger(?).
- 5 The property which he had acquired
in his youth(?) will not [last(?)].
- 6 The 36th year (or: 36 years) he will have property.
- 7 (His) days will be long.
- 8-9 His wife, whom people will seduce(?) in his presence, will (or: His wife, in
whose presence people will overpower him, she will bring (it) about(?).)
- 10 He will have ...'s and women. He will see(?) profit.
- 11 Between travels concerning property



The numbers at the beginnings of the lines are the line numbers on the tablets. Note that the front side contains astronomical and chart data, while the back side contains the significations of the omens.

So here at last we see what appears to have been the last stage of Mesopotamian astrology, on the eve of the beginning of true horoscopic astrology. The next step, the computation of a rising degree or at least sign, and the use of houses or places seems to have been carried out by the Egyptians.

Conclusions

Is Mesopotamian astrology truly astrology? I have loaded the questions slightly by making use of the word “astrology” on both sides of the question. The late David Pingree said “no” on the basis that “true” astrology requires charts with a rising degree, or at least a rising sign; that is, only horoscopic astrology is true astrology. No surviving Mesopotamian chart has an ascendant, and therefore from that point of view, Mesopotamian astrology is not true astrology. But I believe that this is stacking the definitions to make a clear break where there was none.

I say “yes” on the grounds that much of the recent research presented here shows a continuous development between Mesopotamian and Hellenistic periods. There was no sudden break. New research by Dorian Greenbaum and Micah Ross suggests that the ascendant as a marker for a “first house” comes from the Egyptians (as mentioned above), and is not a Hellenistic invention, although it is late in the Persian period.²³

Hellenistic Astrology arose out of a synthesis of late Mesopotamian astrology, Egyptian elements, along with Greek mathematics and philosophy, the last of which, as many ancients claimed, may be strongly derived from the Egyptians. Adherents of Pythagoreanism, Platonism, and Hermeticism all claimed Egyptian roots, but the true root of the astrological tradition is Mesopotamian.

Endnotes

- 1 From whom arose both the Assyrians and Babylonian peoples.
- 2 “*Seleucid*” refers to the Hellenistic empire which governed Mesopotamia.
- 3 Koch-Westenholz (1995), pp. 32-33.
- 4 ca. 2144 – 2124 BCE.
- 5 Hunger & Pingree (1999) passim; Koch-Westenholz (1995) passim.
- 6 Koch-Westenholz (1995), p. 77-78.
- 7 The Sun god.
- 8 Koch-Westenholz (1995), p. 77.
- 9 van der Waerden (1974), pp. 64-67.
- 10 If this dating is correct, it has negative consequences for the followers of Immanuel Velikovsky’s theories.
- 11 Campion (2000) pdf file, 11; van der Waerden, (1974) 50-58. I have no idea who is responsible for the twisted English of these translations, but it certainly was not Nicholas Campion.
- 12 John H. Rogers, “Origins of the ancient constellations: I. The Mesopotamian traditions,” *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, 108 (1998), pp. 9–28.
- 13 van der Waerden (1974), pp. 80-83.
- 14 Declination values are for the year -1000 and obl. = 23°48’52”.
- 15 If one can refer to May Day as “Christianized.”
- 16 Koch-Westenholz (1995).
- 17 Both Babylonian and Assyrian were dialects of Akkadian.
- 18 This issue is discussed at length on my website under the title “On the Invariance of the Tropical Zodiac.” See <http://www.robhand.com/tropzo.htm>
- 19 *Centaurus* 1958: vol. 5: no. 3 4 : pp. 192-208.
- 20 Huber used the equation $\Delta\lambda = 3.08^\circ + 0.013825^\circ \times \text{year}$ (counted from 0 CE or I BCE).
- 21 Rochberg (1998), p. 52.
- 22 There were a couple of other charts in the original presentation which have been omitted here for the sake of space.
- 23 Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum and Micah T. Ross, “The Role of Egypt in the Development of the Horoscope,” in *Proceedings of the Conference ‘Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millennium BCE,’* Prague, forthcoming in 2010.

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Hellenistic Astrology

Chris Brennan

Abstract

Hellenistic astrology is a tradition that was practiced from approximately the first century BCE until the seventh century CE. It was the original tradition of horoscopic astrology, being the first to employ the ascendant, called ‘hōroskopos’ in Greek, as well as other factors that are derived from the ascendant, such as the houses and lots.

Many of the basic techniques and concepts of Western astrology originated in the Hellenistic tradition, although there were also many that were lost or obscured during the course of the transmission of astrology over the past 2,000 years. The process of recovering the tradition has only begun in earnest over the course of the past 20 years, and in that time researchers have made many important and surprising discoveries about the roots of the western tradition.

History

A new system of astrology appears on the historical timeline in the first century CE. The earliest surviving texts of this new system are written in Greek and Latin, and they date to the first century CE.¹ They are preceded slightly by a few extant birth charts from the first century BCE, which exhibit the same system, right at the end of what is usually called the ‘Hellenistic period’ by historians.² Because this new system of astrology appears towards the end of the Hellenistic period, and also displays certain characteristics of the scientific and philosophical developments that took place during that era, it is usually referred to as ‘Hellenistic astrology’.

Hellenistic astrology is the result of a synthesis of the earlier Mesopotamian and Egyptian astrological traditions, with many new technical, conceptual and philosophical additions. It appears to have originated in Alexandria, Egypt, which was under the control of Greek-speaking rulers since the time of Alexander the Great’s conquests in the latter part of the fourth century BCE. Part of Alexander’s legacy was that Greek became the standard language for scholarship, science, and philosophy in the ancient world, and the technical terminology of Hellenistic astrology is rooted in the Greek language largely as a result of this. Alexandria was an intellectual hub in the ancient world due to its state-supported library and research facility, the famous Museum and Library of Alexandria. Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, was the

Chris Brennan, “Hellenistic Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 17–26, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

central area of activity for the development and practice of Hellenistic astrology for the duration of its history, even after the Roman annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE. This new tradition of astrology, while Hellenistic origin, was largely practiced during the Roman Empire, and the fate of Hellenistic astrology was largely tied to the fate of the empire after that point.

The apparent suddenness of the appearance of Hellenistic astrology on the historical timeline has recently given rise to a debate about how it originated. The prevailing opinion at the present time appears to be that it was the result of a deliberate invention by some person or some group of people sometime around or before the first century BCE.³ The systematic nature of Hellenistic astrology is usually given as evidence in support of this argument—that is to say, it looks like a systematic construct that someone deliberately devised, much in the same way that other sciences have been systemized in different periods by tying together earlier ideas. Others argue that Hellenistic astrology must have developed gradually over several centuries, during the course of the previous astrological traditions, and that it only appears suddenly on the historical timeline from our vantage point because of the loss of so many texts from the first few centuries BCE.⁴

Ultimately, Hellenistic astrology appears to be the result of both a gradual development and a sudden invention. On the one hand, there were prior long traditions of astrology in Mesopotamia, and to a lesser extent Egypt, and there are a number of clearly identifiable techniques and concepts that were inherited from those traditions and appropriated by the Hellenistic astrologers. In addition, we are largely ignorant about what the actual practice of astrology looked like in the last few centuries BCE, prior to the appearance of Hellenistic astrology, as we do not possess the technical manuals that would have explained the theory or techniques underlying the delineation of a Mesopotamian birth chart. We do know that there were astrologers who were practicing natal astrology during this time, because a number of Mesopotamian birth charts and reports from literary sources still exist. However, the charts themselves give us very little information about how they were delineated, as that information likely would have been conveyed orally, as it still is today.⁵ The fact that evidence of advanced techniques and delineation principles from the late Mesopotamian astrological tradition does not survive, does not necessarily mean that it did not exist.

On the other hand, there is a high degree of systemization in the techniques of Hellenistic astrology. Many of the techniques and concepts seem to be interrelated in a way that only seems possible if they were deliberately devised at the same time, as some sort of a theoretical construct. This seems to result from the fact that many of Hellenistic astrologers appear to have drawn on a similar collection of early source texts that contained the same techniques and doctrines. The astrologers themselves

usually attribute the creation of the system to mythical or legendary figures, such as Hermes Trismegistus, the pharaoh Nechepso, or the priest Petosiris.⁶ Fragments of texts attributed these authors still survive, largely in quotations by later authors, and so it does appear that there were early compendiums circulating in the ancient world that bore their names. At the very least, there were some texts written that later astrologers all seem to have drawn on and considered to be authoritative, which naturally lends some degree of continuity to the tradition. Despite some of the natural continuities that resulted from this, variations in the later tradition also appear due to differing interpretations of the same early source texts, some of which were apparently written in a cryptic manner.⁷ It is unfortunate that since none of these early source texts survive in their entirety, it is difficult to ascertain their true nature.

What we are left with is a fully mature system that appears in the first century. While there were a number of technical and conceptual innovations, and changes that took place during the course of the tradition over the next several centuries, for the most part the system that appears in the first century CE is very much the same as the system that was practiced towards the end of that tradition in the sixth or seventh century CE, with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and beginning of the Medieval period. The core concepts and techniques of the Hellenistic tradition of astrology would go on to influence every subsequent tradition of horoscopic astrology, and all of those systems are in some ways predicated on the theories and techniques that mysteriously appear as a fully formed system in the first century.

The groundwork for the revival of Hellenistic astrology in the modern period was laid over the course of the past century by scholars in the academic community, who initiated efforts to catalogue, edit, and publish all of the ancient astrological manuscripts that survived from the Hellenistic tradition. One of the largest of these projects took place between 1898 and 1953, and it resulted in the massive twelve volume compendium called the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (*Catalogue of the Codices of the Greek Astrologers*), more commonly known simply by its acronym as the CCAG.⁸

Despite the availability of many of the earliest texts of the astrological tradition for much of the century, it was not until the early 1990's that the revival of Hellenistic astrology began in the astrological community. This revival occurred largely through the efforts of the translation project known as "Project Hindsight," and particularly through the work of Robert Schmidt. Without these efforts it is unlikely that the revival of Hellenistic astrology would have taken place over the past two decades.

Philosophy

Hellenistic astrology originated and was practiced during period of great religious

and philosophical diversity in the ancient world. Accordingly, there were a number of different philosophical and religious groups that incorporated elements of Hellenistic astrology into their beliefs and practices. To the extent that Hellenistic astrology can be seen as a systematic construct that was used to study the relationship between celestial and earthly events, or sometimes more simply as a system for predicting the future, it could be adapted to suit a variety of different views, and indeed it was. During the course of its history, Hellenistic astrology was advocated, incorporated into, or drew concepts from Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Christianity, Judaism, Hermeticism, and Mithraism. This very philosophical and religious diversity has been brought up as one of the primary objections to the sudden invention hypothesis.⁹

Despite the fact that a number of different groups incorporated astrology into their philosophical or religious systems, there do appear to be some common conceptual and philosophical views expressed by the astrologers themselves in their textbooks. Stoicism is the philosophical school that appears to have had the most influence on the development of Hellenistic astrology, and Hellenistic astrologers tend to be aligned with Stoic doctrines.¹⁰

Stoicism was founded in the late fourth century BCE by Zeno of Citium.¹¹ One of its fundamental philosophical premises is that the universe is an animate living being, and everything within it is rationally and purposefully ordered. Since everything is rationally and purposefully ordered, everything that occurs in the world is predetermined or “fated” to occur, with fate being defined as a rational ordering and interconnection of events according to a divine plan.¹² It is partially because of their belief in predetermination that the Stoics also believed in divination, or in other words that the future could be predicted. One of the moral implications of Stoic cosmology is that if everything that happens in the universe happens in accordance with a divine plan, or in accordance with fate, then everything that happens must occur for some ultimately good purpose. Therefore, the goal of the wise man is to learn how to live in accordance with the natural course of things, and to embrace all events that occur in one’s life unflinchingly. The Stoics, then, were not adopting a pessimistic or defeatist attitude, as is sometimes assumed, but rather were adopting an attitude that was supremely optimistic, holding the belief that everything happens for a reason, in accordance with a divine plan that is ultimately good.

Many of the astrologers of the Hellenistic tradition appear to have accepted both the deterministic thinking of the Stoics, as well as the moral approach that the best decision that one can make is simply to accept what is fated, because it allows for a sort of internal freedom and serenity from the agitation associated with lamenting the circumstances of one’s life.¹³

In some ways the rise of determinism in astrology appears to have been the result of the establishment of a more accurate mathematical astronomy. Mesopotamian astrology developed as a late form of divination, prior to the development of an advanced mathematical astronomy that had the ability to predict the positions of the planets far into the future or the past. It was non-deterministic, partially because it was based on what were thought to be semi-spontaneous phenomena, such as the appearance of certain planets at seemingly irregular intervals. The gods were seen immanent deities, who capriciously expressed their intentions to mankind through the erratic movements and appearances of the planets. However, centuries of observation eventually led to the realization that the astronomical phenomena were fixed, periodic and predictable. By extension, the circumstances that correlate with the astronomical phenomena must also be fixed and predetermined. While there is no evidence to indicate that this was a position that was actually adopted during the Mesopotamian astrological tradition, it does appear that this is one of the core conclusions that many astrologers had reached by the time of the Hellenistic tradition.

The fundamental premise for many of the Hellenistic astrologers was that the lives of individual human beings are fully mapped out ahead of time, from the moment of birth, and even before. Although electional and mundane astrology existed as separate branches, natal astrology was the main focus during the Hellenistic tradition, and it was used as a systematic construct in order to study the fate of the individual.¹⁴ The ultimate purpose of this study, as stated by several astrologers, is that knowledge of the future helps to prepare and habituate the individual for what is to come, thus allowing them to encounter events in their life with a greater sense of confidence, contentment and internal fortitude. If all events in one's life are predetermined, then real freedom is a purely internal quality that has to do with the individual's ability to alter their perception of events. This is where true happiness lies, and it becomes the astrologer's job as a counselor to help people to reach this point.

Techniques

The vast majority of basic techniques and concepts of western astrology, which are still used to this day, came into being during the Hellenistic tradition. This includes the fundamental four-fold framework that consists of the signs of the zodiac, the houses, planets, and aspects, as well as all of the technical and conceptual notions that are related to those four areas. Here is a general breakdown of the known concepts that were inherited from the earlier Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions, versus those that appear to have been introduced during the Hellenistic tradition:

Concepts Inherited

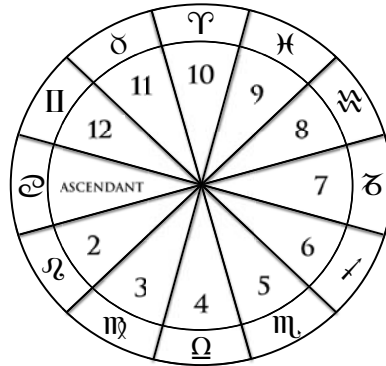
- Twelve sign zodiac
- Benefic/malefic distinctions between planets
- Natal astrology
- Conception charts
- Electional astrology (?)¹⁵
- Exaltations (?)¹⁶
- Triplicities (without their elemental associations)
- Twelfth-parts/dwadashamshas
- Decans (from the Egyptians)

Concepts Developed

- Qualities of the signs (modalities, elements, gender, etc.)
- Rulerships
- Houses (plus concepts such as angularity, ascendant, derivative houses, etc.)
- Aspects
- Lots/“Arabic Parts”
- Sect
- Bounds/terms
- Synastry
- Rectification
- Time-lord systems and other timing procedures
- Transits

It is only in the past few decades that the techniques of Hellenistic astrology have started to be recovered, largely through translations of ancient astrological manuals from that period. This has opened up whole new areas of astrological interpretation through the recovery of the original principles underlying the western astrological construct. Some of the more fascinating and useful discoveries are also the simplest. I will provide two brief examples here.

One of the earliest discoveries that resulted from the investigation of the Hellenistic astrological tradition is that the original form of house division was “whole sign houses.”¹⁷ In Hellenistic astrology the original term for the ascendant in Greek was ‘hōroskopos,’ which means “hour-marker.” The original purpose of the ascendant is that it was used to ‘mark’ or designate which sign would become the first house. So, whatever sign the ascendant falls in, that sign becomes the first house, from zero to thirty degrees of that sign, no matter how early or late in the sign the ascendant falls. Then the next sign in zodiacal order becomes the second house. The sign after that



Whole Sign Houses

becomes the third house, and so on.

Not only was this the original tradition of house division, but it was the prevailing system all the way through the early Medieval period, when whole sign houses became displaced by the quadrant systems for unknown reasons. The rediscovery of whole sign houses has had important implications for the practice of astrology in the past twenty years, and it has the potential of solving one of the most long-standing issues with western astrology, which is the issue of what house system to use, and why. One interesting point is that Indian astrologers still use whole sign houses to this day, nearly 2,000 years after the transmission of Hellenistic astrology to India.

Another immensely important astrological technique that has been recovered from the Hellenistic tradition in recent times is the concept of “sect.” This is a distinction that was used in the Hellenistic period, which divides the visible planets into two factions, teams or “sects.” There is a diurnal or daytime team of planets that is led by the Sun, and a nocturnal or nighttime team of planets that is led by the Moon. Sect is useful because it shows that there is a qualitative distinction between daytime and nighttime charts, so that certain planets will function differently in a chart depending on whether the native was born during the day or at night.

Aside from these basic concepts, a host of advanced timing techniques known as “time-lord” systems have also recently been rediscovered in the Hellenistic tradition. The time-lord systems are the western equivalent of the Indian “dasha” systems, and their purpose is to divide the native’s life into specific chapters and sections, each of which is ruled by specific planets in the chart. The Hellenistic conceptualization of the birth chart was that not all parts of it are activated at all times, but instead that certain parts of the chart are awakened at specific times in a native’s life, for better or worse. The natal potential of certain planets lies dormant in the chart until they

become activated as “time-lords,” and only then is the full meaning and significance of that planet triggered in the life of the native.

There is also a great deal of conceptual wisdom to be learned from the Hellenistic tradition about how astrology functions on a symbolic level, via the interpretation of the placements in the chart, as representing concrete external circumstances in the native’s life. The Hellenistic position is that while the chart may give some information about certain characteristics of the native, or what we might conceptualize in modern times as a person’s psychological makeup, the chart can also provide information about specific external events and circumstances in their life. The chart then becomes much more than a map of the native’s psyche, but rather a map of the entire life, and all of its events, both internal and external.

Future

There is much to be gained from the study of the technical apparatus of Hellenistic astrology. Many useful concepts were lost during the course of the transmission of astrology over the past 2,000 years, not because they were consciously discarded, but because of the hazards of transmitting knowledge from culture to culture over such a long period of time. The recovery of certain concepts can help to clear up technical issues that arose later in the tradition, as in the case of whole sign houses, or they can add new layers of depth and nuance to astrological delineations, as in the case of sect.

Additionally, since Hellenistic astrology represents the oldest systematic collection of nearly all of the same concepts and techniques that are used by western astrologers to this day, there is useful information to be gained from the study of the original meaning underlying these concepts. We can breathe new life into old ideas simply through understanding their original purpose and usage, as well as knowing where they came from and how they were developed.

What we can gain from Hellenistic astrology is the notion that astrology is capable of predicting concrete external events and circumstances in a person’s life. While astrology can also address internal issues such as those related to a person’s character, it is not confined solely to the study of the psyche.

Finally, the predictive nature of Hellenistic astrology raises some questions concerning fate, free-will and determinism. A position that was clearly maintained many of the astrologers within the Hellenistic tradition, and is also raised now if the predictive techniques of that tradition still work in practice, is that the concept of a deterministic cosmos is inherent in the basic premise of astrology itself. The revival of a form of astrology that is capable of dealing with external, as well as internal events makes the philosophical position of a fully deterministic cosmos plausible

once again, as astrology becomes evidence of that reality.

The revival of the fundamental technical, conceptual, and philosophical principles of Hellenistic astrology must be pursued carefully, as the context within which the system is practiced is very different today compared to when it first arose. Nonetheless, it is clear that Hellenistic astrology has much to contribute to the theory and practice of astrology in the future.

Endnotes

- 1 These are the texts of Manilius and Thrasyllus. Manilius is thought to have written his *Astronomica* sometime between 8 and 22 CE, perhaps during the course of the latter part of Augustus' reign and the early part of Tiberius.' For a detailed discussion on the dating of Manilius see Katharina Volk, *Manilius and His Intellectual Background*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pgs. 137-161. Only a summary of Thrasyllus' astrological work survives, edited in *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* [henceforth CCAG], 8, part 3, Brussels, 1912, pgs. 99-101. Cassius Dio tells us that the Emperor Tiberius died the following spring after Thrasyllus, and since Tiberius is known to have died in the year 37 CE, this puts Thrasyllus as having died in the year 36 CE. See Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, Book 58: 27.
- 2 The main collection of charts from this period is in Neugebauer and van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1959. The oldest birth charts in that collection (pgs. 76-78) date to 72 and 43 BCE, although they are both from an astrologer who flourished in the mid-first century CE (Balbillus), and thus they may have been cast many years after the native's birth. The oldest non-literary charts in that collection date to the last decade of the first century BCE (pgs. 16-17).
- 3 Proponents of what I call the "sudden invention argument" are chiefly Robert Schmidt, David Pingree, and James Holden. For each scholar's respective view on the subject see James Holden, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, American Federation of Astrologers, Tempe, AZ, 1996, pg. 12; David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology, from Babylon to Bikaner*, Istituto Italiano per L'Africa e L'Oriente, Rome, 1997, pgs. 26-27; Robert Schmidt, *The Kepler College Sourcebook of Hellenistic Astrological Texts*, Project Hindsight, Cumberland, MD, 2005, pgs. 7-13.
- 4 Proponents of what I call the "gradual development argument" are chiefly Nicholas Campion and Robert Hand. For Campion's views, see Nicholas Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology: A Cultural History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 1: The Ancient and Classical Worlds, Continuum Books, London, 2008, pgs. 203-223. Hand's most extensive treatment of the issue so far occurred in a lecture that he gave on the subject at Kepler College on April 16th, 2005 in Seattle, Washington.
- 5 For the extant Mesopotamian birth charts see Francesca Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1998.
- 6 For example, see Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis*, Book 4, preface: 5, edited in *Iulii Firmici Materni Matheseos libri VIII*, ed. Kroll, Skutsch and Ziegler, Teubner, vol. 1, Leipzig, 1907. Firmicus' hierarchy of founders matches another given in an anonymous papyrus fragment that was attached to a horoscope, edited in CCAG, vol. 8, part 4, ed. Boudreaux & Cumont, Brussels, 1921, pg. 95. The original Greek horoscope that this statement prefaced appears with a translation in Neugebauer & van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, pg. 42, No. 137c.
- 7 One example of this involves the calculation of the Lot of Fortune. Vettius Valens quotes a passage from Nechepso during a discussion of how to calculate the lot, and he goes on to say that other authors have interpreted it differently in the past, and then he introduces his own conjecture as to what it means. See Vettius Valens, *Anthology*, Book 3, Ch. 11: 1-4, edited by David Pingree, *Vettii Valentis Anthologiarum Libri Novem*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1986. Later in his work Valens complains about the cryptic nature of the ancient's writings. See Valens, *Anthology*, Book 7, Ch. 4: 1-7.
- 8 *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, 12 vols. eds. F. Cumont, F. Boll, W. Kroll, et al, Brussels, 1898-1953.
- 9 This is Campion's primary objection to the sudden invention hypothesis, which he outlines in Campion, *The*

Dawn of Astrology, Vol. 1, Ch. 13, pgs. 203-223.

10 The Hellenistic astrologers who express what may be characterized as essentially Stoic views are Manilius, Manetho, Vettius Valens, and Firmicus Maternus. Even Ptolemy, who is no Stoic, pays lip service to what was the common Stoic view at the time about the purpose of astrology, that it prepares the individual for events in the future so that they can develop a greater sense of internal fortitude. See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, Book 1, Ch. 3: 4-6, ed. Wolfgang Hübner, *Claudius Ptolemaeus, Opera quae exstant omnia*, vol 3, 1: *AIOTEAESMATIKA*, Teubner, Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1998.

11 For a concise overview of Stoicism see F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1975 (2nd ed. rev. 1989, Bristol Classical Press, London).

12 For the Stoic views on fate see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pgs. 333-343.

13 See Valens, *Anthology*, ed. Pingree, Book 5, Ch. 6: 9; Firmicus, *Mathesis*, Book 8, Ch. 1: 8-9. Even Ptolemy mentions this as being part of the reason for astrology, indicating that it was one of the mainstream views of the purpose of astrology at the time, although he then tries to distance himself from it by saying that some events can be altered. See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, Book 1, Ch. 3: 4-6. Ptolemy's statements are echoed by Hephaestio of Thebes in his *Apotelesmatica*, Book 1, preface: 4, edited in *Hephaestionis Thebani apotelesmaticorum libri tres*, ed. David Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, vol. 1, 1973.

14 While the idea comes up in other authors such as Valens, nowhere is this notion clearer than in Firmicus Maternus, where he constantly refers to the purpose of astrology as being the study of fate.

15 Champion sees evidence of electional astrology in the earlier Mesopotamian tradition in instances of choosing an auspicious time to begin a war or build a temple. See Champion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, pg. 205. His reference to the founding of Seleucia as the earliest known example of electional astrology seems questionable though, as the stories that this is derived from seem like they are trying to convey a moral point rather than an actual historical event. Cramer, who Champion cites for this, says that doubts about the authenticity of this story are "with good reason." Frederick Cramer, *Astrology In Roman Law And Politics*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1954, pg. 11, fn. 70.

16 Historians of astrology have been in agreement since the early 20th century that the Hellenistic 'exaltations' of the planets are the same as the Mesopotamian 'secret places,' although at the present time no one seems to have adequately addressed why the positions given for the 'secret places' of the planets in virtually all of the extant Mesopotamian birth charts do not match those of the Hellenistic exaltations. For a brief treatment of the evidence see Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes*, pgs. 46-50.

17 This was first pointed out by James Holden in his paper titled "Ancient House Division," in *The American Federation of Astrologers Journal of Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Tempe, AZ, August 1982, pp. 19-29. Schmidt later outlined the evidence in a preface to one of his translations, and pointed out that a practical and conceptual distinction was made between whole sign houses and quadrant houses in the Hellenistic tradition. See Schmidt's preface in Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, Book 3, trans. Robert Schmidt, ed. Robert Hand, The Golden Hind Press, Berkeley Springs, WV, 1996, pgs. viii-xvi. Hand also wrote a monograph on the subject, although he has a more recent and detailed paper published as Robert Hand, "Signs as Houses (Places) in Ancient Astrology," *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 11, no. 1 and 2, Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2007, pgs. 135-162.

Indian Astrology

Ronnie Gale Dreyer

History

Jyotiṣa is the Sanskrit term for the “study of the heavenly bodies, covering astrology, astronomy, and mathematics.”¹ Portions of *Jyotiṣa* have their origins in the Vedic Period (approx. 1500-500 BCE), when the *Nakṣatras*, the 27 fixed star groupings into which the ecliptic was divided, were used to mark the position of the Moon, thus forming the basis of the early lunar calendars.²

Known in the West as “lunar mansions,” the *Nakṣatras* guided the Moon in its 27.3 day journey through the fixed stars. According to mythology, each lunar mansion was one of the Moon God’s 27 wives, with whom he spent each lunar day. The symbolic meaning of each asterism was often derived from its presiding deity, or a prominent star or group of stars, within the *Nakṣatra*.

One notable characteristic of the lunar mansions of the Vedic Era was their frequent division into 28 star groups. These in turn were subdivided into four sequential groups of seven asterisms that were protected by the directions—East, South, West, and North, respectively.³ These 28 *Nakṣatras* were listed in the *Atharvaveda* (the last of the Vedas, the four scriptures of Hinduism, written approximately 1000 BC), where they were used to show the best lunar days on which to perform rituals that related to spiritual practice, fasting, or dietary constrictions. Throughout the era’s epic literature, such as the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, the Moon’s position in the *Nakṣatras* was cited in connection with weather conditions, or noteworthy events like battles, coronations, and marriages.

During the *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa* Era (approx. 500 BCE-300 CE)⁴, the Sun, Moon, and five visible planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) began to appear in Vedic texts, and *Jātaka* (“horoscopic astrology”) flowered. While we cannot determine with absolute certainty when the use of the birth chart emerged, we do know that Hellenistic settlers came to Northwest India as a result of Alexander the Great’s conquest in 325 BCE and they introduced numerous astrological techniques that altered the way Indian astrology was practiced.

The earliest extant astrological text in Sanskrit is *Yavanajātaka* (“Greek Natal Astrology”), authored by Sphujidhvaja, an Indian of Greek descent (269/270 CE). This work was compiled, edited, and translated into English by the late David Pingree,

Ronnie Gale Dreyer, “Indian Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 27–34, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

History of Mathematics Professor at Brown University. It is an adaptation into meter of an earlier Sanskrit manuscript by Yavaneśvara, another Indian of Greek descent (149/150 CE) which, according to Pingree, was translated from a Hellenistic astrological text. Unfortunately, neither Yavaneśvara’s translation nor the original Hellenistic text has ever been recovered.

Yavanajātaka, which is missing fragments, combined Hellenistic concepts with Indian ones, such as the use of Nakṣatras for timing military strategies, and divided the life into unique *Dasās* (“planetary periods”) that were developed in the Indian tradition. Most notable, however, was its use of the zodiac to divide the ecliptic into 12 equal divisions, or signs, of 30° each, as the primary backdrop for the planets, or *grahas* (Sanskrit for “seizers”). Each zodiacal sign, or *rāṣi* (Sanskrit for “heap”), and house, or *bhāva* (“state of being”), is used to categorize everything from dwelling places to body parts to vocation. Also included are descriptions of the planets in signs and houses (along with their exaltations, debilitations, and rulerships) and an extensive list of *yogas* (Sanskrit for “union”)—special planetary combinations that yield specific results.

Another version of the same text, *Vṛddhayavanajātaka* (“Old Greek Natal Astrology”), was written by Mīnarāja, an Indian astrologer in the 4th century CE. This text was a decisive step in the synthesis of Hellenistic and Indian techniques, weaving the 27 Nakṣatras directly into horoscopic astrology by merging them with the zodiac. In this work, the lunar mansions are listed, beginning with *Aśvinī*, the Nakṣatra located at 0° Aries (a point that was taken as opposite the fixed star Spica), making the Nakṣatras coincide with the zodiac’s starting point. Mīnarāja ascribed a particular character and temperament to the position of the natal Moon in each Nakṣatra.⁵

Varāhamihira (505-587 CE), the renowned mathematician and astronomer, further synthesized Indian and Hellenistic techniques in his classic work *Brhājātaka* (“Great Natal Astrology”), forming the foundation for the horoscopic system still used in India today.⁶ Varāhamihira’s descriptions of the position of the natal Moon in each lunar mansion veered from Mīnarāja’s in content, as each delineation was applied to both sexes, which is the way they are used to this day. The Nakṣatra that the natal Moon occupies is still used as the primary marker for one’s temperament and personality, in much the same way that Sun signs are used in the West.

This classic text influenced hundreds of astrological scriptures that followed over the next 1000 years, including the classics *Jātaka Pārijāta*, *Sārāvalī*, *Phaladīpikā*, and countless others.⁷ During Moslem rule (1200-1750), *Tājika* techniques like solar returns and lots were translated from Persian into Sanskrit and incorporated into Indian horoscopy. Apart from techniques and emphases that varied due to regional, linguistic, and cultural differences, or within families of astrologers who passed down

techniques exclusively to their progeny, the astrology laid out by Varāhamihira incorporated Hellenistic and Indian techniques and has remained virtually intact.

Philosophy

During the first millennium CE, astrology in India was the domain of astronomers and mathematicians. They were not known to have been interested in philosophy, and there are no documented contacts between them and contemporary philosophers.⁸

However, since pre-horoscopic astrology developed alongside the Vedas, religious beliefs were naturally an integral part of Indian horoscopy. In India, the horoscope represents the stage that a person's soul has reached, and thus indicates one's caste (Indian class distinction), character traits, and accumulated *karma* (positive and negative actions from past and present incarnations). Understanding the three types of karma—*Sañcita*, *Prārabdha*, and *Āgāmi*—is central to Hinduism, and thus central to the practice of Indian astrology as well.

Sañcita, or accumulative karma, pertains to both known and unknown actions from all previous incarnations that cannot be altered, resulting in the child's "birth in a particular family with particular surroundings, special physical features, and noticeable mental inclinations."⁹ *Prārabdha*, or operative karma, includes all actions that we create and experience in this lifetime, "whose machinery is set in motion towards their fruition in the present life."¹⁰ This karma is a combination of the characteristics and cycles set forth in the horoscope. There will, however, always be differing viewpoints among astrologers as to how much of this "machinery" is pre-determined and how much we can direct. *Āgāmi* karma includes the contemplative and future actions that we plan to do as a result of the insight we have attained.

The horoscope, if properly understood in terms of character strengths and weaknesses, destiny, and planetary cycles, will show how we absolve negative past karma, and create new positive karma, allowing us to fulfill our *dharma*. The concept of *dharma* encompasses the duties we need to perform through family, community, work, and ultimately God, in order to lead a righteous life.

Along with a rendering of the chart, which will outline our strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggest the best timing for education, profession, marriage, children, etc, the astrologer will often prescribe *upāyas* (remedies) consisting of rituals, mantras, prayers, or selfless service, to mitigate planetary afflictions. These remedies are meant to strengthen the mind and spirit in the face of adversity, as well as to provide humility. This helps us to become focused, less centered on personal problems, and more dedicated to acts that are driven by faith and compassion.

Technique

Indian astrology utilizes a sidereal (*Nirayana*) zodiac, a type of zodiac that maintains a fixed relationship with the stars over time, unlike a seasonal, or tropical (*Sāyana*), zodiac, which maintains a fixed relationship with the Vernal Equinox. The difference between the two zodiacs at any given moment is defined by the *ayanāmśa*, the difference in degrees and minutes between sidereal 0° Aries and the point at which the equinox actually occurs. Since the earth's rotational axis moves in a retrograde "precessional" motion, the Vernal Equinox never quite returns to the same place in relation to the stars, moving backward in relation to the celestial sphere at approximately 50'23" per year, thus retrogressing one degree in about 71.67 years.^{11 12}

In the whole-sign house system (See illustration), the sign of the *Lagna* (ascendant) comprises the entire first house, with each sequential sign comprising an entire house. The ascendant ruler and Moon are the most important planets in the chart; the sign and house they occupy (and in the case of the Moon, its Nakṣatra) are paramount in defining the personality and life purpose. If the ascendant and Moon are strong, the character is forceful, and goals may be reached without obstacles. If weak, there will be hindrances in fulfilling one's dharma.

Each planet (including the Moon and the Ascendant ruler) is a natural indicator (e.g. Venus as "love") and house ruler (e.g. Venus as "profession," if it rules the 10th house). Many qualifying factors determine the strengths and weaknesses of each planet, such as exaltation, debilitation, and dignity; whether it is aspected by benefic or malefic planets; whether it is in the sign ruled by a friendly, inimical, or neutral planet; whether the house it occupies is auspicious, neutral, or inauspicious; and more. Planets are further assessed by their participation in one or more of the hundreds of possible yogas, which are combinations that range from spatial relationships (e.g. Moon in the 8th sign from Jupiter), to conjunctions of two or more planets to mutual reception.

Indian astrologers use traditional rulerships: Mars rules Scorpio, Jupiter rules Pisces, and Saturn rules Aquarius, etc. Aspects are different than in Western astrology. Planets in the same sign associate with one another (like conjunctions), and planets always "see" or aspect opposite planets. Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn have special aspects: Mars makes aspects four and eight places from itself, Jupiter aspects five and nine places from itself, and Saturn aspects three and ten places from itself.

A chart assessment always includes the *Candra Lagna* ("Moon as Ascendant"), which places the Moon in the ascendant position, and the *Navāmśa* chart, formed by dividing each *Rāṣi* into nine sub-divisions of 3°20' (1/4 of the 13°20' Nakṣatra), and the most important of the 16 divisional charts, each of which represents a different area of life. The *Candra Lagna* and *Navāmśa* charts are used as checks and balance

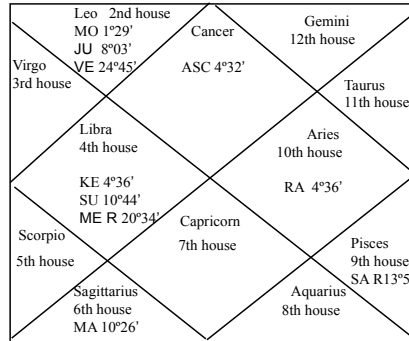


Fig. 1. North Indian Chart

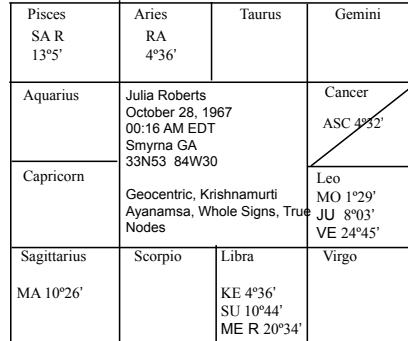


Fig. 2. South Indian Chart

Fig. 1. The North Indian-style chart starts with the ascendant (top central diamond) and proceeds counterclockwise. The houses are always in the same positions, but their signs vary in each chart depending on the rising sign. In this chart, the ascendant is sidereal Cancer, comprising the entire 1st house, Leo comprises the entire 2nd house, in which the Moon, Jupiter, and Venus are placed, Virgo covers the 3rd house, etc.

Fig. 2. The South Indian-style chart has the signs always in the same places, proceeds clockwise from Aries, the 2nd sign-house from the upper left. The ascendant has a diagonal through it, and the houses follow in sequential order.

for the natal chart, by either affirming or rejecting each planet's strength and weakness. Further, the Navāṃśa represents marriage, considered to be one of the most important dharmic tasks.

Central to *Jātaka* is the Nakṣatra-based *Vīṃśottarī Daśā* system (the most popular of many daśā systems), which divides the life into planetary periods spanning 120 years. Each period, the first of which is determined by the planetary ruler of the Moon's Nakṣatra, is ruled by a different planet in the following order: Ketu (South Node) is 7 years; Venus is 20 years; Sun is 6 years; Moon is 10 years; Mars is 7 years; Rāhu (North Node) is 18 years; Jupiter is 16 years; Saturn is 19 years; and Mercury is 17 years. The auspicious or inauspicious nature of each period is derived from the ruling planet's strength or weakness in the individual chart, and the focus of the period can be gleaned from the sign and house that planet occupies and rules.

This brief overview only touches upon the richness and complexity of Indian astrology. Where technique alone is concerned, this system's combination of features—its use of the “classical” seven planets plus Rāhu and Ketu, a sidereal zodiac, whole-sign houses, and Nakṣatra-based daśā systems—have long distinguished it from its astrological contemporaries in the West.

The Future

The greatest challenge in making a classical system accessible to modern needs and viable for the future depends on updating ancient concepts or assigning rulerships to modern concepts (e.g., Rāhu as the ruler of aviation, computers, and technology). Predicting when a woman will have children, for example, is an important issue for many astrologers. This poses its own set of problems, since the astrologer has to extend the window beyond when a woman can naturally conceive, and adapt to the usual markers for conception to a world in which one can adopt, use surrogacy, use fertility drugs, or conceive using in-vitro fertilization.

Often the best way of adapting classical texts to modern times is to consider the functional aspects of ancient interpretive principles. For example, a mention of oxen or other beasts of burden might symbolize modes of transport or machines that lighten our workload. *Rāja Yogas* (“royal combinations”), which indicate a person’s ascension to the throne, may simply be the signature of a CEO, who has employees rather than subjects and servants. Updating these concepts is challenging, but ultimately necessary, in order to make classical astrology relevant for our modern lifestyles. Although Indian astrology may be dated on some levels, on others it is timeless; family, love, work, health, and money will always be important aspects of our lives.

In India, Jyotiṣa will be respected as long as it continues to be taught in universities, yet because it encompasses mathematics, astronomy, and divination, there are disputes as to whether it should be taught as an art or science. In the West, Jyotiṣa, or portions of it, are studied at the graduate level under the auspices of South Asian language departments, or within departments of mathematics or astronomy. This is a fragile route to knowledge, as we can see from the closing of the History of Mathematics department at Brown University after the scholar David Pingree’s death. Thankfully, his colleagues and students continue to teach, translate Sanskrit texts, and conduct research at an array of universities throughout the world. As long as there is an interest in and funding for South Asian Studies at institutions in the West, there will always be a place for the study of Jyotiṣa, even its divinatory aspects, which are still not taken as seriously as they are in India.

Indian parents will also continue to show the horoscopes of their newborn children to astrologers to ask for guidance, especially relating to health and education. As India continues to turn more and more to technology, and thus away from its past, it is to be hoped that the people of India, including those who emigrate to the West, will continue to honor their heritage, and embrace and cherish Jyotiṣa.

It is important that Western and Indian astrologers continue to respect the wealth of astrological knowledge each offers the other, without Westerners fearing what

they perceive as fatalistic and dogmatic principles. Astrologers should not fall into the trap of classifying modern Western astrology as “psychological,” and Indian astrology as “predictive,” since each system touches on both character and life cycles. Nor should they try to create a hybrid system by mixing and matching techniques. Each should be treated separately, as a complete knowledge system in itself.

Lastly, Westerners who practice Indian astrology should try to understand the culture in which it thrives, for only then will they fully recognize the richness of this ancient art and science.

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Endnotes

- 1 Roebuck (1991), p. 165.
- 2 In the Vedic Era, *Kṛttikā* is always listed as the first *Nakṣatra*. Since *Kṛttikā* was comprised of the Pleiades, which heliacally rose at the Vernal Equinox between 2720-1760 BCE, the *Nakṣatras* may have been in use during that time. See Parpola (1994), p. 204, as well as Bag (2000), p. 138.
- 3 The *Nakṣatras* vary between 27 of equal length ($13^{\circ}20'$), and 28 of unequal length. The 28 lunar mansions include *Abhijit*, which falls between the 21st and 22nd *Nakṣatras*.
- 4 *Jyotiṣa* was classified as one of the six *Vedāṅgas* (Sanskrit for “limbs of the Vedas”).
- 5 Roebuck, (1997), pp. 205-212. In this article, Dr. Roebuck translates these two chapters from Sanskrit into English. For original Sanskrit text see Pingree (Ed.), (1976), pp. 335-337, 350-353.
- 6 Unfortunately, there is a gap in the surviving astrological writings that may have occurred between *Mīnarāja* and *Varāhamihira*.
- 7 Some astrologers regard *Hora Śāstra* by *Parāśara* to be the definitive astrological text, but many scholars concur that it was written by several different authors over many centuries, rather than by one person claiming to be *Parāśara*. For this reason I have omitted it.
- 8 Minkowski (2002), p. 496. He cites Collins (1998), p. 551.
- 9 B.V. Raman (1992), p. 30.

10 B.V. Raman (1992), p. 29.

11 The “official” Lahiri *ayanāṃśa*, which is the most popular and used in government publications, is presently 24°00′, meaning that the Vernal Equinox is located at around 6° Pisces 0′. Other *ayanāṃśas* include K. P. Krishnamurti’s at 23°55′, and B.V. Raman’s at 22°34′.

12 Precession was not used consistently in the first millennium CE. The rate of precession was recorded in some texts during the Siddhantic Era (400-1200 CE), yet rejected by several respected astronomers. The astronomer Muñjāla first used an *ayanāṃśa* of about 6° in his treatise *Laghumānasa* (932 CE). See Sharma (2000), p. 227.

Medieval Astrology

Benjamin N. Dykes, PhD

Introduction

Medieval astrology was largely practiced by Arabic and Latin speakers between about 750-1300 CE. In order to understand this period, we must first go back several centuries to the Sassanian Persian empire.

History and Figures

The Sassanian Persian empire began in 226 CE, and flourished until 651 when it was finally conquered by Muslim armies, and much Persian (or Pahlavi) astrological literature was destroyed. But the Persian court had welcomed philosophers and astrologers from the start, and engaged in its own translation projects of Hellenistic Greek material. Despite the overthrowing of the empire, chief texts survived as late as the mid-700s: early Pahlavi and Greek editions of the “Anthology” of Vettius Valens, the “Carmen” of Dorotheus, works of Ptolemy and Rhetorius, and others, along with commentaries. Other uncertain works, in Greek and probably Pahlavi, appeared later under different forms in Arabic, deriving from places such as the Hermetic and astro-theological area of Harran.

We do not know much about the Persian astrologers. But three names do stand out: (1) Buzurjmīhr was perhaps a sixth century minister to Sassanian ruler Khusrau I, though Pingree believes he was really a Burjmīhr (of the same period), who introduced chess into Iran from India.¹ (2) Zaradusht (“Zoroaster”) lived sometime before 600 AD, and wrote a “Book of Nativities” in Old Persian (along with several others), drawing on Greek material. His work on nativities is the oldest Arabic translation of a Pahlavi astrological work we have. Finally, (3) there is the curious figure of Zādānfarrūkh al-Andarzaghār, whose dates are unknown, but whose influence was wide. His work seems to have been responsible for passing on the majority of the Sassanian annual predictive system, as found in the “Book of Aristotle” Book IV, and Abū Ma’shar’s “On the Revolutions of Nativities,” both of which I recently translated and published. Three charts in ‘Umar al-Tabarī’s “Three Books of Nativities” can be dated to between 614 and 642 (near the end of the Sassanian period): since these charts illustrate the annual techniques, it is very tempting to suppose that al-Andarzaghār flourished in these last decades of the Sassanian empire.

Benjamin N. Dykes, PhD, “Medieval Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 35–42, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

Our medieval period “officially” begins around 750, with the founding of the Muslim ‘Abbasid dynasty in Harran—the place of Hermetic magic and star worship. Caliph al-Mansūr (c. 754-775) took advantage of Persian astrological expertise by hiring several Persians and one Indian to draw up an election chart to found the city of Baghdad (which was duly done in 762). Just as al-Mansūr hired Persians to do his astrology, he and his circle supported research projects in all sciences, hiring translators and scholars from the places they conquered, in addition to the Arab practice of hiring Persian administrators to help run the empire.

Thus it was in the mid-to-late 700s that key Persian figures began writing and translating into Arabic for the first time. Works by the Persian Jews Māshā’allāh and Sahl bin Bishr were among the earliest, along with those of Māshā’allāh’s colleague ‘Umar al-Tabarī, and the Christian Theophilus (to whom we owe much of our war horary material). Other notables in this period include Māshā’allāh’s student Abū ‘Ali al-Khayyāt, al-Qabīsī, Thābit bin Qurra, and a later compiler known as ‘Ali al-Rijāl (often called Haly Abenragel). This fruitful period lasted for only about two centuries, when the Persians ceased to dominate.

In the meantime, the Greek-speaking eastern Byzantine empire had an astrological tradition, but for some centuries it remained isolated from western Europe and Perso-Arabic developments. Its works are still rather unknown today. One notable event was the transmission of the works of Theophilus (and associated Perso-Arabic teachings) to Constantinople in the 700s by a man named Stephanus the Philosopher. Immediately, emperors had to have their own court astrologers and military advisors. Another cache of materials arrived in the 11th century, and the compiler Demophilus is one such notable name from that later period.

In the 12th century the Latins picked up on astrology when translators in northern Spain began to work on astrological, magical, Hermetic, mathematical, and philosophical works in Arabic. For example, the famous John of Spain (or John of Seville) and Gerard of Cremona worked in Toledo. In Tarazona and Zaragoza (or Saragossa) there was an important circle of translators such as Hermann of Carinthia, Robert of Ketton, and Hugo of Santalla. (Incidentally, Hugo was the first to translate the so-called “Emerald Tablet of Hermes” into Latin). In the 13th century, astrology became widely known and used by military and political elites, commented and theorized upon by academics like St. Thomas Aquinas and his teacher, St. Albert the Great. For the next few centuries, astrology became a mainstay of university courses, especially in the faculties of medicine. A few notable figures in this period are the Italian astrologer Guido Bonatti (13th century), an advisor to Emperor Frederick II named Michael Scot (12th–13th centuries), and Campanus (13th century), who devised a house system used today.

I have translated, or am in the process of translating, many of these key medieval astrological works from Latin; but it is important to know that not all were equally well-known in their own day in the Latin West—and this has affected the trajectory of medieval astrology. Some were not known because of their date of translation or distribution. For example, certain works by Abū Ma‘shar and al-Rijāl were made available in the 13th century, but either too late or in too-small portions for Bonatti to show much exposure to them. This is important because Bonatti’s work was in some ways definitive for many later European astrologers. Others were neglected because of the irritating style of their Latin, such as Hugo of Santalla’s translation of Māshā’allāh’s “Book of Aristotle” (a Hellenistic-style work on nativities). Medieval astrology might have turned out much differently if not for these issues.

Technical Contributions

This period’s contributions were definitive for the branches of astrology as they were later understood in the West.

First, it seems that full-blown horary methods (as we know them today) were developed, probably on a divinational model of astrology. This material includes a notable contribution from Theophilus of Edessa, who may have gotten some of his material from the Indians when he was attached to Muslim rulers in the Far East.

Second, the Persians (with some Indian ingredients) developed mundane astrological methods, including annual and monthly ingress charts, mundane profections and Lots, mundane periods based on the planets (*firdārīyyah*), and an astrological theory of history based primarily on Saturn-Jupiter conjunctions, and those of Saturn-Mars in Cancer. Early modern astrologers in the 16th–17th centuries spent much time using these methods in their attempt to understand the political tumult around them.

Third, there was a continuation of magical techniques such as astrological talismans, but not much is known about this in the strictly astrological texts.

Fourth, this period saw the rise of numerous quadrant-based house systems using intermediary cusps (e.g., Porphyry, Alchabitius Semi-Arc, later Regiomontanus, and Placidus) instead of the older whole-sign house system (where each sign is identified with a house). It is difficult to find clear and consistent references to quadrant houses in the early Perso-Arabic material, but certainly there were discussions about them, and these systems exploded in the ninth century, just when the Arabs were learning the mathematics to create them. Proponents of quadrant-based houses will consider this a contribution; the opposite is true for those who use whole-sign houses.

Fifth, there was a great expansion of medical astrology and techniques for determining temperament and bodily shape. These methods can be found in William Lilly’s “Christian Astrology” (17th century), though he got them from earlier writers

whose works were still only available in Latin.

Finally, there is a dubious contribution, whose origin has only recently become clearer: the so-called *mubtazz* or “almuten.” By itself, this word simply means the “winner,” and refers to a planet that takes precedence over other candidates when determining some topic in a chart. Greek writers recommended finding such a chief planet in various contexts, but in the Arabic period a weighting system was used, such that different types of rulers for a given topic or place received different point scores. Thus the domicile ruler might receive 5 points, the exalted ruler 4, the primary triplicity ruler 3, the bound (or term) ruler 2, and the decan or face ruler 1: the one with the most points was the *mubtazz*, and the planet to focus on.

The origin of this approach was obscure until recently. It is not found in the numerous works of Sahl and Māshā'allāh, but it is straightforwardly recommended in the ninth century work of al-Kindī. What happened between the 790s and the 850s? The best answer so far comes from the ninth century Persian physician and astrologer Abū Bakr, in his book “On Nativities” (recently published in “Persian Nativities II”). In the material on parents (where Ptolemy describes his own *mubtazz*), Abū Bakr mentions in passing that al-'Anbas, “said that he had found the *mubtazz* [of parents] according to what 'Umar said, by giving five dignities to the Lord of the domicile . . .” and so on. In other words, Abū Bakr's own mentor, or those around him, devised the weighted *mubtazz* specifically in response to a single passage in 'Umar. Thus we can tentatively date the invention of this weighted *mubtazz* to sometime between about 800 and 840, by al-'Anbas, a mentor of Abū Bakr, who at the time held a minority viewpoint. By the time of European astrologers such as Johannes Schoener and William Lilly, this weighted approach was extended to numerous topics, such that one cannot really do anything in Schoener's astrology without calculating a weighted *mubtazz* created of various Lots, cusps, planets, and so on. Critics of the weighted *mubtazz* argue that this way of assigning points ignores differences in planetary conditions and rulerships. The identification of the probable inventor adds weight to the charge of artificiality.

Philosophy

Finally, let us look at the philosophical standpoint of these astrologers. Here I will summarize the attitudes of several schools of thought, but note that not every astrologer can be placed neatly into these categories.

First of all, the medievals emphasized what I call the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian attitude: the planets *cause* things to happen as causal agents. Therefore, astrology is virtually a branch of physics. Modern astrologers who adopt terms in physics such as particles, waves, fields of force, and so on, belong firmly in this camp. This view

also allows for normal human freedom and choice as conventionally understood: the planets may only show causal trends, for instance, but these can be overridden.

The second school of thought was the Stoic. This view says that the planets do not cause things, but they *signify* things. Thus astrology is a science of interpretation, and is divinational. The Stoics also believed that everything is causally determined, so that what the stars signify will in fact happen (even if they only indicate the *types* of things that will happen, and not every detail). This school denied conventional notions of freedom, and was not emphasized in the medieval attitude, but it lurked in the background.

The third attitude was the magical one, which derives from Platonism, Hermeticism, and other sympathetic views. It does not appear very much in the how-to textbooks, but was the province of magicians and talisman makers.

The fourth was a new religious attitude: that is, the introduction of the notion of an indeterminate free will that is liberated from the forces of necessity on earth, and which can radically self-create and change one's direction in life. It is a human mirror image of God's radically free will, but in a weakened form. This theory was invented around the first and second centuries, largely by Jewish and Christian theologians, and astrology had to be reappraised in light of it.

By the 13th century, Islamic and Christian thinkers had developed a compromise blend of radical free will and Ptolemaic-Aristotelian trends. Roughly put, it made the following claims: (1) Astrology fulfills the definition of a science, using experience and reason, with deductions from axioms, and so on, in order to explain things. Because its objects of study (the planets) are among the qualitatively highest in rank, it is among the highest-ranking sciences. (2) The planets are causal agents, and their formal influences affect combinations of form and matter on the earth. (3) Astrology is compatible with freedom, *provided that* a special place is made for the radically free will. Those of our actions and choices that are causally affected by our physiology, character, and so on, can be understood astrologically. But free will and salvation are not subject to physical causes, and so astrology cannot do things like describe our spiritual nature. Therefore astrology pertains to weather, the body, and other worldly events not in our direct control, and even some personality and character matters, but it does not pertain to our free will, or our ability to be saved.

That last part is very important, because it is still with us. In this compromise view, the more holy and blessed you are, the less astrology applies to you. Those with the highest degree of self-determination, free will, and spiritual connection are not subject to astrological causes, apart from physical things like illness and weather. But, the less enlightened, less free, and less spiritual you are, the more astrology applies to you. This same attitude now appears among some modern astrologers, but

instead of being “blessed,” or “saintly,” we are “conscious,” or “evolved.” In other words, some modern astrology is essentially *a secular astrology for the unsaved*. Far from being a special modern discovery based on Jung, or the Theosophists, this concept is straight out medieval Catholic universities, and before that, the works of Abū Ma‘shar. Based as it is on an indeterminate, radically free will, it will probably remain with us so long as people believe in that kind of free will.

Changes and Trajectories

Let me summarize some of the general changes and trajectories in Western astrology, so far as astrological technique and concepts go.

First, the readability of John of Spain’s translations influenced which works were favored and the vocabulary astrologers still use. For example, we say “exaltation,” because of John’s use of *exaltatio*; but if Hugo of Santalla had been more popular, we would be speaking of a planet’s “kingdom,” or “supremacy” (*regnum*).

Second, introductory works like al-Qabīṣī’s, which used a weighted mubtazz and has minimal information on the annual predictive techniques, enjoyed great popularity and thus passed on the mubtazz, but not the extensive annual techniques. This also affected how astrologers worked.

Third, one clear feature of the astrology of ‘Umar and Abū ‘Ali (whose short works were very popular) is the use of methods akin to horary in delineating natal matters. Abū ‘Ali clearly draws on the older ‘Umar, and recommends looking at the relationship between the most powerful planet ruling the matters of the native, and the one ruling the matters of some topic, such as parents. Thus the horary contribution began to blend into much natal practice.

Based on these trends and this new discovery in Abū Bakr, I would like to propose that there was a divergence of “lineage” in natal astrology. The first stream or lineage is the more traditional one, based on Hellenistic techniques. It runs from sources in Valens, Dorotheus, and Rhetorius, through Māshā’allāh and Sahl. It does not use a weighted mubtazz, continued to rely more on whole-sign houses, and borrowed little from horary technique. But it did not predominate in the Latin West, and so was largely lost after the 13th century. The second stream or lineage draws more on Ptolemy and runs through ‘Umar, al-‘Anbas, al-Kindī, and others. This stream adopted the weighted mubtazz, tended towards quadrant-based houses, and applied horary technique to nativities. It was more popular and so became favored.

The Future

Medieval astrology has significant contributions to make to the astrological future. These contributions fall under two headings: traditional philosophy and psychology,

and magic or practical spirituality.

First, in terms of philosophy and psychology, medieval astrology draws on a broader choice of value systems than many moderns are aware of, and makes a serious commitment to moral values like good and bad, as well as a concrete notion of human flourishing. Second, it provides more realistic treatments of choice and freedom, tempering modern notions of absolute personal freedom. Third, it would also be valuable to revive the theory of temperaments, which is already partially familiar to psychological astrologers, but is also connected to herbal and other holistic forms of medicine. Fourth, in terms of magic, through medieval and traditional astrology we may recover Neoplatonic, and other metaphysical, approaches to astrology, which emphasize not simply chart reading, but *practical engagement with* and an *active spiritual connection* to higher levels of being—these practical attitudes allow us to reach beyond our own mind and character, and enable us to participate with the Divine Mind in the administration of the universe.

Endnotes

1 Pingree (1989), p. 231.

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Late Traditional Astrology

J. Lee Lehman, PhD

Introduction

Late Traditional Astrology covers the period from after Guido Bonatti (late 13th century) until just after the life of the great English astrologer William Lilly. There was a successful transition of the astrology of this era through multiple cultures: from Babylon, Hellenistic Greece, continuing through the Sassanian Empire, to the Islamic world, not to mention an interface with India, and even reaches into China and Japan.¹ Astrology moved as part of a cluster of knowledge, having been thoroughly integrated with natural philosophy in general. Astrological treatises often received preferential treatment by translators, and the reason was simple: medicine. The power of astrology as a system for medical diagnosis was extremely appealing.²

History

One of the major developments of the Middle Ages was the university system itself, through its creation of internationally recognized standard degrees. In Italy, the focus was on medical schools. Constantinus Africanus (1015?-1087) brought medical works from Arabic to Latin, thus forming the curriculum for Salerno and later medical schools. There were occasional references to astrological matters: for example, that epilepsy is wet in a waxing Moon, and cold in a waning one, or concerning critical days, or concerning the successive influence of each of the planets during the course of pregnancy.³

The extent of astrological subtexts in European medicine prior to the mid 13th century is somewhat erratic: for example, Gilbert of England, who referred to the importance of the Moon and its conjunction to the malefics, yet without the sophistication typical in Arabic manuscripts of an earlier era.⁴ Even so, William of England wrote a work in 1219 on the examination of urine from an astrological standpoint.⁵

Astrology was also taught within the Faculty of Arts, as one portion of the Quadrivium. The frequency of copies of Abu Ma'shar and Al-Qabisi suggests their use as texts. Astrology as taught in the Liberal Arts was about two-thirds astronomy, and one-third astrology.

The College of Maistre Crétien Gervais was established at Paris in the 1360's through an endowment of the French King Charles V. This was a college of astrol-

J. Lee Lehman, PhD, "Late Traditional Astrology," *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 43-50, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

ogy and medicine endowed with two chairs, the only royal chairs in the University at that time.

In 1431, the Viennese Friar Jean Ganiwet wrote *Amicus medicorum* (*Friend of Physicians*), an excellent and succinct statement on the practice of medical astrology.

That these matters were taken seriously within academic circles is illustrated by the eruption of a controversy in 1437 at Paris over the correct days for bloodletting and taking laxatives.⁶ The matter was only settled when the rector appointed two people to adjudicate: a master of theology, and a prior. Part of their judgment was that all physicians and surgeons needed access to the almanacs that contained the zodiacal position of the Moon, not merely calendars marking the appropriate days for phlebotomies.

We can see this dominance of medicine among the astrologers throughout this period by examining a list of some of the more notable ones, with their vocations.

Table 1. Astrologers from after Bonatti to Kepler.⁷

Name and Dates	Professions
Raymond Lull (~1235-1315)	Medical doctor, theologian, astrologer, philosopher, poet
Pierre d'Abano (1250-?)	Medical doctor, astrologer
Antonius de Montulmo (active ca. 1396)	Astrologer, necromancer, physician
Johann Mueller (1436-1475)	Astronomer, known as <i>Regiomontanus</i>
Simon de Phares (1440-1495)	Medical doctor and astrologer, Councilor to Duke of Bourbon and Charles VIII
Johann Stoeffler (1452-1531)	Ephemeris maker and mapmaker
Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535)	Astrologer and physician
Luco Gaurico (1476-1558)	Cleric and astrologer
Johann Schoener (1477-1547)	Astronomer, geographer, priest, early Lutheran
Paracelsus (1493-1541)	Swiss physician and alchemist. (Pseudonym of <i>Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim</i> .)
Jerome Cardan (1501-1576)	Physician and astrologer
Michael Nostradamus (1503-1566)	Physician and astrologer
Augier Ferrier (1513-?)	Physician and astrologer
Francesco Giuntini Junctinus (1523-1590)	Friar and theologian
Valtntin Naibod (1523-1593)	Mathematician and astrologer
Garcaeus (1530-1574)	Astronomer and meteorologist
Claude Dariot (1533-1594)	Physician

Simon Forman (1552-1611)	Unlicensed “physician”
Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)	Astronomer and mathematician

Medical training was extremely common and any astrologers royal (astrologers to the king) were officially physicians, which was probably not entirely a cover story.

Patrick Curry tells of 17th century astrology in England in his groundbreaking book, *Prophesy and Power*.⁸ The heading of the main section tells the whole story: “From Heyday to Crisis: 1642–1710.” A summary of some of the major astrologers of the 17th century is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Astrologers of the 17th century.⁹

Names and Dates	Nationality
Sir Christopher Haydon (active ~1603)	English
Andrea Argoli (1570-1657)	Italian
Jean Baptiste Morin (~1583-1656)	French
William Lilly (1602-1681)	English
Placido de Titus (1603-1668)	Italian
Nicolas Culpeper (1616-1654)	English
George Wharton (1617-1681)	English
John Gadbury (1627-1704)	English
William Ranese (active ~1653)	English
Richard Saunders (1613-1675)	English
Richard Edlin (1631-1677)	English
John Goad (active ~1686)	English
John Partridge (1644-1709)	English

The introduction of printing had much the same effect in the 15th and 16th centuries that the Internet has had in ours. Suddenly, multiple copies of a work could have wide circulation. And astrology was right on top of this innovation. Many presses used calendars as advertising: and these calendars often featured the lunations, as well as blood-letting days, which itself was in part an astrological derivation. These calendars proved immensely popular. They in turn led to the development of printed almanacs, a combination of a modern farmer’s almanac and a one-year ephemeris: it was common to have both complete astrological positions, as well as forecasting, whether of weather or political events. These almanacs became very popular as yearly best sellers for the Company of Stationers in England, with similar interest

elsewhere.¹⁰ In the earlier Medieval period, there was no such source for publicizing prophesy. Ottavia Niccoli detailed the development of a whole “pulp literature” related to the multiple conjunctions in Pisces in 1524—the first instance of a boom in works relating to prophesy, although not all were strictly astrological.¹¹

In the Medieval period, monarchs could obtain astrological advice privately, and we know they did, whether for dynastic concerns, or to make war. There was no obvious channel for large-scale public prediction. Rival nobles could equally hire astrological guns, but astrologers were not in a position to convey their predictions, except through letters among their circle of friends. While the events surrounding 1524 did not result in political tumult, the English Civil War in the middle of the 1600s resulted in that perfect storm—a popular uprising by the Parliament against the King—with competent astrologers like William Lilly publishing predictions of the king’s downfall, which then came to pass. Did the prophesies come to pass because of astrological necessity or causation, or because the astrological predictions gave the Parliamentarians confidence to achieve their victories?

Either way, once the restoration of the Stuart line occurred in 1660, the mood of the aristocracy turned against astrology, as it proved too powerful a propaganda tool. Louis XIV of France (1638-1715) banned almanacs for their political content. In the immediate aftermath of the English restoration, it was fashion that drove out astrology, not edicts. The satire of Jonathan Swift and Rabelais accomplished what the law probably could not.

The astrologers of the 17th century inherited the same system as the astrologers I have already discussed; and undoubtedly saw themselves as continuing that tradition. But there was change, nonetheless. The grounding of astrology within natural philosophy meant that astrology was also subject to changing academic trends. One of the biggest changes the 17th century astrologers faced was not so much the Copernican revolution, as the change in attitude about matters occult. Curry and others have made a good case to suggest that modern science, as we know it, in part originated from individuals who had considerable occult interests: people like Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle. And yet, the end of the 17th century marked a decline in interest in astrology, at least among the upper and educated classes, despite efforts by astrologers such as John Gadbury to produce an astrology more in synch with the interests of the time.

The loss of astrology’s academic base did not kill it by any means, as almanacs continued to sell well. In the 19th century, astrology would resurface, in part through the popularity of Raphael’s ephemerides, which became popular works. However, the loss of the academy decoupled astrology from philosophy—although one wonders whether the change from natural philosophy to science as part of the Enlightenment

would not have accomplished the same end. Cast adrift from the technical learning of medicine and philosophy that had transmitted its ideas and practice as a whole from culture to culture in the ancient and Medieval world, astrology assumed the position of either stand-alone craft, or hand-maiden to occult or New Age syntheses.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Latin West at the opening of this period contained elements of Hellenistic philosophy, with Arabic glosses. Increasingly, the entire Hellenistic corpus that had been translated into Arabic made it into Latin—but the earliest editions weren't necessarily the cleanest translations.

As important as Aristotle was to the Latin West, this was not the pure Aristotle of the Greeks, but a substantially reworked version that accommodated Christian dogmas and priorities, and also included Arabic commentaries.¹²

The universities were considered the home of philosophy in this period. But Theology was the Queen of the Academy, because God was the supreme force of the cosmos. While angels might be above us in many respects, it was our human ability to choose right or wrong that put us above the rest of creation.¹³ All animals and plants were on Earth for no reason other than to serve Man's needs. This idea had resulted from a fusion of Genesis 1:27 with Aristotle's tripartate soul: plant, animal, and human.¹⁴ As such, Man was so much higher than any other form of life.¹⁵ And yet, centuries of tending farm animals had taught people the basic similarities in what we would now call physiology. It was precisely this overlap that was amenable to astrological medical analysis.

The use of astrology in medicine did not meet much resistance, because it passed the great theological test: the body was considered natural in quality, and thus, could fall under the rule of the stars. Where astrology became dangerous was when its use impinged on the soul. The areas where this could be construed to happen were nativities, and horary and electional astrology (apart from medical applications).

There were few books from this period that were strictly on astrological medical topics, with the exception of Andrea Argoli's work on critical days.¹⁶ Bonatti was certainly not the only one to address those areas of astrology that were theologically over the line with regard to free will. Montulmo, Stoeffler, Regiomontanus, Schoener—all these men and more wrote on nativities, and the full range of horary or electional, preserving the Arabic tradition, pretty much in its entirety. Appropriate obeisance was given to the importance of free will in its Christian connotation, but then ignored in application. When Protestantism developed in the early 16th century, they faced the same theological issues as the Catholics, so astrology really received no favors from this split. There remained an uncomfortable truce, as Christianity

required free will for redemption to be meaningful, while many of the greatest intellects of the West were fascinated by astrology in all its aspects.

Techniques

In this period, quadrant house systems were dominant. Within medical, we had the full development of the doctrine of decumbitures, the astrological system for examining the diagnosis and prognosis based on a chart for either the onset of the disease, or a question put to the physician. The decumbiture could be used with the qualities of herbs to develop a treatment regimen. Critical day theory, another branch of medical astrology, could predict the ongoing course of the disease. Electional astrology would determine the correct time to administer the herb or protocol.

Astrological commentaries on Avicenna's *Canon* were not uncommon. The Perugian professor Gentile da Faligno wrote a number of commentaries that included astrological causation, and also produced material related to the Plague, as it ravaged Europe in the 1340's.¹⁷ The discussion of the causes of the Black Death at a number of universities included theories of astrological influence.

A 1437 manuscript called *A Treatise of Astronomical Physic for the greater security of the exercise of the art of Medicine* addressed horary-type interrogations related to medical matters, as well as bodily correspondences with the planets.¹⁸ Readers of either this manuscript or Ganivet's would need a fairly sophisticated astrological education: not only the rudiments of chart calculation, but knowledge of the houses, planets, lunar cycle, essential dignity, planetary hours, and the like.

Marsilio Ficino's (1433-1499) translations of portions of the *Corpus Hermeticum* led him and his followers to a new synthesis of the meaning of a healthy lifestyle. Ficino proposed finding one's planetary ruler, which would then be fortified—by appropriate music, chants, talismans, and other matters—perhaps not so appropriate for a Christian cleric to mention.¹⁹

The 17th century dawned with Kepler's heliocentric, elliptical cosmos, which resulted in more accurate ephemerides, and Kepler's new aspects. However, astrology was already so on the ropes that his contemporary, Sir Christopher Heydon, entitled his 1603 work, *In Defense of Natal Astrology*.²⁰ Even so, astrology was in a very innovative period. Astronomical instruments invented and perfected in the prior century by Gemma Frisius and Tycho Brahe enabled greater accuracy in observations. This bore fruit immediately, with Heydon and Kepler observing the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction of 1603, the Great Mutation into the Fire Signs, with the first published attempt to produce a chart for the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction itself—a chart still being hotly debated in 1659.²¹ New house systems were developed, and secondary progressions were invented. The 17th century saw great compendia of astrological

techniques, from Lilly²², to Morinus²³ to Saunders.²⁴ It is ironic that the era ended so abruptly after such richness.

The Future

The legacy of traditional astrology lies in its variety, and the many applications that were worked out. No system invented and used for a few decades can compare with the complexity that traditions hundreds of years old have mastered.

The idea that we have evolved in ways that make old forms of knowledge obsolete is merely a blind form of egotism. When we examine the root causes of our modern problems, whether the Great Recession, or the BP oil spill, that old cardinal sin of greed floats right to the top. People still have problems with their relationships, worry about money, their boss, their children, their parents, and their health.

What has really changed? We use fossil fuel as our slaves instead of people, and that energy source has driven us to the point of non-sustainability. Is this a virtue? The fundamental questions of life have not changed—only their trappings.

Or, to put this in a more spiritual perspective, if we have incarnated in matter for a reason, then do you really think that we will get a “Get out of Jail Free” card to evade cleaning up the mess that our species has created, by evolving out of matter without first mastering the lessons?

This is not to say that the planets discovered since Uranus have no meaning, and that the discoveries of 19th and 20th century astrology are groundless. But the study of the outer planets shows that we will experience interesting times for the rest of our lives, and Medieval and earlier forms of classical astrology illuminate how people have succeeded, time and again, in finding creative solutions to their problems.

Endnotes

- 1 For information on the transmission of Hellenistic techniques into China and beyond, see Peng Yoke Ho, *Chinese Mathematical Astrology: Reaching out to the Stars*, Needham Research Institute Series, Routledge, London & New York, 2003.
- 2 Roger French, *Ancients and Moderns in the Medical Sciences*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2000, pg. x.
- 3 Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science during the first Thirteen Centuries of Our Era. Volume I*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 1923, pgs. 756-757.
- 4 Thorndike, *A History of Magic, Volume II*, pgs. 484-485.
- 5 Thorndike, *A History of Magic, Volume II*, pgs. 485-487.
- 6 Thorndike, *A History of Magic, Volume IV*, pgs. 139-142.
- 7 A fuller version of this table with annotations can be found at: http://leehman.com/16thc_astrologers.html
- 8 Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1989.
- 9 A fuller version of this table with annotations can be found at: http://leehman.com/17thc_astrologers.html.
- 10 Two good resources on the history of almanacs are: Maureen Perkins, *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change, 1775-1870*, Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1996, and: Louise Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine, 1550-1700*, 1st ed., Manchester

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11 Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1987, 1990.

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13 This issue of the status of man relative to the animals and plants is forcefully worked out here: Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, Penguin, London, 1983, 1984.

14 Thomas, 1984, pgs. 30-31.

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16 Andrea Argoli, *De Diebus Criticis Et Aegrorum Decubitu*. Patiaii: De Diebus Criticis et Aegrorum Decubitu. Apud Paulum Frambottom Bibliopol., 1652.

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18 Thorndike, *A History of Magic, Volume IV*, pgs. 145-146.

19 See for example, D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, Penn State Univ. Press, University Park, PA, 2000.

20 Christopher Heydon, *A Defence of Judiacciall Astrologie, in Answer to a Treatise Lately*. Published by M. John Chamber, &C., Cambridge, 1603.

21 Christopher Heydon and Nicholas Fiske, *An Astrological Discourse with Mathematical Demonstrations, Proving the Powerful and Harmonical Influence of the Planets and Fixed Stars Upon Elementary Bodies, in Justification of the Validity of Astrology. Together with an Astrological Judgment Upon the Great Conjunction of Saturn & Jupiter 1603*. Written by That Worthy Learned Gentleman Sir Christopher Heydon, Knight, and Now Published by Nicholas Fiske, Jatromathematicus, Printed by J. Macock for N. Brooks, London, 1650. Edlyn, Richard. *Observationes Astrologicae, or, An Astrological Discourse of the Effects of That Notable Conjunction of Saturn and Mars, That Happened October 11, 1658, and Other Configurations Concomitant From Whence Is Rationally Predicted the Quality and Time of Those Principal Transactions That Are Probably to Ensur in England and Severall Other Parts of Europe (Almost) Untill the Year 1661 : to Which Is Prefixed a Breif Instiution [Sic] for the Better Understanding the Following Discou[R]E ... : and Also Added, a Most Ingenious Discourse of the True Systeme of the World*, Printed by T.W. and are to be sold by Richard Blome, London, 1659, pgs. 40-41.

22 William Lilly, *Christian astrology modestly treated of in three books: the first containing the use of an ephemeris, the erecting of a schein of heaven, nature of the twelve signs of the zodiack, of the planets, with a most easie introduction to the whole art of astrology: the second, by a most methodicall way, instructeth the student how to judge or resolve all manner of questions contingent unto man, viz., of health, sicknesse, riches, marriage ... : the third containes an exact method whereby to judge upon nativities*, London, 1647.

23 J. B. Morin, *Astrologia gallica principis & rationibus propriis stabilita, Hagu-Comitis, ex typographia Adriani Vlacq*, 1661.

24 R. Saunders, *The astrological judgment and practice of physick deduced from the position of the heavens at the decumbiture of the sick person: wherein the fundamental grounds thereof are most clearly displayed and laid open : shewing by an universal method not only the cause but the cure and end of all manner of diseases incident to humane bodies, also divers notable experiments of great use to all students in physick and astrology*, Printed for L.C. and are to be sold by Thomas Sawbridge, London, 1677.

25 A much more complete bibliography relating to this period can be found at: http://www.leelehman.com/references_western.html.

Twentieth Century Astrology

Keiron Le Grice, PhD

Introduction

Despite its incongruence with the mechanistic materialism of the dominant modern world view, astrology has undergone a renewal in popularity over the course of the last century, particularly since the rise of the 1960s counterculture. The pioneering work of figures such as Charles Carter and Dane Rudhyar initiated the progressive reformulation of astrology that has ensured a continued interest in the subject.¹ Previously astrology's language was somewhat antiquated; fatalistic and moralistic in tone, it gave the sense of a destiny set in stone, with personality descriptions more befitting the Victorian Era. The modernization of astrology encouraged a new breed of psychologically-oriented astrologers to emerge. Inspired by the nascent disciplines of psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology, they brought greater depth, sophistication, and insight to astrological interpretations. Over the last thirty years or so, with the publication of many new books, astrology has become far more widely accessible and has become an important component of the wider "spiritual revolution" of our time.

The Development of Psychological Astrology

The dominant movement within astrology during the twentieth century, especially since the 1970s, has been "psychological astrology," a term that refers to an eclectic group of approaches, loosely influenced by certain aspects of twentieth century psychology. The precursors of this new form of astrology can be traced back to the theosophist Alan Leo at the turn of the twentieth century, who, in a marked shift of emphasis, applied astrology to understand the traits and characteristics of the individual personality rather than to predict events. This development was carried forward by figures such as Charles Carter, John Addey, Margaret Hone, and Charles Harvey in the U.K., and Grant Lewi and Isabel Hickey in the U.S. The writing of each of these authors provided evidence of a shift towards a concern with the personal experience of the individual and a new focus on using astrology to increase spiritual awareness and insight into one's life purpose. Reflecting the emergence of the modern individual self in the modern era, the twentieth century witnessed the development of a form of astrology geared towards understanding the character, innate potentials,

Keiron Le Grice, PhD, "Twentieth Century Astrology," *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2010, pp. 51–60, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

and psychological dynamics of the self and of individual experience. A new form of astrology began to emerge, one that served, rather than precluded, the individual's capacity for subjectivity, autonomy, and freedom of will.

In general terms, the modern reemergence of astrology can be seen as an expression of the wider spiritual transformations associated with the Neptune-Pluto conjunction of the late nineteenth century. During this time a number of pivotal developments occurred that shaped modern understanding of psyche and cosmos: Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of god," the decline of the traditional religions, the resurgence of previously submerged occult practices, the emergence of depth psychology, the revolutions in physics associated with relativity and then quantum mechanics (during the Uranus-Neptune opposition of the early twentieth century), and the influx of Eastern ideas into the West. Central to this process of spiritual and cultural transformation was the work of Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung, whose ideas were to have a profound influence on modern astrology, initially through the work of Dane Rudhyar, and also directly through Jung's own exploration of astrological thought.

Rudhyar's work between the 1930s and the 1980s initiated a revolution in modern astrology by pioneering modern psychological and spiritually-oriented astrology in both its humanistic (or person-centered) and transpersonal forms—indeed, he was among the first to coin the term *transpersonal*. A polymath and prolific author, he drew together ideas from the emerging philosophy of holism, Hindu thought, Taoism, the *I Ching*, theosophy, and Jungian psychology to present his view of astrology as a way of self-realization, rather than a means of prediction or character analysis. Rudhyar's focus was on the place of the individual within larger wholes and cycles of time, and he advocated using astrology to provide spiritual meaning and purpose. The first definitive statement of his approach is given in his 1936 publication *The Astrology of Personality*. Rudhyar also incorporated Marc Edmund Jones's system of Sabian symbols, which ascribes a specific symbolic meaning to every degree of the zodiac. In the 1960s, Rudhyar then launched humanistic astrology, which was concerned with using astrology to promote the fulfillment of an individual's innate potentials. Later, Rudhyar distinguished this *individual* or person-centered level of application of astrology, as he called it, from a more advanced *transpersonal* level in which astrology could be used to help spiritually aspiring individuals transcend the limitations of the rational ego. The clearest statement of this later approach is given in *The Astrology of Transformation*.

Alongside Rudhyar, Stephen Arroyo and Liz Greene were particularly influential figures in the rise of psychological astrology. Arroyo was deeply influenced not only by Rudhyar's work, but also by his reading of Jung and American psychic Edgar

Cayce. Writing in the 1970s, Arroyo provided some of the most perceptive insights into the nature and phenomenology of astrological factors, especially in his *Astrology, Karma, and Transformation*. In effect, Arroyo gave Rudhyar's spiritual approach to astrology a more contemporary psychological voice, combining depth of insight with a presentation of his ideas in a more readily accessible style.

Whereas the writings of Rudhyar possess a characteristic esoteric and explicitly spiritual style and focus, Liz Greene is more classically Jungian and psychological in her approach. Greene's work is marked by a keen awareness of the personal and collective unconscious as primary determining factors behind individual experience. Her writing is informed by a sensitive appreciation of the complexities of human relationships, the dynamics of the family, early childhood conditioning, and the mysteries underlying character, vocation, and individual destiny. Above all, Greene, sees the astrological chart in the context of a process of the development of personality. The birth chart is a developmental blueprint that details, from an archetypal perspective, the unfolding pattern of an individual's intelligible character. Greene explicitly incorporates Jung's focus on myths and archetypes into the practice of astrology—an approach also pursued by Tony Joseph before his untimely death in the early 1980s—thereby reconnecting astrology to its former roots in the mythic traditions of Greece, and elsewhere.² Of all modern astrologers, Greene's work has had the most significant impact on astrological psychological education and training through the establishment of the Centre for Psychological Astrology in London and Zurich.

Other influential figures in the field of psychological astrology include Howard Saspertas (who often collaborated with Greene) and Robert Hand, whose works include *Horoscope Symbols*, a comprehensive introductory text, and *Planets in Transit*, an equally comprehensive reference work for transit astrology. Hand's approach in these two books reflects a broadly humanistic style, with a recognition of the capacity of the individual to shape how astrological factors can be expressed in the vicissitudes of personal experience.

Technical Developments in Modern Astrology

The major development in astrology in the modern era has, without question, been the assimilation of the outer planets—Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto—into astrological theory. Many authors have noted that the archetypal meanings associated with each of these planets broadly reflect the historical events and zeitgeist of the periods in which the corresponding planet was discovered: the discovery of Uranus coincided with the French, American, and Industrial Revolutions, for example. The discovery of Pluto is associated with the development of atomic power, the rise of depth psychology, and the rise of fascism. Here again Rudhyar was the central figure, inter-

preting the discoveries of the outer planets and the corresponding emergence of the archetypal potentials of the associated planetary archetypes as a kind of teleological unfolding, an evolution of human cultural awareness, and a progressive disclosure of the deeper dynamics of the collective unconscious.

Another significant technical development in modern astrology has been in the understanding of the importance of midpoints. According to midpoint theory, planetary archetypes trigger potent relationships when one planet is positioned halfway between two or more others. An analysis of midpoints often helps account for traits of character and biographical themes that an analysis of natal aspects by itself cannot. Major texts focusing on this area include the influential *The Combination of Stellar Influences* by Reinhold Ebertin, and *Working with Astrology* by Michael Harding and Charles Harvey. Alongside midpoints, I should also mention here John Addey's theory of harmonics, which emphasizes the importance of Pythagorean number symbolism in astrology (a lineage further developed by Charles Harvey's work) and AstroCartoGraphy, developed by Jim Lewis.³

In general, modern astrologers have sought to simplify astrological techniques with the introduction of keyword approaches to interpretation, and a focus on common themes underlying the symbolism of planets, signs, and houses. In retrospect, the modern era has witnessed a great democratization of astrology. The revolution in computer technology makes biographical data and charts instantly available, and the mass publication of astrological textbooks has extended astrology from a few practitioners into the hands and hearts of the many.

Philosophical Suppositions of Psychological Astrology

The work of Rudhyar and Arroyo, in particular, elevated astrology to the status of a spiritual path and to a large extent liberated it from the superficiality, literalism, or fatalism of many earlier forms of astrology. In the 1970s and 1980s, astrologers increasingly became more involved with the inner world of the psyche and the spirit, than the outer world of mundane events. The birth chart was construed as a map of the psyche, a blueprint of the course of individual psychological development.

However, like depth psychology, psychological astrology addressed itself to subjective individual experience within the accepted reality of a radically disenchanted cosmos in which matter, nature, and the universe at large were seen as unconscious, mechanistic, and essentially dead. Psychological astrology came into existence within a cultural world view that radically rejected claims of astrological truth and denied outright the possibility that there could be any relationship between the patterns of human experience and the planetary cycles in the solar system.

Against this background, psychological astrology was subject to the same im-

explicit philosophical limitations that initially shaped the movements of depth and transpersonal psychology, such as a tacit, residual Cartesianism, in which the human psyche was seen as separate from the external world. Although psychological astrology served the emergence and actualization of the modern individual self, like depth and transpersonal psychology, it has at times inadvertently fostered what Jorge Ferrer calls “intrapyschic reductionism,” reducing astrology to “nothing but” the expression of intrapsychic psychological dynamics. Psychological astrologers often explained the basis of astrological correlations (if this issue was addressed at all) as a form of unconscious symbolic projection of the inner dynamics of the psyche onto an essentially neutral, or even meaningless, cosmic order.

In general, despite the greater psychological sophistication of modern astrology, philosophical questions underpinning the working assumptions of astrology have often been overlooked. A notable exception is Richard Tarnas’s *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*, which directly addresses the place of astrology within the evolution of consciousness, culture, and the Western world view. After introducing an expanded theoretical framework for astrology, drawing especially on Jung’s later research into synchronicity, Tarnas presents a detailed body of evidence pointing to a consistent and coherent correlation between the planetary cycles and archetypal patterns of world history, from the Axial Age in the first millennium BCE to the present day, encompassing every sphere of human endeavor and every dimension of life—social, political, cultural, artistic, philosophical, scientific, and spiritual. Tarnas’s research, which is distinguished by his emphasis on the alignment cycles of the outer planets, suggests that world history unfolds in close accordance with the framework of thematic meanings associated with planetary alignments formed during those times.⁴

Tarnas moves beyond the conceptual limits of conventional astrology, which has tended to be more literal and concretely predictive in its approach, and deepens the philosophical and interpretive precision of the astrological perspective by drawing from the depth psychology of Jung, James Hillman, and Stanislaw Grof. Tarnas explicates the fundamental attributes of archetypal principles, which gives him a more comprehensive grasp of astrological correlations and, crucially, of the limitations of what astrology can actually reveal. Perhaps the most important of these attributes is the inherent *multivalence* of the expression of planetary archetypes in human experience and the concomitant realization that astrology is archetypally rather than concretely predictive—an insight that implicitly characterizes and informs much of modern psychological astrology. From this perspective, any given astrological factor, such as a natal aspect, can manifest in a wide range of different ways, while still remaining consistent with a central core of meaning. Accordingly, astrology’s proper

concern is discerning the universal themes and principles evident in human experience; by itself it can reveal nothing of the specific form these universals will take when enacted in the particulars of life.

Future Directions: The Emergence of Archetypal Cosmology

Tarnas's research has helped to establish a foundation for the emergence of *archetypal cosmology*, a new academic discipline that is concerned both with empirical research into astrological correlations and with articulating a new world view or cosmology that can support and account for these correlations.⁵ In many ways, archetypal cosmology represents a continuation of developments that began with psychological astrology—the recognition of the archetypal significance of the outer planets for understanding the deeper dynamics of the unconscious psyche, the recognition of the participatory role of the modern self in shaping the expression of the archetypal patterns studied in astrology, the use of astrology for providing psychospiritual insight, and to increase self-knowledge.

However, archetypal cosmology also aspires towards a greater empirical and philosophical rigor, drawing on Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, mythic perspectives, depth psychology (Jung, Hillman, and Grof), process philosophy (Alfred North Whitehead), and the new paradigm sciences (including the work of Bohm, Capra, and Sheldrake) to seek a better understanding and explanation for astrological correlations.⁶ Crucially, archetypal cosmology situates psychological astrology's emphasis on the individual psyche within a larger cosmological and metaphysical context. Like earlier forms of astrology, archetypal cosmology explicitly recognizes the existence of something like an *anima mundi*—the interiority of the universe at large. From this perspective, planetary archetypes are seen not as wholly intrapsychic factors merely reflected in, or projected onto, the planetary order of the solar system, but as cosmological and metaphysical principles shaping and informing both the inner and outer dimensions of reality. Psyche and cosmos are interconnected as related expressions of a deeper underlying ground. Archetypal cosmology thus directly addresses, and seeks to overcome, the modern dichotomy between inner and outer, between the subjective human self and the objective cosmos. It seeks to make explicit the deeper unity between psyche and cosmos, microcosm and macrocosm, that has been the concern of astrological practitioners through the ages.

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Endnotes

- 1 For further detail on the emergence of psychological astrology, see Perry, "Birth of Psychological Astrology."
- 2 For more on the re-emergence of the mythic tradition in the 20th century see Demetra George's article later in this journal.
- 3 See John Addey, *Harmonic Anthology*, 1976; repr., AFA, Tempe, AZ, 2004; Charles Harvey, *Anima Mundi: The Astrology of the Individual and the Collective*, CPA Press, London, 2002; and Michael Harding and Charles Harvey, *Working With Astrology: The Psychology of Harmonics, Midpoints, and Astro-Cartography*, Arkana, London, 1990.
- 4 Rod O'Neal has called this approach to the study of history archetypal historiography. See O'Neal, "Archetypal Historiography."
- 5 See Le Grice, "The Birth of a New Discipline" for further details on the emergence of archetypal cosmology.
- 6 Many of these areas are addressed in my forthcoming book, *The Archetypal Cosmos*, which presents a theoretical synthesis of Jungian depth psychology and the new paradigm sciences in an attempt to develop a new world view to account for astrological correlations.



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Science and Astrology

Kenneth Irving

Abstract

From the standpoint of research, the modern horoscope essentially consists of two layers. One of these, called the “mantic” layer, consists of the zodiac, along with the house framework and the interconnected rulerships used to specify the basic themes and underlying details of a person’s life; the second and most basic is the “metric” layer, which is purely astronomical, as it includes primarily the celestial sphere and the planets. Over many decades of astrological research, studies that engage the mantic layer have produced little of substance. On the other hand, studies aimed at the “metric” layer of the horoscope have produced clear evidence for the interaction of the cosmos with human beings. Three examples of this type of research are: Michel Gauquelin’s work on professions, Didier Castille’s demonstration of a pattern relating the birthdays of children and their parents, and James Spottiswoode’s studies showing a connection between “psi” ability and the orientation of the celestial sphere.

In the 17th chapter of a book called *The Astrology of Sex* (Robson 1941), Vivian Robson unwittingly damns astrology with bold praise, or at the very least points to a major gap between astrology and the facts it addresses. Says Robson, “One of the most surprising things about astrology is the way in which all kinds of detail can be obtained about people and things, which one would expect to be quite beyond the province of the horoscope.” To illustrate this point, he shows how the 5th house in the chart of a male client, “. . . would furnish any details that might be required about a cat owned by the daughter of a charwoman, employed by the wife’s sister-in-law!” He does this by reassigning houses in horary fashion (the 7th is the wife, the 9th considered as the 3rd from the 7th is her brother, and so on) until he arrives at “the required cat,” which he then proceeds to describe, in detail, as black, and with a “weak leg due to a fall from a height....”

The example itself is, in Robson’s own words, ridiculously extreme, but immediately after touting the method as “thoroughly reliable and unbelievably accurate,” he informs us that the chart to which he has applied it is not that of a hypothetical married man, but actually that of a woman of 38 who is unmarried. In the course of setting up this example earlier in the chapter, he has already told us that such indi-

Kenneth Irving, “Science and Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 59–64,
www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

cators as he has used to find the cat are not absolute, so that, for example if the 9th house contains the marital partner's significator, though it could indicate marriage to a foreigner, it "... could just as easily indicate a meeting in church or at a university, or through friendship with one of the future partner's relatives, or even through an advertisement in a matrimonial journal."

At the end of the chapter, Robson says that with sufficient practice, one can learn how to select "the correct variation or alternative" among the various symbolic possibilities, but this does not save a point he has already lost. What Robson asserts about the method's accuracy is belied by everything he says about its application, as the main thing it clarifies is that through reading a horoscope in this way *when given direction* ("My wife's sister-in-law's charwoman has a cat," says the client), one can *specify* any desired person, place, or situation, whether real or imaginary. However, it is not at all clear that one can actually *identify* any real set of circumstances in this way without some type of prior knowledge.

The construct that Robson uses to go in search of his mythical cat faces evident challenges in living up to his claims for it, but it also the very real problem that the two elements it depends on most, the zodiac and houses, are not directly observable. The zodiac in particular is not demonstrable by experiment. Summaries of this point can be found in Eysenck and Nias (1982), and Gauquelin (1988), but perhaps the clearest and most accessible evidence is a classic experiment undertaken by astrologer Jeff Mayo and psychologist Hans Eysenck (Mayo, White, and Eysenck, 1978). By comparing responses on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire with the tropical Sun signs of the individuals involved, the experimenters felt they had confirmed an association of extroversion-introversion with odd and even signs, respectively, as well as the greater emotionality of water signs. A year later, in a similar study, Pawlik and Buse (1979), by separating their subjects into those with knowledge of astrology and those without, found that Mayo, White, and Eysenck's results were only true among the former. Thus, the original study's heartening results were apparently due to self-attribution based on astrological expectations, and not to the signs themselves, a conclusion that has since been supported by others, such as Van Rooij (1994).

Where houses are concerned, the profusion of systems hard-coded into modern astrology software is a good indicator of the size of the problem with that concept. For example, Esoteric Technology's popular Solar Fire Gold program offers about 30 systems, 18 of which are equal houses based on the longitudes of various points and planets. It would be difficult to argue that a house system that uses the prime vertical as a frame of reference, another that uses diurnal and nocturnal semiarses to determine house divisions, and another that uses the position of a particular planet as a starting point for the 1st house all can produce meaningful results in a system like

the one described by Robson, or any system based on similar principles. The recent return by many Western astrologers to the historically original idea of whole-sign houses does not, unfortunately solve the problem. If houses and signs now share the same fate, and signs evade honest attempts at demonstrating their validity, then we are left back where we started with Robson.

One answer to such dilemmas as these is to simply accept that signs, houses, and the rulerships that bind them together constitute a set of divinatory elements that allow “perception by intuition; instinctive foresight.”¹ Elements of astrology that both research (Eysenck, Mayo, et al.) and the problematic writings of astrologers such as Robson tell us are probably more theoretical than actual should be accepted as such unless proven otherwise. Essentially they constitute what could be called a “mantic” layer in the traditional horoscope.

In contrast to this “more theoretical than actual” mantic layer, there is an elemental layer to the horoscope, referred to here as the “metric” layer, which consists of the simple relationships of planets within the framework of the celestial sphere, the earth’s rotation, and its orbit around the Sun. Unlike signs and houses, the measuring devices we use to examine possible correlations between earthly events and the simple elements of this metric layer are not invested with predetermined meaning, but are rather convenient grids and rulers which, properly used, allow us to see the shapes of things that join above to below.

Though research directed at the mantic layer is prone to disappointments such as the Mayo-Eysenck study outlined above, research based on the metric layer has a solid track record. The work on the link between professional success and the diurnal placement of planets at birth begun by Michel Gauquelin in 1949, and pursued by others up to the present day, has produced a body of evidence that is beyond dispute (Ertel and Irving, 1996). Even though there are distinct differences between the findings of Michel Gauquelin on professions and planets (1955, 1960) and traditional astrology, the fact is that his work shows a clear connection between planets at birth and the life that follows, and thus his findings are, by any definition, astrological (Irving, in Ertel and Irving, 1996, page vi). They demonstrate not only the correlation between planetary placements at birth and success in a profession, but also specific differences among the planets that reflect ancient tradition, as well as the effectiveness of angularity in bringing out those differences.

Figure 1 shows basic findings, with black triangles indicating which of five bodies were in excess in Gauquelin’s sensitive zones around the angles (those in parentheses he considered probable, but preliminary). Inverted white triangles mark the bodies that showed a deficiency in the same areas, and Figure 2 shows that the structure of the results in Figure 1 demonstrates a basic astrological relationship between the classical

	☾	♀	♂	♃	♅
Actors	·	·	·	▲	▽
Journalists	·	·	·	▲	▽
Scientists	·	·	·	▽	▲
Doctors	·	·	▲	▽	·
Sports	▽	·	▲	·	·
Military	·	·	▲	▲	·
Executives	·	·	▲	▲	·
Writers	▲	(▲)	▽	·	▽
Painters	·	(▲)	▽	·	▽
Musicians	·	·	▽	·	·
Politicians	▲	·	▲	·	·

Figure 1: Gauquelin's correlation of 5 birth planets with future success in 11 professions has a specific structure.

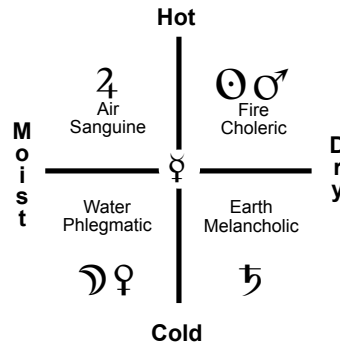


Figure 2: The structure of Gauquelin's 11 professional results reflects an ancient astrological concept.

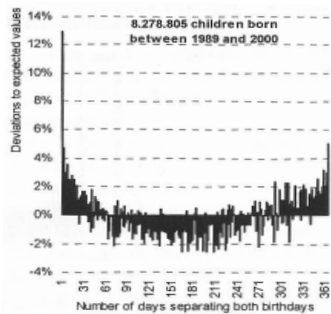


Figure 3: Didier Castille has shown that children tend to be born around the same dates as their parents.

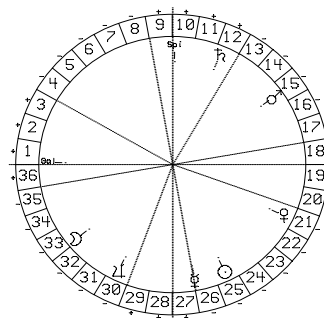


Figure 4: Research comparing psi scores with local sidereal time has produced an "astrological" result.

planets, the four qualities, and the four humors found in astrological works, perhaps as early as the 9th century CE in the writings of Abu Ma'shar (Greenbaum 2005).

One obvious thing missing from the work of Gauquelin and those who followed his line of research is any effect involving Mercury, the planets beyond Saturn, or the Sun. Worthy of note in that latter case is Didier Castille's recent finding that parents and children tend to be born around the same calendar days (Castille 2004). Though there is a significant upward spike right around the parents' birthday, the effect as a whole (seen in Figure 3, which shows just one set of the father-child data for brevity) seems to extend for about 60 days/degrees on either side. This finding needs to be investigated further and replicated by others, of course, but it has immediate implications for several puzzles left by Gauquelin's work, including the "missing sun," and the possibility of astrological heredity.

Castille's work was published in an astrological research setting, but when we are focusing on the metric layer, valid findings in any field where the basic data consists of a) the time, place, and date of an event, b) an astronomical variable, and c) some measurable aspect of human behavior, is germane to astrological research as well. One good example is work by James Spottiswoode linking local sidereal time with the variation of scores in "free response" experiments. In this type of experiment, the subject is free to say, write, or draw impressions that may reflect, for example, a picture someone is viewing in another room, or the salient features of a remote location. A judge or a group of judges then scores the result. In his initial study, Spottiswoode (1997) looked at 1,468 such experiments that included information about time, date, and place, and found a distinct peak in the success rate at around 13.5 +/- 1.25 hours of local sidereal time, a figure confirmed by a second set of 1,015 free-response trials. His conclusion: "Assuming that some unknown systematic bias is not present in the data, it appears that AC [i.e., ESP, or "anomalous cognition"] performance is strongly dependent upon the LST at which the trial occurs. *This is evidence of a causal connection between performance and the orientation of the receiver (i.e., a term for subject or participant), the earth and the fixed stars.*"

The part in italics (emphasis mine) is essentially astrological. Spottiswoode's "LST effect" (my term) has been confirmed by, among others (e.g., Lobach and Bierman, 2004). What he proposes is not yet a settled issue, but it is one example of a growing body of studies on various LST effects by scientists in various disciplines. Figure 4 is a chart for an arbitrary date, longitude, and clock time (May 6, 2010, 10:26:19 p.m. EDT, 73°57' West) when the local sidereal time was 13:30:00. Since Spottiswoode himself mentioned fixed stars, the one closest in right ascension to his target sidereal time, Spica, is included, plus one uncommon and rather large celestial object, the Galactic Center, which can be seen on the Eastern horizon. The classical seven bodies of ancient and medieval astrology are also included, and everything is plotted using Gauquelin's sector framework, allowing us to better understand the relationship of these celestial points to both the local meridian and the local horizon.

Though Spica's position tells us that 0° Libra of the Babylonian (Fagan-Bradley) zodiac is near the Midheaven, this hopeful sign is likely a coincidence. However, the Galactic Center on the horizon seems the more likely cosmic influence candidate, especially if the laboratories where the experiments were done tend to cluster around certain northern latitudes. In fact, the latitude for this chart, 37°44' North falls between two latitudes where most of the experiments in the initial data table shown in the referenced article were done.

Two related points need to be made in summary. The first is that while astrologers tend to see research findings as irrelevant to everyday practice², such results as

those outlined briefly here are immediately relevant to further research. Gauquelin, Castille, and Spottiswoode are all looking at the possibility of cosmic influences on human beings within an observable and definable frame of reference, so each carries research implications for the other. If research of this type does not seem to lead so easily to useful astrological technique, it can for those willing to think outside the circles (i.e., the zodiac and houses). The second point is that while studying astrology's traditions, whether recent or ancient, is important, taking those traditions as revealed truth in the face of challenging evidence is like treading water in a shifting sea. Understanding the relationship between these traditions and that evidence brings us safely to shore to explore new and exciting territory.

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Endnotes

- 1 This is an appropriately nonjudgmental definition of divination from Random House's dictionary.com that suits astrology well. For a reasoned defense of astrology as divination see Cornelius (2003), e.g., on page xxii: "...the main body of astrology's practice, and especially the interpretation of horoscopes, is properly understood as a form of divination...It is divination despite the fact that aspects of symbolism can be approached through scientific method, and despite the possibility that a few factors in horoscopy can arguably be validated by the appeal to science."
- 2 "Astrologers treat Gauquelin's findings much like mainstream scientists treat anomalies in their own fields: They cannot classify them properly, so they tend to ignore them." (Ertel, 2010).

Uranian Astrology

Gary Christen

Abstract

The Uranian System is a method of applying astrology in a so-called *modern* format. It is a predominantly geometric system that relies on symmetrical planetary arrangements on various planes. Interpretation is guided by a system of planetary hierarchy and meanings of combinations that are standardized and repeatable. All of the ideas underlying the Uranian System are ancient in origin, but they have been cleaned up and presented in a very clear and definite way. The idea was to use astrology as a scientific language following the form and function of early 20th century scientific concepts and organization.

While the System appears to be biased towards strong predictive procedures, it is a highly capable toolset for eliciting deep psychological data out of a horoscope. Uranian Astrology's hierarchical system of organization creates a context for cataloging human behavior and motivation that has no apparent match in any expression of astrology to date. In addition, a good understanding of the concepts underlying the Uranian System creates an excellent viewpoint for evaluating all systems of astrological thought.

Origins and History

After studying with Karl Brandler-Prack (a German who studied under Alan Leo), Alfred Witte (1878-1941) collaborated with Friedrich Siegggrun (1877-1951) and started a study group called the Keplerian Circle in 1915, in Hamburg, Germany. The purpose was to take the great astrologer Johannes Kepler's suggestion that astrology is overweighed with ancient beliefs and poor techniques, and needs to be re-examined and re-built ("Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater!").

They were making significant progress, while examining the use of the Arabian Parts and directional arcs, when World War One intervened. During the war years, Witte perfected this work. Witte came home from the war in 1918 with profound ideas about the nature and use of astrology, and began to write revolutionary articles about how to apply his new techniques.

In 1918 Witte met Hans Niggemann (1889-1985), another veteran officer from the war, and along with Seigggrun and a few others, began meeting in Hamburg to discuss

Gary Christen, "Uranian Astrology," *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 65–72, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

and develop these ideas. Between 1918 and 1924, the main outlines of what was to become the “Hamburg School of Astrology” took shape.

The techniques Witte developed were so useful and strong that he and Sieggrun used them to discover planetary bodies beyond Neptune and published ephemerides of these *Transneptunian* planets (TNP for short). The reasoning was that if the astronomers found evidence of these proposed bodies, then astrology would be vindicated. This was not an unusual proposition for the time, since the astronomers were still predominantly preoccupied with the workings of the Solar System (Hubble had yet to discover galaxies) and many had proposed hypothetical bodies to account for perturbations in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune. By 1922, approximately 3000 hypothetical planets had been proposed by the astronomers with a straight face. Yet, the System was ridiculed, then as now, for this daring work (fictitious planets, indeed) and the proposed TNPs have very little to do with the power of the System. Their creation was a byproduct of very powerful techniques and observation.

The use of the TNPs is not a necessary part of the Uranian System’s multitude of techniques, by any stretch of the imagination, but they demonstrate what the System can do. It is interesting to note that the range of the orbits for the TNPs was between 262 years and 720 years to orbit the Sun. No other factors were proposed in any other orbital range. In the early 1990s, the Kuiper belt was discovered with the orbital definition of between 250 and 600 years to orbit the Sun. Pluto is considered the first of the Kuiper belt planets (or now, planetoids).

At the first pan-Germanic astrology conference in 1923, Sieggrun presented some of the core ideas of their discoveries and was booed off the stage. Magazine publishers began to reject Witte’s work. By 1924 Witte was dejected and suicidal, and stopped as the prime originator of the ideas behind the System.

The students (there weren’t many) organized the material, collected Witte’s observations, added to them, and published the “*Book of Rules for Planetary Pictures*” in 1928, and the Hamburg School was on its own.

In 1937, Hitler’s regime seized and destroyed the publisher’s stock of the “*Book of Rules*.” In 1941, Witte committed suicide (taking cyanide) in a police van after being arrested by the authorities. Sieggrun died after the war in 1951, leaving Hans Niggemann and a handful of others as the original surviving students and innovators. The Hamburg School continued to expand during the next 40-50 years from Germany to the rest of the world. Ludwig Rudolf published the “*Book of Rules*” and many other seminal works, helped take the ideas in new directions, and fostered the spread of Witte’s theories and ideas. He was succeeded by his son, Udo, who revitalized the school by bringing back Witte’s original works and fostering many diverse ideas.

Other European offshoots rose from the 1930’s forward into the 1960’s. Rien-

hold Ebertin studied with Witte in the 1930's, and by 1948 had synthesized his own views of the work. He streamlined many of Witte's ideas and re-branded the work as *Cosmobiology*. Edith Wangemann and her husband also initiated an offshoot of the original ideas, starting the *Cosmobiosophical Astrology* movement. Edith created the concept of the *Composite Horoscope*, still in wide use today. Many other great teachers and schools followed in Europe and throughout the world.

In the United States and other English-speaking areas, Hans Niggemann built on the work of Richard Svhela, an earlier American student of Witte, who authored the first English translation of the "*Rook of Rules*" in 1937 and coined the name *Uranian System*, and brought in his unique perspective as being one of the originators of the System. Niggemann began promoting the System as *Uranian Astrology* in the late 1950's and taught a form that had a strong emphasis on visual elements and dial work. He translated many works into English, and shaped the American view of the System in ways very different than his German counterparts.

In the last decade, we are seeing a revitalization of Witte's ideas as a facet of *Symmetrical Astrology*. The Symmetrical umbrella is opening the core principles of Witte's observations to the new century and bringing many of the innovations of the latter part of the 20th century together. In this light, the Uranian System is becoming the core of a wholly new system of astrological thinking, with roots into our collective past. It has taken almost 100 years, but the beautiful baby of astrology is being cleaned-up and showing amazing new strength and resiliency.

A Few Core Ideas of the Uranian System

In this short overview of the technique underlying the Uranian System, we will discuss a few core concepts. These are presented as Rules (similar to the older style of aphorisms or theses).

- *The character and destiny of man can be seen through the symmetry of the planets, not the aspects between the planets.*

The primary view is that *planetary pictures* are the geometric basis of Witte's observations, and it implies that placement in the zodiac is of secondary importance relative to the dynamic interaction of the planets. It also supports the observations of Arthur Blackwell, the great western Sidereal School astrologer, about parans, angularity, and symmetry with the Horizon and Meridian axes in the horoscope. Blackwell's contribution was not originally part of Witte's concepts, but it does underlie the newer Symmetrical viewpoint and is not inconsistent with the core ideas.

- *Equal Sums, equal Half sums, and equal Differences all = Planetary Pictures, completed symmetrical planetary arrangements. This Rule, when reduced, becomes: **ARC OPENINGS = PLANETARY PICTURES.***

The Equal Openings Rule outlines what forms Planetary Pictures can take and how to recognize them. While originally derived from the *Arabic Parts* and the *Lots* before them, the use of symmetrical arrangements goes much further.

One uses the principle described above by taking the actual zodiacal longitudes of factors, adding them and subtracting them to create latent *sensitive points*. We examine these generated points to see if they are natively completed and seen as part of the native's character or are dynamically completed and become part of the native's *event sequence*. While Witte primarily worked with the *Sums* (the addition of the longitudes of two or more factors that can be the core of standard three-planet or more pictures, but by themselves always involve the Cardinal Axis into a symmetrical relationship), the students of Niggemann began to rely more on the *Differences* (the subtraction of the longitudes of two factors, whose result is expressed as a position connecting the Cardinal Axis to the originating planets, or more commonly, as an *Arc Opening* that can be used in an almost infinite number of ways). The principle underlying this idea is *resonance*, which gives rise to the concept called the *Difference Theory*. In the late 1970s, the author realized that Difference Theory is the fundamental bedrock of this entire astrological premise.

As an example, the idea of Planetary Pictures and Difference Theory as applied to the Part of Fortune shows equal openings, common midpoints and a sensitive point that may or may not be completed by a natal factor, dynamic factor or the effects of another horoscope.

It should be noted that the use of Planetary Pictures and the principles of planetary hierarchy is not confined to just the Zodiacal Plane, but can be applied to any *Great Circle* plane, horizontal or vertical (for example, *Zenith charts* using declination positions, or any *Mundoscope*, etc.).

- **Personal Points** increase the efficiency of Planetary Pictures in locating and identifying areas of activity in the horoscope

The rules regarding the definition and use of Personal Points provide the basis of the *language* of the System. This language has clear definitions and structure, implying a hierarchy of astrological factors. Personal Points show us where to look and the weight or preference we should attribute to a combination. They are verbs, and when we use these verbs with all the other factors in the horoscope, a structure emerges. This structure is similar to a sentence, but more like chemistry's periodic table, which guides us, and helps us understand what to expect as we mix and combine the various elements. Starting with the importance of the Personal Points and the effects they show about a native's character and destiny, we end with a framework that is multidimensional, and can be viewed through time.

The Personal Points are the Sun, Moon, Midheaven, Cardinal Axis, Node, and As-

endant. We observe that *nothing happens unless the Personal Points are involved and the more Personal Points involved, the more important they affect*. This rule also indicates the role other factors play in the horoscope. Once we are outside of the web of Personal Points, everything else becomes an adjective describing the quality or form that a natal characteristic or an event expresses.

One of the modern aspects of the Personal Point concept is the differentiation between the native's inner point of view and their outer persona. All of the points involving the intersection of great planes—Cardinal Axis (intersection axis of the Equator and the Ecliptic), Moon's Node (intersection axis of the Moon's orbital plane with the Ecliptic, averaged or projected for any given time), and Ascendant (intersection axis of the Horizon and the Ecliptic)—describe information pertaining to the type of connection between the self and the outer world, local environment, and intimate relations. The Sun, Moon, and Midheaven are concerned with inner states of being, and are also timers for dynamic events (Sun = day, Moon = hour, and Midheaven = minute).

It is the Cardinal Axis (as well as the definition of the MC) that may seem very new to most astrologers. We consider this to be the one Personal Point that ties the native into the world-at-large. In this view, all beings and things on this planet share the commonality of the Cardinal Axis – we are all part of this world and share certain common experiences because of it. While well known to the ancients, it apparently wasn't useful for personal interpretation before the advent of a truly global society. Still, the marking of the calendar, calculating various ingress charts and recognizing precession are a few of the significant uses of the Cardinal Axis throughout history. I cannot underestimate the importance of the Cardinal Axis in a modern society.

The definition of the Midheaven is also an evolution. First it is treated as a specific factor, like a point, not a sector like a house. Since it is the minute that life is brought to this world or the instant of a large transition like an event, horary, electional or other time condition, it is the final mover that brings character or definition to a native or event. In standard interpretation of natal charts, The MC is the perception of the self. Uranians call it *the seat of the soul* and it is where all of the native's perception focuses. It is what talks to you in your head, but is only the person listening. It is simply the most personal factor in the horoscope. In mundane work or event interpretation, it is the minute and shows the timing of an event. It will always be involved in Planetary Pictures that describe the event or is in other ways the essence of the horoscope.

The rest of the interplay of the Personal Points describes all of the core principals of life on this earth and the manifestation of events. Everything else in the horoscope describes how this interplay of Personal Points unfolds. In this way we can query

a horoscope from different points of view and create a true three-dimensional view of either a native or event using a language that is very specific to the work, as well being repeatable and applicable to a large array of matters.

- *The most reliable and simplest arc of directions is the Solar Arc (SA).*

Any symbolic movement of factors can be reduced to one or more simple arcs of one form or another. *Secondary Progressions* are a collection of individual direction arcs formed by each planet moving at its own rate in a single horoscope. *Primary Directions* refer to arcs created by the symbolic rotation of the Earth and can also be reduced to a simple single arc expression. Great 20th century innovators such as Charles Jayne and others called for various derived directional arcs created by great circle factors, moving along with various Meridian directions. When we look at these arcs reduced to a specific plane, we can simplify great complexity.

Instead of looking at the results of these various directions through the positions they form in the horoscope, Uranians are concerned with the openings between factors formed by these arcs (see *Difference Theory*, above). We already know that various interplays of arcs will create well known symmetries that are easy to time as the arcs are *completed* (where a dynamic factor creates exact symmetries and expresses as an event).

Speed analysis and timing are some of the efficiencies that come from using the Uranian approach and methods. The System, being non-exclusive, allows the practitioner to use any known methods of creating dynamics arcs for timing. We also go for the most elegant solution where possible, and it is common for Uranian practitioners to use the simple Solar Arc as a dynamic timer. In the symmetrical approach, we also take into consideration other dynamics, such as in mundo positions, parans and other three-dimensional forms building on the work of Blackwell and others. In the past, many of these techniques were difficult to express, calculate and even visualize. Today we have computers with terrific power to display this work. In the future, we can use the System's framework to integrate these new uses for the mundane view, but the two-dimensional use of a dial to illustrate a plane is speedy and quite practical for the present.

Due to the geometric structure of Planetary Pictures, various permutations of the SA can be created and used. Any given arc can be expressed in six ways: The direct arc expressed as the natal Sun position subtracted from the progressed Sun, one half of the direct arc, and double the direct arc. For each of the direct arcs, we can also derive its *converse* position. For example, if the SA direct is 10 degrees, then the sensitive positions will be 10 degrees ahead of any factor, 10 degrees behind the same factor, 5 degrees ahead of the given factor, 5 degrees behind the same factor, 20 degrees ahead, and 20 degrees behind. Any Planetary Picture completed by the SA

will always connect the natal Sun and progressed Sun, whether they are physically part of the picture or not, as described by an understanding of the Difference Theory. It is the simplicity and speed that makes this approach so powerful, as we observe through practice that directed transits are very effective timers.

Pathways to the Future

This paper presents some of the more obvious ideas and methods in use today, however the entire System itself is only a foundation. Witte was trying to create an astrological alphabet, similar to chemistry's periodic table, which is repeatable, follows clear and modern theories, and can be used to combine elements and ideas in infinite ways. Witte's initial concepts bring astrology to a place functionally equivalent to the languages that underlie modern science. While this in itself is revolutionary in light of a craft that hasn't substantially changed since Ptolemy, it doesn't bring astrology forward in a modern manner, but it brings astrology to a place where it can go forward. The System has created the bedrock of fundamental concepts to build astrology's future.

An astrologer can master any of the ancient systems recently re-discovered and now in use, but none of those frameworks are useful for advancing the field in the light of modern thinking. The forces unleashed during the last 400 years have forever evolved and changed humans through the way we conceive ideas. In the past, each human had to internalize all the knowledge of the world – books were scarce and memory was king. Today and tomorrow, knowledge is becoming external and the process of complex integration of knowledge takes away the need to make it personal. As humans continue to organize knowledge in deeper and more complex ways, very novel spiritual, scientific and, of course, astrological conceptualizations will take place. These events will help create astrological techniques that will look nothing like what we (all of us, including Uranians) practice or study today. If you take a doctor from the 14th century and place him in a modern first world hospital, he just would not understand it as it would have no resemblance to what he knows or does. The Uranian System allows and creates space for any new conception. It is a house with many rooms, waiting to be wired with creative modern thinking.

In the current age of statistical analysis, astrology occupies a tenuous place. Testing commonly-known astrological ideas don't clearly show good results. Yet, there are some statistical studies vindicating planetary influences. The results just don't quite look like what we would call "orthodox" astrology. The easiest way to illustrate this observation would be to look at the Gauquelins' work, where they got great results from mundane positions of the planets correlated to professional careers. When their results are graphed, the statistical spikes do not correlate to known astrological

concepts. The Gauquelin's discovery points to a very new conceptualization of the mundane sphere. They knew they had something unique and created the Gauquelin Sectors to illustrate aspects of their new astrology.

The language of Uranian concepts allows for a Gauquelin-style astrology or any other discovery of a non-orthodox manner. And this is the Uranian System's strength over time and into the future—its language and conceptualization is highly flexible, yet firmly anchored. I know of no tests using laws of Equal Openings or hierarchical forms and there is huge room in the System for making a framework for testing and advancing the whole field. I am not an advocate of statistical methods, far from it, but I see the writing on the wall, and have for the last 40 years.

The future of the Uranian System lies in the rise of the form of Symmetrical Astrology, where all the various splintered schools founded on Witte's concepts fall into a single area. Ideas involving oblique factors and off-ecliptic work, parans, and arcs are the near future. Computerizing the existing theories in non-static ways will allow the work to be streamlined and reach its full potential. Spin-offs like Composite charts will continue to occur with more regularity. The future is quite bright indeed when we think about the Uranian paradigm.

Summary

While this short paper introduces a few aspects of some of the underlying features of the Uranian System and its background and implications, it is not a substitute for the proper study of the subject. The System is a complete astrology with all the breadth and features of the entire astrological field and is well-established as the core of a progressive move to the future. In this first successful system of astrological thought in modern times, we have a very sturdy framework. It is rooted in a language that is consistent with the prevailing scientific outlook and well suited for statistical investigation.

Exposure to the concepts of the Uranian System is often quite alien to a classically trained astrologer and unless thoroughly studied and experienced, it is easy to dismiss. Yet, the System persists and grows in adherents, decade after decade, for very simple reasons. It is logical, produces dramatic results, easily fits into the culture of our time and is simply the future of astrology. It is hard to dismiss truths that are so easy to quantify, demonstrate, and repeat. It is a great testament to what can be accomplished when a science and art like astrology is cleaned up. Kepler was correct and prescient in his estimation of the baby that emerged from the bath.

Data Collections

Frank C. Clifford

Astrologers seek truth in the evidence of the lives of those whose charts we study. For over a decade we have turned a critical eye on those charts, finding that much of our data have been hearsay, and worse, unstated speculation. Through exposing data to the harsh clarity of public scrutiny, we have multiplied not only our databank, but also our sophistication. We are more skeptical today, and more demanding of an accounting of accuracy of source.

Lois M. Rodden, Astro-Data IV (AFA, 1990)

This paper will consider the history and development of data collecting and the philosophy behind it, as well as how the growing accuracy of recorded birth times and publication of large data collections has changed research and challenged astrological assumptions. Along the way, we will discuss the impact of data rating systems on professional standards, the importance of collections, and the legacy of data collectors.

History: Data Recording and the Emergence of Collections

During the twentieth century, two changes occurred that would shape the field of data collecting: First, an increase in the recording of birth data on official documents, and Second, the publication of collections based on accurate and sourced information. The legal requirement to record birth information (including birth times) would give astrologers the opportunity to obtain data from official sources and cast natal charts with greater accuracy, while the availability of data collections ensured that astrologers could develop their techniques from a wide range of example charts and be more aware of where the birth information originated.

Both of these major developments would ensure that using accurate (or, at the very least, sourced) astrological data would become a fundamental part of professional practice among astrologers.

(1) Birth Time Recordings

Some European countries began listing birth times on certificates as far back as the late 18th century (France and much of Germany in 1792, Belgium and the Netherlands from 1793, Naples and Sicily from 1820 and Italy from 1866, Scotland from

Frank C. Clifford, "Data Collections," *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 73–80,
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1855¹). But there is little evidence, however, of astrological authors using these official sources to build collections or test findings until the middle of the twentieth century. At this time, there was an increase in the number of countries and states recording birth times on official documents, and those that had already begun this practice were now doing so with greater (sometimes to-the-minute) precision. And only after statisticians Michel and Françoise Gauquelin began a huge undertaking to find correlations between eminence in profession and planetary placements did astrologers begin to take advantage of the vast amount of verified data available and carry out their own research projects to ‘prove’ astrology or to analyze individual charts.

But not all countries had birth times recorded officially. Even now, only birth times of twins are required on certificates in England, and this is to comply with the Succession Law. As in many other countries, obtaining a birth time is dependent on contact with the person in question who might have access to a hospital tag, family note or anecdote. If astrology was once a luxury in England for the privileged few—those born to the purple—then the availability of birth times of historical figures reflects this: only births (such as new additions to the royal family) considered important or newsworthy were recorded and published, most notably in *The Times*.

The 50 U.S. states vary as to when birth times began to be recorded with consistency (if at all), and most states block public access to these records. From the early 1980s to late 1990s, when data collecting was at its peak with a network of dedicated collectors, access to registries in California, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas proved invaluable and such states were mined constantly. But at the present time, increased security measures as well as issues of personal privacy and data protection have seen these few remaining states implement stringent regulations that restrict access.

(2) The Publication of Data Collections

There is some evidence of early data collecting with books that included small collections of birth data. For example, in the mid-second century, the astrologer Vettius Valens included over 100 example charts in his nine-book-long astrological treatise known as the *Anthology*.² Many of the charts were from his private client files, while others seemed to have been from the collections of earlier astrologers.

In the modern period, from the 1970s, there was a move by the Gauquelins and astrologers such as Lois Rodden and Marc Penfield to publish large collections of birth data for the astrological community. More importantly, these collections began to list the sources of their information (for example, “data from birth certificate”). Prior to this, astrologers did not question the reliability of data in print, and so few verified birth data of public figures were available that collections (few and far between) were often indiscriminate compilations of speculative, rectified, and unsourced data.

Many early attempts to present famous horoscopes in print (for instance, in works by Alan Leo, Maurice Wemyss, and Marion Meyer Drew) were based on inaccurate data, and later invalidated by contradictory reports, or considered unverifiable because of the absence of sources.

The Gauquelin Effect

Astrology enthusiast Michel Gauquelin (1928–1991) began to collect accurate birth data in 1949 to look for correlations between personality/behavior and horoscopes. A few years later, he was joined by statistician Françoise Schneider (1929–2007), who became his wife. By using very large samples of birth data, they discovered correlations between eminent sportsmen, scientists, politicians, and writers and the diurnal positions of up to five planets in their horoscopes (the Moon, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn). The areas in the horoscope that were statistically significant (essentially the cadent houses, using a rough-and-ready version of the Placidus house system) were named '*Gauquelin Sectors*' (or *Zones*). The couple would later study planetary heredity as well as character traits.

Their six-volume data collection (published in 1970) was unique in its enormity (14,247 data), and that all the data had originated from birth certificates. Although it seems the tenacious Gauquelins were thorns in the side of both the astrological and scientific communities as a whole, their enormous collection of research is not only an example of working within a scientific framework and protocol, but also a rich source of the data of eminent professionals for further research.

The Philosophy of Accurate Data: the Impact of Rodden

The 20th century's fascination with celebrity and personality captured the interest of astrology authors and lecturers, who used examples of lives that would be familiar to their audience. Indeed, it was a profile of the infant Princess Margaret in 1930 that prompted the growth of Sun Sign astrology in newspapers. Yet rectified charts and speculative birth data—arguably reflecting the astrologer's own set of astrological considerations, education, and sensibility—persisted in books and presentations, usually without reference to the fact that the data had been manufactured.

In no area of science are professionals or academics able to present findings without verifying their sources and data. Why, in 1979, were astrologers so far behind? It was clear that a stringent system of data classification and use was required urgently. Canadian astrologer Lois Rodden was about to make it her life mission to raise our standards. Her complaint was not with the use of rectified or speculative charts, *if they were presented as such* (although basing theories on inaccurate charts was cause for concern).³ The issue was (and remains) the lack of referencing of source data in

astrological literature and presentations. In her first data volume, *Profiles of Women* (AFA, 1979), she wrote:

I implore astrologers everywhere to record the data source on every chart... Accuracy of data is essential to sound research, as well as to skillful delineation... Speculation and rectification are valid techniques in our business and, used skillfully, may constitute brilliant displays of astrological expertise. However, presentation of rectified data that are not designated as such is careless or presumptive and is an insult to the intelligence of our community.

“Women,” she later said, “was the book that turned the corner between the naiveté of the early 20th century about our data, and the awareness of the 21st century astrologer, approaching our data as educated professionals.”⁴

Rodden became the central source for collectors to send in their contributions and exchange data, and for astrologers to retrieve data. Recognizing that data are volatile and subject to correction (even birth certificates can be error-prone), her newsletter, *DataNews*, became a means to present new finds, bring information up to date, and for her to connect with astrologers in 24 countries. With tenacity and diplomacy, Rodden was able to set standards of excellence in data collecting and encourage writers and publications to adopt professional levels of reporting and data etiquette.

Techniques: The Rodden Rating System

Rodden’s campaign to cite sources led to many magazines (such as *The Mountain Astrologer*) accepting articles based only on accurate, sourced data. In addition to culling the work of many collectors into her files, by 1980, Rodden had also created and developed a simple system to rate the integrity of data. Her classification system would become data collecting’s most significant and enduring contribution to astrological practice today. The letters below are now instantly recognized and widely used to indicate a ‘shorthand’ of data accuracy, as well as a writer’s awareness of data etiquette and willingness to meet the professional standards set out by Rodden.

Rodden Rating System⁵

AA – Data from birth certificate, hospital, church or governmental birth record, notes from the Vital Statistic Registry Offices, notations in a family Bible, baby book or family written record. Although birth times may be rounded off or, on occasion, information may be in error, this is the best evidence of data accuracy.

A – Data from the person, family member, friend or associate. Also included are newspaper birth announcements, as well as birth times given within a ‘window

of time' of thirty minutes (e.g. 'between 3.30 p.m. and 4.00 p.m.') from any of these sources.

B – Data from biographies, autobiographies, and personal websites, where no other source is given.

C – Caution, data not validated. No source; vague, rectified/speculative data, 'personal' ambiguous sources, approximate birth times (e.g. 'early morning', 'around lunchtime').

DD – Dirty Data. Two or more unsubstantiated quotes of time, place or date. Any unverified data are contradicted by another source.

Technical Advances

Perhaps more than any other branch of astrology, data collecting has been affected by the development of astrological programs for personal computers. These programs have eliminated the need to hand-draw horoscopes and created an opportunity to store, retrieve, and analyze data. In 1985, Rodden committed herself to putting the astrological community's collection onto disk. Early attempts foundered, but the entrance of computer whiz Mark McDonough into Rodden's life on July 3, 1996, led to the development of the *Astrodatabank* program. McDonough built the program to test various astrological theories, and Rodden, with a team of writers, created biographies and categories for over 25,000 public individuals, and many anonymous data for research. The program was pioneering in that it enabled astrologers to search the database to filter and weigh a variety of astrological placements, aspects, rulerships and phenomena, and to test-run hypotheses with control groups.

With the development of sophisticated astrological calculation programs came the need to provide data collections for buyers. The emergence of *Astrodatabank* proved a blessing for astrologers, but there were political difficulties to resolve. Numerous collectors (who for so long engaged in their unpaid labour of love) objected to the sudden issue of data ownership and the right to sell and profit from a community's donations. This, coupled with the death of data's doyenne Rodden in 2003, led to an apathetic response, and far fewer contributions of new data in the new millennium. The sale of *Astrodatabank* to the Swiss company Astrodienst in 2008, and its subsequent conversion to a free service through their commercial website, www.astro.com, has raised similar ownership issues. However, the sourced data and categories have established a central access for astrologers worldwide to find accurate and sourced charts of public figures.

Importance and Legacy

The pursuit, collection and classification of birth data have been of great significance

to astrologers. In order to develop our skills and test our hypotheses, astrologers must have accurate horoscopes with which to work—it is our primary consideration before we begin research.

Data collections have expanded the scope of astrological research and practice. We learn much of our astrology from historical examples, celebrity case studies, and the charts of family and friends. Without access to charts from data collections, which provide examples of how planetary configurations have worked in the lives of others, our study is purely theoretical. A wealth of biographical information and the vast collections of accurately timed horoscopes now available to our community afford us the privilege of learning to observe how a series of symbols in similar horoscopes has a spectrum of possible interpretation, and how these symbols might play out in the life and character of each owner. When we base an opinion on—or develop astrological interpretation from—speculative or rectified charts, we risk perpetuating presumptions as to what ‘should’ be present astrologically from such a life.

The accumulative databases of the Gauquelins, Lois Rodden, Edwin Steinbrecher, Sy Scholfield, and Grazia Bordoni provide instant access to tens of thousands of accurate data. The vast data now available to astrologers online and in books were collected by a worldwide community of “data freaks” who have, for many years, found ingenious ways of tracking down and double-checking correct birth information, and have sniffed out rare data finds by writing to celebrities and Vital Records offices, wading through excerpts from obscure interviews, sidestepping ‘resumé’ ages, and examining numerous badly handwritten birth records.

Yet despite the efforts of collectors, many published books and articles still do not give sources or references (such as the online site Astrotheme, which poaches data without source or credit, and Io Edition software). The reader has no idea whether the information is correct, may naively trust, and regurgitate charts based on unverified data or, worse still, latch on to a chart because it “fits” assumptions of what such a person should “look like” in horoscope form. Interestingly, the move to raise standards and ensure published charts are based on accurate, sourced data has, on occasion, led to a backlash: some astrologers, keen to give weight to their assertions, have falsified source notes and presented speculative or rectified data as accurate.

With thousands of data available, astrologers can now perform number-crunching analyses to look for correlations and distinguish the repeatable from the coincidental, although it is interesting to note that most astrologers have not attempted to integrate the most significant statistical findings—those of the Gauquelins—into their astrological practice. Using a computer, researchers wishing to consider astrology in quantitative terms can instantly select a few hundred horoscopes with a key personality trait or event in common and put astrological theories to the test. In doing so, it

has the potential to demolish and “clean up” a number of assertions found in astrological “cookbooks” (for instance, claiming that Jupiter on the Midheaven indicates a brilliant career for its owner), and force astrologers to back up their claims.

Yet no single aspect makes a signature—external factors such as opportunity, culture, education, and health play significant roles. Arguably, the horoscope reveals a number of routes across the same landscape, and many possible destinations. The more charts we study, the less we can relate to a narrow model of presumed astrological signatures. Astrology is both a language and a study of patterns. Even if we choose to interact with the scientific and academic communities, in an area as complex as human emotion, reasoning and interaction, do statistics help us to *interpret* the horoscope? With empirical research, we are looking for meaningful observations and *correspondences*: we notice themes under similar transits or natal placements, and we begin to document lives at key planetary periods and cycles. When clients or public figures “speak their charts,” we collect gems that inform our practice.

Most importantly, the last sixty years of data collecting, storage and sharing have enabled student and working astrologers to have access to accurate, verified information. With this, we can build our astrological vocabulary, test our own theories, and avoid falling into a derivative pattern of regurgitating the work of other astrologers, or reinforcing stereotypes from past generations without question or update. Such data collections have also given lecturers and writers the *opportunity* to present observations and findings from accountable, verified sources—the lifetime wish and goal of many data researchers worldwide. At the UAC before Rodden’s death in 2003, *Astrodatabank* partner Mark McDonough said, “We as a community are blessed that Lois Rodden’s life’s passion has given us a cornerstone for rebuilding the respect that astrology so richly deserves.” It is up to us, as a community, to take advantage of this gift and build upon it.

Dates of Key Publications

- ca. 175 *Anthology*, Vettius Valens
- 1662 *Collectio Genituarum, or A Collection of Nativities*, John Gadbury
- 1917 *1001 Notable Nativities*, Alan Leo
- 1930 *Astrology: Your Place Among the Stars*, Evangeline Adams
- 1938 *Famous Nativities*, Maurice Wemyss
- 1941 *101 Headline Horoscopes*, Marion Meyer Drew
- 1951 *L'influence des Astres*, Michel Gauquelin
- 1962 *101 Hard to Find Horoscopes*, Marion Meyer Drew
- 1970 *Birth and Planetary Data Gathered Since 1949* (six volumes), Michel and Françoise Gauquelin
- 1972 *The Circle Book of Charts* (AFA), Stephen Erlewine
- 1972 *An Astrological Who's Who*, Marc Penfield
- 1979 *2001: The Penfield Collection*, Marc Penfield
- 1979 *Profiles of Women* (AFA), Lois Rodden

Four volumes of data follow: *Astro-Data II* (General, 1980, 1200 data), *III* (Occult, 1986, 700 data), *IV* (Culture, 1990, 750 data), *V* (Crime, 1991, 735 data). *Astro-Data I: Profiles of Women* is later rewritten and expanded, becoming Rodden's flagship book (1996, 1400 data).

- **1982** *The Gauquelin Book of American Charts* (AFA), Michel and Françoise Gauquelin
- **1984** *Accurate World Horoscopes* (AFA), Doris Chase Doane
- **1986** *Data News*, ed. Lois Rodden, first of 100 issues published
- **1988** *The Book of World Horoscopes* (Aquarian), Nicholas Campion (revised 1995, 2004)
- **1989** *Scottish Birth Data* (on Astrocalc), Paul Wright—later incorporated into a larger volume of 2800 data, *A Multitude of Lives* (Parlando, 2009)
- **1990** *Contemporary American Horoscopes* (on Astrolabe), Janice MacKay and Jessica Saunders
- **1991** *Internationales Horoskope Lexikon* (Bauer Verlag), Hans-Hinrich Taeger—the first of four volumes (7600 data)
- **1992** *Nativitas: Astrological Studies* (Triom), James Martin Harvey—the first of three volumes
The House of Commons, Caroline Gerard (revised 1997)
- **1995** *Datanotizie*, ed. Grazia Bordoni, first issue published
- **1997** *The Clifford Data Compendium* (on Solar Fire), Frank C. Clifford
British Entertainers: the Astrological Profiles (Flare), Frank C. Clifford
- **1998** *The Canadian Astrology Collection* (Canadian Astrology Press), John McKay-Clements
A Chronology of American Charts (Poz), Ronald Howland
- **1999** AstrodataBank launched
- **2009** *The Astrologer's Book of Charts* (Flare), Frank C. Clifford AstrodataBank freely available on www.astro.com

Endnotes

- 1 AstroDataBank, *Reference Manual*, Manchester, MA, 1999, p. 164.
- 2 *Vettii Valentis Antiocheni Anthologiarum Libri Novem*, ed. David Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, 1986. All of the charts in Valens' collection were dated in Neugebauer and Van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1959.
- 3 In many countries, it is now standard practice for astrologers to fine-tune data—to rectify charts *from an existing record*—as it is accepted that birth times are sometimes rounded off, or still may be listed incorrectly. There is also astrological debate as to what constitutes the precise moment of birth; an enquiry not aided by a past lack of interest in documenting the birth time.
- 4 Lois M. Rodden, *Astro-Data I: Profiles of Women*, Data News Press, Hollywood, 1996, p. 1.
- 5 Text from *The Astrologer's Book of Charts*, Frank C. Clifford, Flare Publications, London, 2009, p. 4.

Asteroids and Mythic Astrology

By Demetra George

For the first four thousand years of astrological practice, astrologers and astronomers knew of only seven visible moving bodies—the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Since 1781, not only have Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto attained the status of planets, but many thousands of additional celestial bodies have joined the ranks of the inhabitants in our solar system.

The belt between Mars and Jupiter contains more than 400,000 asteroids. Some astrologers have incorporated Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta into their chart analysis, but are daunted at the prospect of considering the 15,000 other asteroids for which there now exist ephemerides. Chiron was discovered in 1977, traveling between the orbits of Saturn and Uranus, and it quickly became popular among astrologers. Then by the 1990's, a number of other centaurs—Pholus, Nessus, Asbolos, Hylonome, and Chariko—were identified in Chiron's region of space. The dust of the Kuiper Belt extends 7 billion miles beyond Neptune. In the first decade of the 21st century, a host of other celestial icy objects—Orcus, Haumea, Makemake, Quaoar, Varuna, Ixion, Eris, and Sedna—have been found in the Oort Cloud, which is billions of miles further away.

The multitude of newly discovered celestial bodies challenges the astrological community to ascribe meaning to them in our rapidly expanding solar system, or not to. This paper documents the history of asteroid research, and argues that the mythic tradition, present from the very beginning of the astrological way of thinking, is a valid philosophical approach by which to delineate the interpretive significance of celestial bodies in chart analysis.

History of Asteroid Discovery and Research

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) speculated in *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, “Between Mars and Jupiter, I place a planet.” Fifty years later, J. D. Titius (1729–1796) presented a detailed study of the relationship between the distances of planets from the Sun, and noted a significant gap between Mars and Jupiter. This theory later became better known as Bode's Law. It was initially dismissed as a piece of idle curiosity, but Uranus' discovery in 1781, at the predicted Bode AU position, precipitated astronomical societies worldwide to search for the missing planet.

Demetra George, “Asteroids and Mythic Astrology,” *NCGR Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 81–89, www.geocosmic.org/researchjournal

On January 1, 1801, a Sicilian priest, Giuseppe Piazzi (1746–1826) was correcting errors in a star catalogue, and accidentally discovered a new body, which he named *Ceres Ferdinandea*, after both the Roman and Sicilian goddesses of grain, whose mythological site was near his observatory, and King Ferdinand IV of Naples and Sicily. The asteroid Ceres was subsequently lost from sight, but found again in December of that year, at its predicted Bode position. In the next few years, several more asteroids—Pallas (1802), Juno, (1804), and Vesta (1807)—were discovered. It is important that these asteroids were located in accordance with Bode’s Law, which indicates that they are part of the underlying mathematical and geometrical structure of the solar system, and not aberrant cosmic gravel, as some astrologers suggest.

Piazzi set the precedent by naming asteroids after goddesses, as the astronomer who discovered the asteroid had the privilege of proposing its name. Each asteroid was given a number in chronological order and, for the most part, a name from classical myth. About 95% of the asteroids have regular orbits, and these were given feminine names; the remaining 5% with irregular orbits were given masculine names. By the end of the 19th century, there were 450 asteroids, mostly named after Greco-Roman goddesses or women. In the 20th century, asteroids were named after both gods and goddesses from many world mythic traditions, and after countries, cities, rivers, male and female common names in honor of relatives, colleagues, distinguished musicians, painters, writers, intellectuals, and concepts.

In the century following their discovery asteroids received only passing mention by a few astrologers—Wilson, Leo, and Sepharial. No ephemerides were available, so interest was theoretical and sparse. It was not until 1973 that the first asteroid ephemeris for Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta was published, due to the untiring efforts of New York astrologer Eleanor Bach,¹ who convinced an astronomer to calculate their difficult orbits in an age before computers. Bach proposed tentative meanings for the asteroids, derived from the mythology associated with their names. In the next several years, Esther Leinbach² and Emma Bell Donath³ investigated the asteroids and put forth their preliminary findings. Meanwhile, Neil Michelsen produced more accurate ephemerides and Zip Dobyns began research into these new bodies.⁴ When Chiron was discovered in 1977, Al Morrison immediately put out its ephemeris.⁵

Morrison, with the assistance of Lee Lehman, ushered in the 1980s with the publication of a dozen more ephemerides of the ‘minor’ asteroids.⁶ On the East Coast, Lehman, Diana Rosenberg, and Nona Gwynn Press⁷ made strides in asteroid research, while on the West Coast, Michelson, Dobyns, Batya Stark, and Mark Pottenger⁸ pursued further investigations. Tony Joseph,⁹ Frances McEvoy, Lorraine Welsh, and Pamela Crane lectured, taught, wrote articles, and sponsored asteroid-related education during this time. And, the first books about Chiron by Erminie Lantero, Richard

Nolle, and Zane Stein came out.¹⁰

The second part of the 1980's saw the publication of works about the asteroids by Demetra George,¹¹ Press,¹² Lehman,¹³ and Martha Lang Wescott;¹⁴ Pottenger made his CCRS asteroid program, which generated positions for thousands of asteroids, available to the public. The NCGR Asteroid SIG¹⁵ was formed, and it is still active. Roxana Muise instituted a service to provide individual asteroid ephemerides and complete lists of thousands of asteroids for an individual chart. Additional insights on Chiron were published by Barbara Hand Clow and Melanie Reinhart.¹⁶

In the 1990's, astronomer Lutz D. Schmadel published the *Dictionary of Minor Planet Names*¹⁷ (with current online updates), which served as an inspiration for Jacob Schwartz's¹⁸ encyclopedia and software programs. Press and George published other books that included research on the minor asteroids,¹⁹ and Ariel Guttman and Kenneth Johnson gave equal space to the asteroid archetypes in their *Mythic Astrology* books.²⁰ Adam Gainsberg, Eric Francis, and Martin Lass continued their research into Chiron.²¹ In the first decade of the 21st century, we have seen additional asteroid research as Roderick Kidston,²² Melanie Reinhart,²³ Phillip Sedgwick, Dave Campbell,²⁴ Jonathan Dunn, Brian Clark²⁵, Kelley Hunter,²⁶ Mark Holmes,²⁷ and Nick Anthony Fiorenza have investigated the centaurs and other objects in the distant realms of our solar system. Astrologers now have computer software to generate the zodiacal positions for over 15,000 asteroids.²⁸

The Mythic Tradition

The plethora of new objects orbiting in the solar system raises certain questions that our astrological forefathers did not have to consider. Do all celestial bodies have interpretive meaning in the astrological chart? If so, what methods can be used to research their individual significations in human and terrestrial experience? Are the mythological stories recounting the attributes and deeds of the deities a viable avenue by which to reveal this meaning? Do philosophic justifications and historical precedents exist for this approach? Let us begin by exploring the historical relationship between the planets and the gods after whom they are named. This query will inevitably lead us to uncover how politics and religion have influenced a mythic approach to astrology during various historical periods.

The earliest written evidence for astrology comes from Mesopotamia in the second millennium BCE. Known as the astral doctrine or astral religion, the planets were directly and implicitly understood to be one manifestation of the gods. By their appearances in sky, the planetary gods communicated their intentions to humans on the earth. A cuneiform text reads, "When Ishtar (the planet Venus as the goddess of love) stands on high (culminates in the sky), lovemaking (is) on the land."²⁹

Divination by the stars was practiced in Mesopotamia for almost two thousand years before this astronomical knowledge arrived in Greece. In the 6th century BCE, the Pythagoreans gave the planets the names of the Greek gods who most closely resembled their Babylonian counterparts, but made it clear that a planet fell under the auspices of some god rather than being the god itself. Long before the development of astrology in Greece, Platonic philosophy alluded to a connection between planets, gods, and human character. At this time, Greek gods had long lived on Mt. Olympus, rather than in the sky. A century later, Plato proposed that the planets were visible manifestations of the gods.³⁰ He wrote how the twelve Olympians drive their chariots along the course of their planetary orbits; each soul follows a particular deity, and when it returns to earth, it most closely resembles that planetary god.³¹

Astrology, as we know it today, emerged in Egypt in the 2nd century BCE under the rule of Greek kings. According to the Hellenistic authors, the earliest texts on astrology were ascribed to the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistus.³² Hermetic philosophy proposed a living cosmos imbued with a multitude of divine and semi-divine celestial spirits and a chain of correspondences whereby human body parts, plants, metals, stones, animals, scents, colors correspond to a particular planet, zodiacal sign, and divine spirit.

Several centuries later, Claudius Ptolemy (c. 90–c.170 AD) gave a physical explanation for the powers of the planets based upon Aristotle's natural philosophy,³³ and after this time there was a split between the earlier spiritual hermetic astrology and the later more science-based astrology. A central question of subsequent philosophic debate that arose from this distinction was between 'soft' and 'hard' astrology. Are planets appearances of gods expressing divine will, or are planets physical causes of material events? Are planets imbued with soul and consciousness, or are they composed of inert material devoid of sentience?

Henceforth, most mainstream Hellenistic astrological texts described the planets in terms of their physical qualities of hot, cold, wet, and dry, and gave significations for the planets, which while coincident with the characteristics of the gods, were not directly linked to the gods themselves. For example, while Mars had command over violence and military expeditions,³⁴ it was not *because* Mars was the God of War." With only a few exceptions, mentions of the gods were rare.³⁵

This shift in astrological thinking, from a spiritual to a physical basis for its working, reflected larger cultural paradigm shifts from a mytho-poetic view of the cosmos to one based upon rational philosophy and natural causation. Political and religious considerations also played a role, especially when it was judicious that astrology not be perceived as promoting pagan planetary gods in the face of the deification of kings and emperors as gods. The increasing power of monotheism and a desire that

astrology not be tainted by its association with magical thinking were additional factors in the distancing of gods from planets by most Hellenistic astrologers.

In late antiquity, the planet-god connection disappeared from mainstream astrology and went underground into the Hermetic, Gnostic, magical Jewish, and alchemical traditions.³⁶ This trend continued during the golden age of medieval Arabic astrology, when Aristotelian philosophy and Islamic monotheism prevailed in cosmological thinking. None of the major astrologers, such as Masha'allah, Sahl, Abu Ali Al-Khayyat, or Abu'Mashar, refer to planets as pagan mythic gods. However the planet-god connection survived and flourished in the Hermetic Sabian tradition of planetary god cults, temples, and rites practiced in Harran, whose traditions were brought to Baghdad by Thabit ibn Qurra (836–901) in the 9th century.³⁷ The spiritual foundations of astrology later emerged in Arabic Neoplatonist doctrines contained in the writings of the Brethren of the Purity, where astrology was seen as a means for a soul to return to God.³⁸

Following this precedent, Latin, Medieval, and Renaissance astrologers such as Bonatti, Cardanus, Morinus, Schoener, and Lilly did not mention mythic planet-god correspondences in their texts. However, the underground river of spiritual astrology flowed forth into Europe from two directions—the Harranian/Bagdad stream was transmitted to the Islamic Moorish kingdom in southern Spain, and reappeared in the Spanish *Picatrix*.³⁹ Byzantines fleeing the fall of Constantinople brought manuscripts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* to Italy, where they were translated by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), and inspired his astrological treatise, *Three Books of Life*.⁴⁰ Henry Cornelius Agrippa wrote *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* in the 16th century as a compendium of the spiritual magical workings of the gods and planetary influences.⁴¹ The Renaissance book series *Children of the Planet* presented artistic images of planetary gods in the heavens as overseers of human occupations on earth, each accompanied by symbols of the zodiacal signs they rule. The power of images, symbols, and the imagination broke through centuries of suppression.

It was not until the 20th century, when Carl Jung re-conceptualized the gods as psychological forces of the psyche, that we see the full re-appearance of a mythic approach to the astrological interpretation of planets as archetypes. Jung wrote, “Astrology consists of symbolic configurations, just as does the collective unconscious, with which psychology is concerned: the planets are the gods, symbols of the powers of the unconscious.”⁴² His articulation of this perspective liberated astrologers from the two thousand year taboo against imbuing planetary symbols with the magical powers of pagan gods.

A new generation of contemporary astrologers began to look to myth as a way of understanding the planetary archetypes. Wendy Ashley, Tony Joseph, Liz Greene,

Eleanor Bach, Richard Idemon, Howard Sasportas, Brian Clark, Melanie Reinhart, Darby Costello, Kenneth Johnson, Ariel Guttman, Erin Sullivan, Kelly Hunter, and Demetra George all used mythology to deepen an astrological understanding of planetary influences in human behavior. The appearance of the asteroids on the astrological scene coincided with the articulation of a psychological-theoretical construct that utilized myth as a way of apprehending planetary meaning.

If it's in the Sky, it's in the Psyche

We will now revisit our question: Is there a philosophical and historical justification for using myths to discern planetary meaning—specifically the meanings of the many asteroids and other recently discovered celestial objects? Plato put forth the idea that the planets are the visible appearances of the gods. The Hermetic philosophy declared that man is the image of the cosmos and “that which is above is like that which is below.”⁴³ The Stoics held the notion of cosmic sympathy, where everything is connected through a chain of correspondences between celestial bodies in the sky and life forms on earth. And Jung explained that gods correspond to aspects of human consciousness; images of gods are projections of active forces in the psyche. Images of deity are none other than the unified nature of mind itself, and it follows that planets (or any celestial bodies) stand as symbolic intermediaries in the chain of orders between deities and humans. In short, *if it's in the sky, it's in the psyche*; everything in the sky corresponds to some aspect of the psyche.

The astrological chart is a map of the arrangement of celestial bodies in the heavens that mirrors the structure of the psyche. Celestial bodies in the heavens correspond to centers of consciousness in the human psyche, whose natures can be accessed through the myths of the deity. The discovery of new celestial bodies corresponds to the awakening and activation of these centers of consciousness in the process of awakening mass consciousness. The plethora of newly discovered planetary bodies speaks of a quantum leap in human brain cell processing as witnessed by the information explosion of the Internet Age. The use of myth is one way to illuminate meaning in terms of the activation of human potential, synchronistic with discoveries in an expanding solar system.

How can these principles be applied to a technique for utilizing myth in the astrological interpretation of asteroids? How can we determine which of the multitude of celestial bodies are significant for an individual human being or event, based upon the inception moment? I suggest that we start by using small orbs to identify the asteroids that are connected with the power places of the chart; the Sun, Moon, the Ascendant and its ruler, as well as the other angles.

A brief example will illustrate this process: the event chart⁴⁴ for the fatal plane crash

of John F. Kennedy, Jr. who, although a newly licensed pilot, ignored the advice of a seasoned professional concerning dangerous solar glare weather conditions. He took off in a small plane, which crashed into the ocean, drowning his wife and himself. At that moment, the asteroids Anubis, the Egyptian jackal-headed god, who escorted the dead to the Underworld, and Oceana, symbolizing the ocean depths, were rising on the Ascendant. Saturn, the Ascendant's ruler, was conjunct Icarus. The asteroid Icarus was named after the winged youth who likewise did not heed his father's warning not to fly too close to the Sun, because the heat would melt the wax holding together his feathered wings, and he subsequently crashed into the sea. Saturn and Icarus were exactly trine to the Moon, which was partile conjunct the asteroid Daedalus, the father of Icarus, whose flight and escape were successful. These mythic asteroids from Greek and Egyptian traditions in tight configuration with the primary planets and angles graphically portray the fateful events that ensued that evening, as the sun set into the horizon, depicted by the ancients as the place of death.

The Future

In recent centuries, astrologers had to accept the addition of Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto into their astrological symbol system, and arrived at interpretive meanings. The discovery of ever-increasing numbers of celestial bodies in the solar system in the last century spurred astronomers to reclassify objects in the solar system, and likewise forced astrologers to rethink their rationale concerning the incorporation and interpretation of such additional planetary bodies. The mythic approach, whose roots go back to the origin of astrology, has proved fruitful in the research involved in asteroid study in the last forty years, and provides us with a way for making meaning of the myriad gods in the heavens.

How do ancient myths continue to live on in contemporary psyches and society? Eris, the Greek goddess of strife, was vengeful at not being invited to the wedding feast of Thetis and Peleus, so she threw a golden apple into the crowd and incited the Trojan War. The discovery and naming of her asteroid in 2005 likewise upset the applecart, as she again caused dissension and controversy, and forced astronomers to reclassify objects the solar system by demoting Pluto, and promoting Ceres and Eris, to the status of dwarf planets.

Will the astrological community now reject Pluto and marginalize its importance in chart analysis because astronomers claim that it no longer has equal status with other planets? Or will they broaden their perspective to consider the value of other celestial bodies as integral parts of the wholeness of the cosmos and human nature? Asteroid research renews and revitalizes the mythic tradition, and points the way to understanding the profound connection between the gods, planets, and mind.

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- 44 John F. Kennedy Jr., July 16, 1999, 8:38 pm, Caldwell, NJ.

(continued from page 94.)

4 Much of this was documented in Nicholas Campion’s paper “The Traditional Revival in Modern Astrology: A Preliminary History,” *Astrological Quarterly*, Astrological Lodge of London, Vol. 74, No. 1, Winter 2003. The revival of the medieval tradition first began around 1980 with the publication of Robert Zoller’s book *The Lost Key to Prediction: The Arabic Parts in Astrology, Inner Traditions*, New York, NY, 1980, which was largely based on translations portions of Guido Bonatti’s work. The revival of the Renaissance tradition occurred later in the same decade in the UK, largely centered around the work of William Lilly, and the practice of horary astrology, spurred chiefly by the late Olivia Barclay. The revival of Hellenistic astrology began in the mid-1990s with the foundation of the Project Hindsight/ARHAT translation project, with the majority of the early translations of Greek astrological texts being published by Robert Schmidt between 1992 and 1998. I locate the pivotal period in the rise in popularity of Indian astrology in the west to the 1990s because the first wave of books on the subject published by westerners came out in the first part of that decade, and the same period also saw the launch of some of the first organizations for Indian astrology in the west, such as the American Council of Vedic Astrology in 1993. While not technically a “revival,” the surge in the popularity of Indian astrology during that time can be seen as part of a broader wave of interest in older and most established traditions of astrology.

5 The best overview of the history and transmission of the techniques of astrology is given in James Holden, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, American Federation of Astrologers, Tempe, AZ, 1996. Many of these periods of transmission and synthesis are defined quite clearly by Holden.



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Moving Forward, Looking Back¹

Chris Brennan

Astrology fell into disrepute in the west in the 17th century due to a variety of social and political reasons.² It was not revived again until the late 19th and early 20th century, at a time when an enormous amount of change was taking place in the world.³ While it was not exactly continuous, there was a sense of continuity in the western astrological tradition up until this break, in between the 17th and the 19th centuries. When it was finally revived again in the 20th century, astrology was based on a much different conceptual and technical framework than previously. It was reinvented in some sense, based on a few pieces of the earlier tradition, which were then given new life when aligned with the philosophical and conceptual notions of the modern age.

This development culminated in the past 30 years, around the same time that a new movement was beginning—the movement to revive the ancient traditions of astrology. It started in the 1980s with the Medieval and Renaissance traditions, and then in the 1990s with the Hellenistic and Indian traditions.⁴ We now stand at the threshold of the second decade of the 21st century, only 20 or 30 years into the revival of “traditional” pre-20th century forms of astrology, with a majority of the key foundational texts of the earlier traditions available again for the first time in centuries. Moreover, groups of astrologers are practicing techniques that have not been employed or known about for hundreds of years, and adopting philosophical and conceptual approaches to astrology that have long been forgotten or marginalized.

Clearly we have reached a pivotal time in the history of astrology, where ancient and modern traditions are coming into contact with, and often contrasting with, each other. If we consider the type of astrology that flourished during the late 20th century as “Modern astrology,” it seems that we have reached a point where we have to ask what comes after that. I will therefore adopt the designation “Post-Modern astrology” to refer to the system or systems of astrology that will emerge from the multiplicity of different traditions and approaches to astrology that are now intermingling in the astrological community. This is a temporary designation, as its sole purpose is to identify the anticipated results of the changes that the community is now undergoing. I suspect that these changes will result in the emergence of an astrology that will come to define our practice in the 21st century, and beyond. We need only look through the articles contained in this journal to get some sense of what the astrology of the 21st century might look like, or perhaps more accurately, some of the challenges that the astrological community faces now in attempting to reconcile more than three thousand years of astrological theory and practice.

While it might appear that we are experiencing a unique time, and in many respects we are, I would like to propose that this is not a new or unique process, but instead one that has happened several times in the past. I would go so far as to say that every major tradition or era of astrology has been initiated under circumstances similar to those in which we now find ourselves.

One of the major components is the transmission of older forms of astrology, followed by their assimilation by contemporary practitioners, and finally the emergence of a new synthesis of the contributing traditions. This was certainly the case during the early Hellenistic tradition, the early and late medieval traditions, and the Renaissance traditions.⁵ To the extent that horoscopic astrology in India represents a synthesis of the Hellenistic tradition and the indigenous lunar astrology of the nakshatras, Indian astrology is also an example of this process. The time has again come to engage in the same process of retrospective analysis of the traditions, and for the creation of a new synthesis for the future.

It is clear that each of the traditions described herein is self-contained and adequate on its own. There is not necessarily *need* for synthesis, as each can be practiced on its own terms, and appreciated for its own merits. But there might be something to be gained through a common dialogue, and through an exchange of ideas amongst the professors of the different traditions. Although I do not agree with the charge that is sometimes made that astrology is a religion, I do think that it is susceptible to the sorts of internecine wars that characterize the clash of different sects, which result from deeply ingrained beliefs about the nature of the cosmos coming into conflict with each other. If we approach each other in good faith, there is no reason that such a dialogue should end badly, or be counterproductive.

Part of the purpose of this journal's collection of papers is an attempt to contrast the positions that the different traditions hold on a variety of philosophical, conceptual, and technical matters. We did this so that the reader can see what positions are on the table, and which need to be addressed during the course of the dialogue among the traditions. This has raised a number of interesting issues, and I will try to outline a few of these below:

At issue in the philosophical department are questions related to "fate and free-will." Some astrological traditions accept that we inhabit a fully or largely deterministic cosmos, while others assert the potential of the individual to become self-actualized, and to manifest their own destiny, either in part, or in full. This brings into question a set of issues involving the mechanism through which astrology works: Does it function through some sort of physical mechanism or force, or does it manifest through some sort of unknown or esoteric power of the planets? Does it utilize something like Jung's Theory of Synchronicity, or is it a form of divination? While

the choice of astrology's underlying mechanism has implications for the degree to which one views astrology, as indicating that everything is predetermined, that is not to say that one mechanism necessarily implicates one philosophical position or the other. Astrologers have mixed and matched these positions throughout history. An astrology of signs can be deterministic and "fate" oriented, whereas an astrology of causes can leave room for the possibility of mitigating the "influences" of the planets, and vice versa.

This issue of "signs versus causes" is connected to a technical debate regarding the number of bodies that can or should be used in astrological delineations. Those traditions that developed prior to the discovery of the outer planets are more inclined to argue against the inclusion of new bodies into the system, partially under the premise that it violates the integrity of the system, and introduces unnecessary or unimportant variables. On the other hand, traditions that developed after the discovery of the outer planets are more likely to include these bodies into their delineations, and often have them function as core components of their system. They argue that it would be inconsistent to ignore major astronomical objects in the sky simply because they weren't known in the astrological traditions that existed prior to their discovery. Within this debate is another sub-debate regarding the inclusion of smaller celestial bodies, such as asteroids, into delineations.

Similar technical issues relate to the practice of associating particular planets with certain signs of the zodiac, otherwise known as "rulerships." The question is whether astrologers should stick with the original system composed of the seven visible planetary bodies, or whether the outer planets should be assigned to certain signs, based on certain perceived similarities. This also relates to the distinction between the tropical zodiac in the western tradition after the work of Ptolemy in the second century CE, versus the sidereal zodiac favored by Indian astrologers and some modern western siderealists.

Finally, one of the ultimate meta-issues is: What is the purpose of astrology, and what should it be used for? The answer depends partially on which subjects are within the purview of astrology. Does astrology say something about concrete external events, or does it primarily relate to the psyche and character of the individual? Is astrology inherently predictive, or can it only be used contextually, as a descriptive tool? Is astrology best used in concert with counseling and psychology? What should the role of horary or electional astrology be in contemporary practice? What is the relationship of astrology to religion, spirituality, or even science? Can astrology function in a purely materialistic cosmos, or does it require notions related to spirituality and the divine?

I will not attempt to answer these questions here, because it would be premature

for anyone to do so, when much of this dialogue between the traditions has only recently begun. I will say that the future of astrology will in large part be determined by the answers to these very important questions, and every astrologer should contemplate their answers and implications carefully.

Astrology was once the subject of inquiry by some of the best and the brightest minds in the world. While there is no doubt that a number of remarkable individuals have contributed to the subject in the past century or so since its revival in the west, the position that it holds in society is not the same as in previous eras. Instead, astrology has become the subject of scorn and ridicule by many intelligent and well-educated people. This does not reflect the inherent merits of astrology, or even its practitioners and advocates in the modern period, but it is a partial reflection of a failure on the part of the astrological community as a whole to reframe the subject in a way that restores the esteem that it held prior to the Enlightenment. The implications that astrology has for cosmology and society are profound, no matter what approach one takes to the subject, and it is up to us as a community to make that case and to reassert the importance of astrology, once again in our time. This is one of the underlying goals of the post-modern movement.

We are not just engaging in a process of retrospective analysis and synthesis of the traditions in order to create a better system, purely for the sake of the astrological community. The ultimate purpose of this movement is to reassert astrology's rightful role within society, as a study that has important implications for our understanding of the universe and ourselves, something that was lost during the break in the tradition between the 17th and 20th centuries. It is time for us to reclaim this once again. In order to do so, we must take stock of the various traditions and approaches that have existed and still exist, and determine what they have to teach us about the nature of astrology. In doing so, we will improve not only our own practice and understanding of the subject, but we will also restore astrology's status as a respectable study that advances humanity's understanding of the cosmos.

Endnotes

1 This paper, as well as the concept underlying the symposium and journal, was largely inspired by a talk given by Robert Hand titled "Towards a Post-Modern Astrology" at the AA Conference organized by the Astrological Association of Great Britain, at the University of York, on October 2, 2005. The transcript was subsequently edited and published by Astrodienst on their website at the following URL: http://www.astro.com/astrology/in_postmodern_e.htm. For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the downfall of astrology around the 17th century see Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology, Vol. 2, The Medieval and Modern Worlds*, Continuum, London, 2009, pgs. 151-191.

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