

**WISE MEN
FROM THE
EAST
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

EIGHT INVESTIGATIONS ON ASTROLOGICAL THEMES

by

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A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

The essays which form this volume largely have their origins in talks which were delivered - mainly to astrological groups - over about a ten year period. They have undergone a degree of editing, but by and large I have tried to retain the form in which they were originally presented. For this reason each is dated with the year in which it was first prepared. This may sometimes assist in placing it in context

The first of these essays, *Wise Men from the East*, began as an article for the Journal of the Federation of Australian Astrologers. However since that date it has also been delivered in various forms as a talk to a number of groups, as well as being reprinted in the above publication. Apart from these appearances in the Journal, it also forms one of the contributions in an anthology of Australian astrological writing published by the FAA and entitled *Under Capricorn*.

In general the themes of the essays are reflections upon two issues that have been of continuing importance for me. The first is the relationship between astrology and the Christian tradition. As I am an ordained priest of the Anglican Church, this has naturally been a matter with which I have been confronted on a number of occasions. That particular group of essays are therefore a kind of Apologia for my involvement in an area which - at least in our present age - has not in general found favour with the majority of those who seem to speak publicly for the Church.

The second involves several attempts to answer the question, "If one accepts the astrological concept, what kind of world does this imply?" As one reads the pages of astrological journals it is apparent that astrologers are much given to the discussion of the practical issues of their trade. However far less is written with regard to what one might call the philosophical questions which its practice raises. I have tried to take at least a few steps down this path.

I hope therefore that the essays will be of interest. Perhaps there may even be those who find in them some things which may be of help in their own quest to find those patterns of meaning that underlie the structures of this world in which we live.

RALPH HOLDEN

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WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

1975

My introduction to astrology was really quite curious.

In 1963 I was appointed priest-in-charge of the Anglican parish of Cummins in South Australia. This is a farming area situated about 400 miles west of Adelaide. Its remoteness from the city meant that visits to Adelaide were infrequent, and much had to be purchased by mail order. I therefore joined a Book Club whose members were able to order from a range of selected books at discounted prices, listed in a catalogue which was received on a regular basis.

One of the books which I ordered was *Astrology* by Louis MacNeice. No doubt the description in the catalogue paralleled that printed on its dust cover. 'This is the only comprehensive and authoritative survey of astrology that takes no sides but presents to the modern reader all the facts that he needs to form his own judgement.'

As a 'modern reader' without any real understanding of astrology, this appeared to be an excellent book to place on my list. I suppose in a sense it was, because the end result of its reading was that I became seriously involved in astrology. But I fear for all the wrong reasons.

The final section of the book gave instructions on the erection and interpretation of the horoscope. A little experimentation soon revealed that these were hopelessly inadequate or in error. The end result of which was to convince me that if astrology had occupied the pre-eminent place that it once did for so many thousands of years, it must have been something much more than that described by the author.

In one place however there was a mention of "The London Faculty of Astrological Studies." I decided to try to make contact with this organisation, and after much searching was able to find an address and do so. The upshot was that eventually I enrolled as a student and attained its Diploma.

Obviously – given my profession – the story in St Matthew's Gospel of the visit of the Wise Men to the infant Jesus, now took on a new significance. In other reading I had come across the proposal made by Johannes Kepler that the 'star' was in fact a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. In 1975 the original article "Wise Men from the East" was published in the journal of the Federation of Australian Astrologers.

While the essay essentially deals with the Matthean subject matter, it was also (I suspect) my first 'apology' for astrology. What I tried to do was to show that the account is precise, consistent, and can be fitted into an accurate historical frame work.

That is, astrology as astrology is inextricably woven into the fabric of the gospel of St. Matthew. It was (if I remember aright) John Henry Cardinal Newman who said that the Church cannot celebrate that which is not itself holy. When therefore the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany on 6th January each year, it may not be

inappropriate to remind it that it is also celebrating an astrological event of some consequence.

Probably the most well known astrological event in history was the visit of the Wise Men (as they are called in the Authorised King James version of the Bible) to the infant Jesus, which is recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel. However it is a story which is undeservedly neglected, both in astrological as well as in orthodox Christian circles.

No doubt this is because both of these traditions have developed a degree of reserve towards each other. However as I have some roots in both worlds, it may not be inappropriate for me to look at this event a little more seriously than either the astrologer or the theologian appears to have done in recent years.

So let us begin by looking at the account in the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel as it is translated in the New English Bible. Here the equivocal "Wise Men" have at least become honest astrologers!

Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers from the east arrived at Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star and we have come to pay him homage". King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this; and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the chief priests and lawyers of the Jewish people and put before them the question, "Where is it that the Messiah is to be born?" "At Bethlehem in Judaea", they answered; and they referred him to the prophecy which reads; "Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are far from least in the eyes of the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a leader to be the shepherd of my people Israel".

Herod next called the astrologers to meet him in private, and ascertained from them the time when the star had appeared. He then sent them on to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and make a careful inquiry for the child. When you have found him report to me, so that I may go myself and pay him homage".

They set out at the King's bidding; and the star which they had seen at its rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay.

Matthew then tells us that having reached Bethlehem, the astrologers offered gifts to the child whom they found there, and departed from Judaea without returning to inform King Herod of their discovery. Herod, when he eventually realised that he had been deceived, was furious and made a barbaric attempt to kill the infant.

When Herod saw that the astrologers had tricked him, he fell into a passion, and gave orders for the massacre of all children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, of the age of two years or less, corresponding with the time he had ascertained from the astrologers.

We are of course all accustomed to seeing various parts of this story (apart from its pretty blood-thirsty conclusion) portrayed upon our Christmas Cards each year. While the artists responsible choose varying parts of the story as the basis for their works, all seem to agree upon one thing: the Birth Star shone with exceptional and unmistakable brightness in the heavens.

Yet we are immediately confronted by a significant problem. If this star shone so brightly and so beautifully, how was it that it had apparently passed unnoticed by Herod and his court? The ancient world had little lighting of its cities at night, and the heavens would have shone with undiminished brightness. How would it have been possible for such an event to have been observed by the astrologers, and yet apparently not seen by others? And why would these men then make an arduous journey of some 600 to 700 miles by camel, at the bidding of what seems to have been such an uncertain object?

Firstly (as we mentioned previously) the “astrologers” in our account are the “Wise Men” of the older Authorised Version. The word in the Greek text is “Magoi” (Magoi) who were originally a priestly caste from Media, distinguished in appearance by the wearing of flowing white robes and a tall pointed hat. It is from them that not only does our word “magician” come, but also the traditional pointed hat of both the witch and of the dunce. The last has its own curious derivation, but that is not our concern at the moment. They were men of considerable learning and well-versed in the arts and sciences of their day.

The journey from Media to Jerusalem is some 700 miles. If we allow their progress by camel to have been about 20 miles a day, then this implies a travelling time of perhaps 35 days. With rest days – and some days of slower than average progress – we may not be far out in suggesting a total time for their journey of some six weeks. After this extensive travelling they were finally admitted to King Herod’s court where they inquired, “Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star”.

The translation with which we may be more familiar, and is generally used in the older versions, says “For we have seen his star in the East”, Is there significance in this difference in the translations?

The usual Greek phrase in the New Testament for the words “in the east” is “en tai anatolai” (εν ται ανατολαι), but in the Matthean account of the visit of the Magi the phrase is “en te anatole” (εν τη ανατολη). This is the singular form of the normally plural phrase. This particular form of the words occurs in four other instances in the New testament, and in each of these cases the usage describes the rising of the sun, rather than the direction east.

It appears therefore that what we have is actually a technical astrological term, the most satisfying rendering of which would be “we saw his star rising in the first rays of dawn”. The term used today which would correspond with the ancient “en te anatole” is “heliacal rising” or “rising with the sun”.

But we should remember that when the astrologers were interviewed by King Herod they did not say, “We have made an interesting observation of a heliacal rising”.

Rather they said, “Where is the child born to be king of the Jews?” What led them to put such a question? What particular series of events would have been of such consequence as to lead them to undertake a journey of close to six weeks under difficult circumstances, in order to make such an inquiry?

According to the traditions of Chaldean astrology the Zodiacal sign of Pisces had special associations with Israel, and particularly with the Jewish concept of the Messiah. As well it is generally agreed by astronomers that the precession of the equinox caused the First Point of Aries to enter the constellation of Pisces some time in the ten years preceding the commencement of the Christian era.

We may therefore assume that astrologers in the ancient world would have been alert to any celestial event of significance occurring in the sign of Pisces at this particular time. Moreover, for many such an event would have had a natural association with the nation of Israel and presumably with its expectations of a Messiah. What kinds of occurrences therefore would fit this scenario?

The two possibilities that immediately come to mind are either a comet or a supernova. These unfortunately seem to be far too obvious for our story. We must remember that the “star” which the wise men saw was not sufficiently spectacular to have been observed by others. Certainly by any at King Herod’s court.

There is however one series of events which we know to have happened within these ten years which could well provide a solution to our problem. This was a number of conjunctions of the Great Planets Jupiter and Saturn within the sign of Pisces. Not only would these be of exceptional importance – bearing in mind that these would be the first Great Conjunctions in the sign of Pisces for the Piscean Age – but also that both planets carried some special implications. Jupiter is by nature associated with rulership and royalty, while Saturn was held by Chaldean tradition to be the protector of Israel. The Latin writer Tacitus in fact equated Saturn with the God of Israel.

This solution was first proposed by Johannes Kepler in 1603, when he had observed a similar conjunction in December of that year. The possibility that such an event could have been the ‘star’ of the Magi immediately leapt to his mind.

As well (as we shall see later) this event was not a simple conjunction, but actually the coming together of both planets three times within the space of a few months, due to both bodies becoming retrograde during the period. This would add enormous significance to the events, as such multiple conjunctions occur in any particular sign only once in about 800 years.

The advantages of this hypothesis are three-fold.

Firstly it meets our criterion of an exceptionally important celestial event occurring in an appropriate location in the zodiac.

Secondly it is astrological and not astronomical in nature. That is, its significance lies not in its observational impact (its brightness, for example) but rather in its interpretation. Thus not being an event which was noticeable to the casual observer, it

is quite reasonable to propose that King Herod and his court would have been unaware of it.

Thirdly, with the aid of modern computer generated tables we are able to reconstruct the events quite precisely.

Let us then assume that the event which had such significance for our wise men was indeed the first Great Conjunctions in the sign of Pisces at the commencement of the Piscean Age. We may then draw the timetable of St. Matthew's narrative along the following lines.

At the end of February 7 BC Jupiter moved out of Aquarius towards Saturn, which had already been in the sign of Pisces for some considerable time. Since the Sun was also in Pisces at this time the planet naturally was not visible. The laws of planetary motion were not precisely formulated until the 16th century (by Kepler himself of course). Thus the astrologers of this period were not able to calculate the date on which the planet would again become visible, but simply had to wait and conduct daily observations.

On 12th April 7 BC both planets rose heliacally (in the "first rays of dawn" or *en te anatole*), some 8 degrees apart. From the relative positions of Jupiter and Saturn the astrologers knew from experience that they would soon form a close conjunction. That is, once they had observed these two bodies "rising in the east" they knew that it was inevitable that a major astrological event would occur. It was at this point – at this first observation – that they would realise that the "star" of the "child who is to be king of the Jews" had arisen.

Then on the 27th May 7 BC – visible in the morning sky for about two hours before dawn – the two planets lay in exact longitudinal conjunction in 21 degrees Pisces, a little over one degree apart in latitude. A very close but not precise conjunction.

However not long after this both planets became retrograde, and a second conjunction occurred on 3rd October 7 BC, in 18 degrees Pisces. Then resuming direct motion, a third conjunction was formed on the 4th December in the same year in 16 degrees Pisces.

At the end of January in the year 6 BC Jupiter moved out of Pisces into Aries.

Now while these Great Conjunctions were obviously of considerable astrological importance, were they sufficiently so to lead to the long and difficult journey undertaken by the "Wise Men" of the gospel narrative?

One of the most significant events of Jewish history was that which is called "The Exile".

At the beginning of the 6th century BC the country had been overrun by the Babylonian armies, and after a dreadful siege the city of Jerusalem was taken. The victorious armies laid waste to the country side and completely demolished the Holy City. All leaders of commerce, learning, religion, and politics – indeed all notable citizens of any kind – were forcible transported to Babylon. This exile lasted until the

empire fell to the Persian armies in about 520 BC, at which time the Jews were given permission to return to their own country.

However it seems that a very large number (if not a majority) elected to remain in Babylon where they had prospered in numerous fields. No doubt a number would have studied at the great school of astrology at Sippar. This significant encounter between Jupiter (the planet of royalty) and Saturn (the planet of Israel and the Messiah) within Israel's own zodiacal sign of Pisces, must have been exciting to such Jewish astrologers.

This would be all the more so at the very dawn of the Piscean age, of which they would have been excitedly aware. If ever there were to be an astrologically appropriate moment for the birth of the Messiah, this would appear to be that time. The Age of the Messiah had dawned, and to see this with their own eyes may well have been the driving force behind their journey from the East.

That is, the "Wise Men from the East" were neither kings nor gentiles (as our Christian traditions have suggested), but rather expatriate Jewish astrologers from the college of Sippar near Babylon. It is also quite possible that their journey may not have been totally the result of religious zeal, but they may have rather been sent by the other Jewish members of their school – with their trip financed as a kind of research scholarship – in order to determine whether or not a suitable candidate for messiahship had in fact been born at this time.

Their probable Jewish status also casts light upon other aspects of the story. Their ready acceptance at Herod's court is in accord with a welcome extended to important countrymen visiting from a renowned centre of world learning. Their interest in and familiarity with Jewish customs and scripture, as well as their apparent knowledge of Palestinian geography, is also in accord with such a status. No doubt the term "magi" which was given to them, had by that time simply become a generic word for any person versed in their skills and sciences. In later Roman days astrologers were called "Chaldeans" regardless of race or origin.

It may be objected however, that if they were indeed Jews, why was it that they did not appear to know the scriptural prophecy concerning the birthplace of the Messiah? This may be explained by suggesting that they would perhaps quite naturally have expected to find a royal birth occurring in a royal situation. Finding no knowledge of such an event in King Herod's court they asked the question, "Well then, does any one know where the child who is born to be king of the Jews is likely to be?" A conference was held, and it was suggested that if the birth had not occurred in Jerusalem (and none had knowledge of a birth which seemed to present a likely candidate), then the scriptures pointed to Bethlehem as the logical alternative place.

However, let us briefly return to Babylon in order to put their journey into perspective.

On 27th May 7 BC the first close conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces was observed from the roof of the observatory at the school of astrology at Sippar. As was mentioned previously, astrologers had been waiting anxiously for this since they first sighted the two planets at their heliacal rising and realised that a Great Conjunction

was imminent. However it was mid summer in Mesopotamia. Only the most foolish or most desperate would make such a journey as they were contemplating during this season.

But as they also observed that the daily motion of the planets was decreasing, they knew that the bodies would therefore both shortly regress, and that the likelihood of a second and third conjunction was very high. So they waited until the second conjunction did in fact occur. This fell on the 3rd October 7 BC. By a remarkable coincidence this was the Jewish feast of Atonement. Perhaps they felt this to be some sort of divine omen, and so preparations were made at once for the “research team” to leave, and to commence its journey to the land of their fathers.

About six weeks would have seen them arriving at Jerusalem. That is, towards the end of November. They at once would have sought an audience with King Herod, or perhaps more likely would have been requested to appear before him as their arrival in Jerusalem would have aroused much notice and curiosity. Naturally they immediately inquired regarding the birth of a royal infant: “Where is the child who is born king of the Jews, for we have observed the heliacal rising of his star?” After discussion it is decided that they should investigate births at Bethlehem, and so they left for this village.

Now Bethlehem lies about 5 miles almost due south from Jerusalem. That is, towards the ecliptic in the northern hemisphere. They may well have set out towards the town during the twilight hours of the evening of the 4th December 7 BC. The journey would only have taken about an hour and they probably anticipated finding accommodation in the village that night, and so be able to commence their inquiries first thing in the morning.

On this night however Jupiter and Saturn were again together in the last of the series of Great Conjunctions. This would have been visible in the evening sky due south of Jerusalem, in the direction which they would have to take in order to reach Bethlehem. St. Matthew’s account says, and the star which they had seen at its rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay. One may allow a little poetic imagination to the evangelist. As the travellers moved down the road the “star” would have appeared to move ahead of them, and then stop as they themselves stopped at Jerusalem.

We do not of course know from all this the actual date of Jesus’ birth. The impression that we gain from King Herod’s later actions in slaughtering the infants of Bethlehem suggests that the first observation of the star was possibly up to two years prior to the visit of the Wise Men. All children of the age of two years or less were to be killed corresponding to the time he ascertained from the astrologers. However this is not necessarily the case, and it is very likely that Herod chose the age of two years simply because he wanted to be quite sure that the child who posed a potential threat to his throne was caught in the net of infanticide .

If we assume that Jesus was born at or about the time of the first of the Great Conjunctions, then we have a late May date in the year 7 BC. By the time that King Herod had become sure that the Wise Men were no longer “searching carefully” for the child – but had secretly left the country – the date may well have been about

February 6 BC. Thus the infant may have been from 9 to 12 months old. The death of all children under two years would therefore resolve the issue without the need to inquire too closely into birth dates.

It is also interesting to speculate upon the method which the astrologers may have used to choose the infant Messiah. It is not realistic to assume (as St. Matthew appears to do) that the star in some way “stopped” above the place where the child was, and all that they needed to do was to walk through the appropriate door. They may (for example) have interviewed the parents of all children born close to the time of the first Great Conjunction, and perhaps chosen the candidate with the most appropriate genealogy for messiahship.

In this regard we may note that Matthew actually begins his Gospel with a Table of Descent for Jesus. This may not be totally unrelated to his later story and the astrologers’ recognition of the Messiah whom they sought. If this is the case, then the infant whom they chose was one directly descended from King David, and most probably would have been born on the 27th May 7 BC.

This may appear at first sight to be a rather early dating for the birth of Jesus, whom we normally assume to have been born close to the first year of the Christian era. However St. Matthew also tells us that the child Jesus was taken to Egypt almost immediately after his birth (so escaping King Herod’s attempt to assassinate him) until his parents heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judaea in the place of his father Herod. Since we know that King Herod died in 4 BC, it is obviously necessary that Jesus should have been born some time prior to this. Thus the date 7 BC appears to be quite reasonable from this point of view.

St. Luke’s gospel too has some evidence supporting a May date for the birth. In one place his account reads, Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields keeping watch through the night over their flocks. In Hebron grass temperatures fall well below freezing from December to February, and no shepherds would be watching sheep over night in the fields during these months. This therefore points to the birth occurring during the warmer months of the year.

It is also interesting to note that Clement of Alexandria, writing in the third century, suggested May 20th as a possible date for the birth of Jesus.

Unfortunately other evidence which St. Luke gives concerning the birth of Jesus – which one might assume to be helpful – only serves to confuse the issue. He writes that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem (where Jesus was born) on account of a requirement related to a census that was held when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Sulpicius Quirinius was certainly a governor of Syria and we know that he did in fact hold a census. However this was in 6 AD when Judaea was reduced to the status of a Roman Province, an impossibly late date for Jesus’ birth.

Quirinius held the census in order to determine the amount of tribute that the new province would be liable to pay. The records of the governorships of Syria are quite clear. Sentius Sturnius was governor from 9 BC to 6 BC; Quintilius Varus from 6 BC to 4 AD; and Sulpicus Quirinius from 4 AD onward.

This is not to say that there was no census held at the time of Jesus' birth, but if one were held then it is not one of which we have historical records (apart from St. Luke's reference) and certainly not the one conducted by Quirinius. This account therefore offers us no further information regarding the birth date of Jesus, which must have occurred prior to 4 BC.

It may be mentioned that there are other difficulties in reconciling the birth accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

St. Matthew tells us that the Holy Family were living at Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth and did not leave there until they fled in order to escape King Herod's troops. Then some time after 4 BC (when the king died) they returned to Palestine, but settled in Nazareth. On the other hand St. Luke appears to make their stay at Bethlehem a very brief one, having travelled down there from their permanent home at Nazareth simply for the purpose of the census. He also makes no mention of a sojourn in Egypt.

This is a chronology into which it is not possible to fit realistically the account of the visit of the Wise Men, as it really demands that they should have left for Jerusalem at least six weeks before the first Great Conjunction in order to be at Bethlehem just after the birth. This of course would have been before they could have been certain of the first conjunction even occurring, let alone of observing it. There are therefore reasons for being cautious in the use of the information presented to us by St. Luke.

So let us draw this part of our exploration to a conclusion.

Towards the end of May in the year 7 BC – and in all probability on the 27th day of that month according to our present reckoning – Joshua ben-Joseph was born at Bethlehem. In the twilight hours close to the 4th of December of that same year expatriate Jewish scholars from Sippar near Babylon, impelled by astrological curiosity, came to see the one whom they hoped would fulfil the long expected dreams of the Jewish people.

Now – like the Wise Men themselves – we too have made a considerable journey, and having come thus far it is difficult to resist the temptation to see whether or not it is possible to erect a horoscope for Jesus. Since the astrologers must have assumed that the child was born close to the time of the first Great Conjunction of the Piscean age in the sign of Pisces – and that this assumption was accurate enough for them to be able to locate the infant at Bethlehem – it will be instructive in the first instance to inspect the chart of the visible planets for this date.

Using the Tuckerman tables, the conjunction formed at 8.45 am Greenwich Mean Time, on the 27th May 7 BC. The chart of the planetary positions is shown in Figure One.

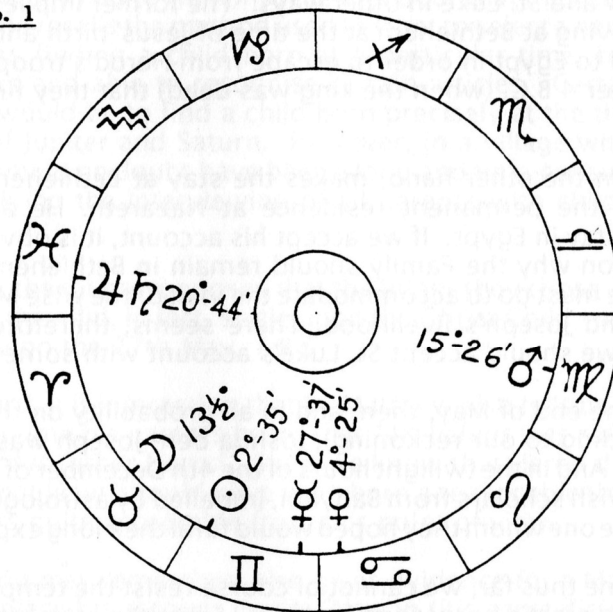
Two – or possible three – things stand out in this configuration.

1. The first is the opposition between Mars and the conjunct planets.

2. The second is the “bowl” shaping of the pattern, which according to Marc Jones is indicative of those who wish to share their abilities and gifts with others
3. The third is the almost total lack of any other important aspect or feature.

Thus the whole significance of the chart lies in Pisces and its planets. Apart from this it is a very ordinary map indeed. Naturally no significant alterations to this pattern will occur within the space of those days that we may allow as our “orb of probability” of the birth date.

CHART No. 1



The Conjunction in Pisces, 27th May, 7 BC.

Is it possible to go further and suggest a probable horoscope?

Three possibilities seem to suggest themselves.

The first – and probably that which the astrologers themselves assumed – is that the birth occurred at the time of exactitude of the conjunction. That is, at 8.45 am Greenwich Mean Time, or with the necessary allowances for the accuracy of our tables, between 11.00 am and 11.30 am local time at Bethlehem on the 27th May, 7 BC.

The second is that the birth occurred with the conjunct planets rising at the horizon, as this also would seem to have an appropriateness in the circumstances. This time would have been between 1.00 am and 2.00 am local time on the 27th May.

The third is the traditional midnight birth.

These three possible charts are shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4. Have we any compelling reasons for preferring one about the other two?

CHART No. 2

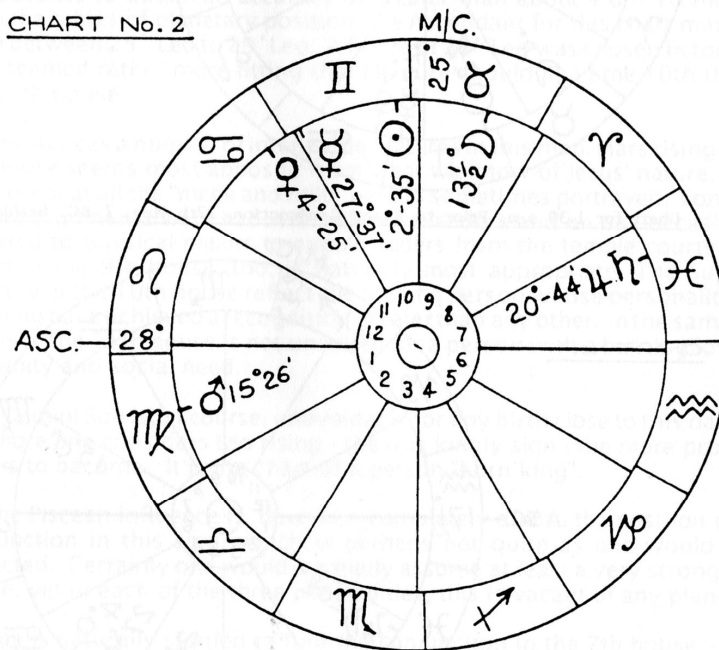


Chart for Exactitude of Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem 11.30 a.m.

CHART No. 3

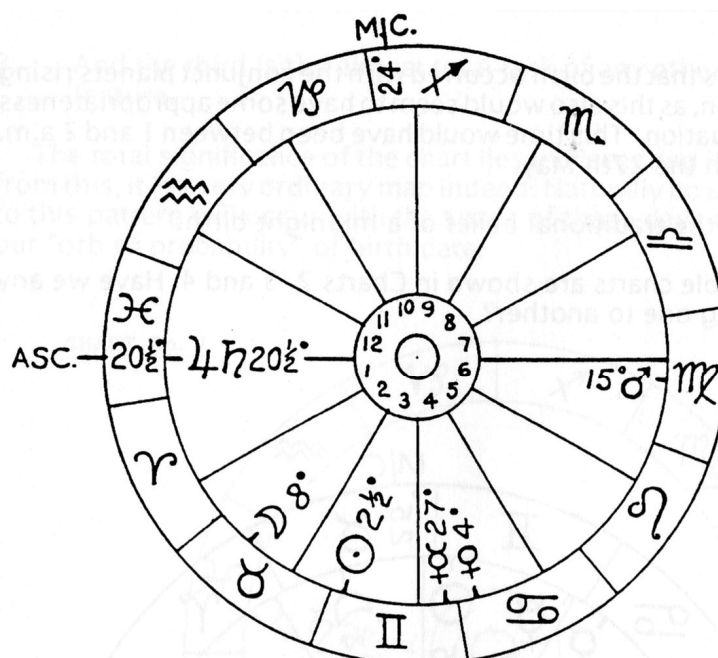


Chart for 1.30 a.m. Prior to Exact Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem.

CHART No. 4

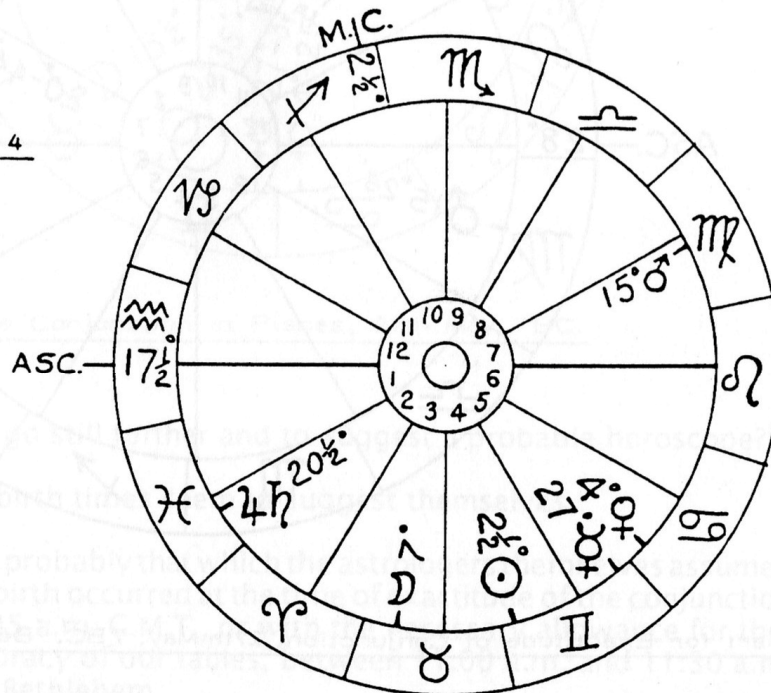


Chart for Midnight Prior to Exact Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem.

Of the three the second – while there is some symbolic appropriateness in the conjunct planets associated with the Ascendant – it is in fact the least satisfactory. It seems to be quite inappropriate that the Moon should fall in the Second House, even though a Piscean Ascendant is superficially attractive. A case too may be made for the Sun in the Third House. However one is at a loss to explain the significance of Mercury and Venus in the Fourth House from what is known of Jesus' life.

In a similar way the traditional midnight birth is not greatly encouraging. Certainly the two conjuncted planets in the First House are helpful, but the presumed importance of the Fourth and Fifth Houses in this map is hard to justify.

We are forced then to examine more carefully the chart erected for the exact time of the conjunction (as near as we can ascertain this). Since it is not possible to obtain an accuracy of greater than + or – ten minutes from the tables of planetary position, the Ascendant for this chart may vary from between 25° Leo to 29° Leo. A figure of 28° Leo was finally chosen, as it seemed rather more fitting that Mercury should lie in the Tenth rather than the Eleventh House.

There are a number of interesting features in this chart. Mars rising in the First House seems appropriate from what we know of Jesus' nature. Certainly he was not the 'meek and mild' person sometimes portrayed. Long and heated arguments were held with religious leaders, and on one occasion he resorted to physical violence to expel traders from the temple courts.

The Moon in the Ninth House is naturally very appropriate also. The Sun and Mercury in the Tenth House reflect the life of a person whose personality and teaching have achieved a recognition perhaps greater than any other historical figure.

In the same way Venus in the Eleventh House is not unsuited to a person with a burning love for humanity and social equality.

A Gemini Sun is unavoidable for any birth close to this date, but the more one considers Leo rising – the true kingly sign – the more proper it seems to become. It is the chart of a person “born king”.

The Piscean influence is however completely due to the position of the conjunction in this sign, which in its mundane relationship is perhaps not quite as would have been expected. Certainly one would normally assume at least a very strong Twelfth House, yet in each of the three possible charts this house is vacant of any planet.

It is then rather startling to find the conjunction in the Seventh House, since certainly neither marriage nor commerce were traditionally a part of Jesus’ life. However this is also the house of the deepest possible ties with others, whether in friendship or in enmity. Perhaps therefore when one remembers the enmity, argument, and hostility which surrounded his public ministry, as well as the Christian belief which holds that he was a person who shared mankind’s lot and estate in a way that no other could, there is a certain significance in the configuration. Indeed, St. Paul talks of the Church as being “the bride of Christ”.

There was also in Jesus’ life a sense of unity with others that should be reflected in the chart at some point. It is interesting to remember that in horary astrology the Seventh House is considered as the one which represents “all extraordinary achievement”. This is then a chart which does deserve to be considered seriously.

Of course the most striking thing that is apparent in the chart is that the birth occurs with the Sun in orb of conjunction to the midheaven. Again this is singularly appropriate, certainly far more so than the traditional view that it was in opposition to the mid heaven (that is, the midnight birth is one with the Sun conjunct to the I.C.). Never the less one must still admit that a birth time approaching midday is one that has never traditionally been considered. Nor is the reason for this hard to find.

St. Luke provides us with this account. *Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock, when suddenly there stood before them an angel of the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord shone around them. They were terror struck, but the angel said, “Do not be afraid; I have good news for you. There is great joy coming to the whole people. Today in the city of David a deliverer has been born to you – the Messiah, the Lord.*

Naturally generations of Christians have assumed that the angelic message came virtually simultaneously with the birth of the child. However this is not necessarily the case.

According to St. Luke the angel said, *Todaya deliverer has been born.* One is not in the least compelled to believe that this event had occurred during the last few minutes, or even during the hours of darkness. The angel is referring to an event that has already been accomplished. If the message was delivered in the late evening (rather than in the small hours of the morning as we tend to assume) it could quite naturally be interpreted that the birth had occurred during the previous daylight hours.

There would therefore seem to be nothing in this particular narrative that precludes a midday birth.

Perhaps there is also one other minor indication to enforce this. When the shepherds arrive to see the child everything seems to be quiet and in order. The baby has been washed and wrapped, and is sleeping in the manger. Mary and Joseph too seem able to receive visitors without too much ado. It appears reasonable to assume that a certain amount of time has passed since the birth took place.

Thus, there appears to be good reasons for proposing that Jesus was born at the time of the first Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces. In one sense this may be itself considered as the “birth day” of the Piscean age. And at this time, close to 11.30 in the morning local time on the 27th May in the year 7 BC, Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem.

In itself the horoscope for this birth is one that promises leadership and distinction. However it is only in retrospect that its full implications can be judged, and the appropriateness of its significance for this unique life assessed.

A Note on the Charts

It will be observed that only the visible planets have been shown on the charts, and that the method of domification is that of the Equal House system. That is, the horoscopes are cast in the terms of those techniques that astrologers of the last decade before the Christian era had at their disposal. Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* - which is the earliest extant description of a house system – employs the Equal House method, but calls it the usage “of the ancient”. In this he seems to be referring to the work of Petosiris who is presumed to have introduced the system about 140 BC. It is interesting, therefore, to seek to interpret the chart from these factors alone, thus to some degree placing ourselves in the shoes of “the Wise Men from the East”.

THE NINE OBJECTIONS TO ASTROLOGY

1980

In 1969 Michael Gauquelin's work *Cosmic Clocks* was published in English, followed in 1970 by his *Astrology and Science*, and in 1973 by *Cosmic Influences on Human Behaviour*. These books were accompanied by a number of other publications by a variety of authors, all of which sought to elevate the statue of astrology.

These publications were accompanied by a growing general interest, and by an increased self assurance and public presence by astrologers themselves.

However at the same time there was a strong reaction by those opposed to astrological practice. This came from certain sections of the scientific community, but perhaps most noticeably from the Christian Churches.

The Student Christian Movement (for example) published a book by J. S. Kerr entitled *The Mystery and Magic of the Occult*. In it astrology is treated at some considerable length. However, this apparent seriousness does not reflect an unprejudiced approach to the subject. Kerr introduces his book by saying, "The resurgence of the occult in the midst of history's most scientific period is a phenomenon that amazes some, puzzles others, and thoroughly excites the thousands who have found a new dimension of spirituality – for good or ill – in these long discredited arts."

This growing war against so called occult practices found another outlet in 1975, when an Anglican Commission of Inquiry in Australia published a report entitled *The Occult*. The general tone of this may perhaps be judged by an Appendix contributed by the Reverend Dr Stuart Barton Babbage. He begins this by saying, "It is clear that people must believe something. If they have nothing sensible to believe, then they will believe nonsense..... Today, with the withering of faith, we have the flowering of credulity." Then in a particular reference to astrology, "Today the educated man knows that the science of astrology is a fraud and a fiction. We no longer ask incredulously,

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

We know the answer;
You're the cooling down of gases
Into incandescent masses."

It was against this background of a quite sustained attack upon the intellectual basis of astrology that the following essay was written. It seemed to me that in spite of the considerable output of anti-astrological material, the arguments against its practice fell under a number of convenient headings. I therefore tried to examine these, and to discover how sustainable they were.

□

In the 5th century AD Saint Augustine wrote a book which he called his *Confessions*. In this he devoted some space to an attack upon astrology.

Augustine was born with a Christian mother and a Pagan father. For many years he followed the teachings of a religious sect called Manichaeism. This was a curious eclectic religion with ideas drawn from a wide variety of sources. In order to achieve enlightenment the devotee practices a number of practices and techniques, of which astrology was one.

In 383 AD Augustine went to Rome to lecture in philosophy, and then to Milan. Here he fell under the influence of Saint Ambrose and was converted to Christianity. With all the fire of a true convert, he turned against all that his old faith had espoused. This included the practice of astrology.

In his attack in the *Confessions*, he compared the social conditions of the son of a slave and the son of a landowner, both born at the same time in the same place and therefore sharing a common horoscope. As both apparently lived totally different lives, this seemed to Saint Augustine to demonstrate that astrology did not “work”. In other words, he advanced the argument that astrology was unscientific, and in this he has had a very considerable following in the western world in the last two centuries or so.

In one sense it is perhaps strange that the claim can be made at all that there are “scientific objections” to astrology at all. The normal scientific method is one in which a theory is advanced and experiments performed in order to test the validity of the theory under a variety of circumstances. The theory is then retained, modified, or rejected according to the nature of the results obtained from such experiments.

Yet in fact no such effort was made with respect to astrology until well into the last half of the 20th century, and this in fact tended to lend support to the astrological concept rather than denigrating it. Prior to this astrology was rejected simply because it appeared to offend some of the philosophical bases of western science. Indeed, I hope that I will be able to show that the so called “scientific objections” to astrology are rather surprisingly unsubstantiated by actual evidence, and are really little more than the “belief statements” of scientific dogmatism.

In general those who seek to speak against astrology – and contrary to proper scientific procedures – make the initial assumption that astrology cannot work, and then advance various arguments to justify this already entrenched assumption. If however one examines the various objections raised against the practice of astrology, they seem in general to take one of the following nine forms.

9. The Copernican Theory

This objection rests upon the proposal that the concept of a sun centred solar system – expounded by Copernicus in the 16th century – destroyed the older idea of an earth centred one, in which the sun and planets revolved about a fixed terrestrial globe. This earlier cosmology provided the essential structure of astrology. Today astrologers still erect their charts using such a central earth with a zodiac encircling it

containing the sun, moon, and planets. Thus – it is suggested – this demonstrates that astrology is dependent upon a concept which has been shown to be untrue. Since its initial premise about the structure of the solar system is false, then the whole structure which this supports must equally be false.

Two answers may be made.

In the first place it needs to be remembered that Copernicus did not “invent” the heliocentric system, as this was certainly being taught by some ancient astronomers as early as the 5th century BC (notably by Pythagoras). Astrology certainly flourished in these ages, and there is no reason to suppose that the concept of a sun centred system was seen in any way to challenge basic astrological premises.

Exactly the same point may be made with regard to Copernicus himself (as well as Kepler and Galilei) all of whom continued to be committed astrologers while accepting whole heartedly a heliocentric system. Doubtless many astrologers in Europe were upset – as indeed most certainly were many theologians – to learn that the earth was not fixed and immovable in the heavens, but their astrology was none the worse for this.

Secondly it is proper to point out that we still alternate between a geocentric and a heliocentric astronomy according to our purpose. A heliocentric astronomy is excellent for certain mathematical purposes, for portraying the spatial nature of our system, and for the demonstration of the workings of gravitational forces. It is however unsuited to a number of other practical circumstances.

To locate a planet or star the astronomer uses a system of coordinates that assume a stationary earth with the heavens revolving about his own location. Similarly all celestial navigation necessarily assumes a geocentric universe.

In the same way the astrologer is required to determine the relationships of the sun and planets to the geographical place of birth at a given time. This is an operation analogous to the astronomer seeking to locate a star from his observatory. Both are geocentric operations, because the “focus” is a certain terrestrial location. Quite obviously there simply can never be a heliocentric observational astronomy, as the sun is a rather inhospitable place for observers! However in the not too far distant future there will no doubt be a lunar centric astronomy, and perhaps a lunar centric astrology as well.

Astrology therefore is not conditional upon a geocentric universe being a physical reality. The astrological chart is simply a diagram of the way that the heavens looked at a certain time and at a certain place on earth. The art of the astrologer is in interpreting what meanings may be contained in the relationships of the bodies of the solar system with respect to a specific terrestrial location.

Whether this is a true or false art is certainly a question to be asked, but it is unrelated to our conceptual structure of the solar system.

2. The Planets cannot have an Effectual Influence upon the Earth

This is perhaps more a declaration of faith than a disproof of astrology. It is simply the statement “astrology cannot work” put another way.

It is however given some teeth by pointing out that one of Newton’s gravitational laws states that the attraction between two bodies is proportional to their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. Given the enormous distances which separate the earth from the sun and other planets, it becomes obvious that the gravitational influence upon terrestrial events from an interplanetary source is almost infinitesimally small. For this reason – it is argued – the astrological premise of planetary influence cannot be accepted.

Again two answers may be made. In the first place – even accepting the grounds of the objection that planetary influence is essentially gravitational – the sun and the moon must obviously be excepted. Not only are the tidal effects of the moon clearly demonstrable, but there are a number of other well established lunar effects upon terrestrial events. The sun however is pre-eminently the source and sustainer of earthly life. Thus it is plainly evident that there are in fact a large number of terrestrial circumstances that are indivisibly linked with non terrestrial conditions.

While this may be so obvious as to seem almost pointless to make the statement, it does at least establish the fundamental requirement of an astrological system. That is, that there is a demonstrable relationship between certain celestial and terrestrial circumstances.

The major flaw in the objection however is the assumption that the only possible effectual influence that the planets can have upon earthly conditions is by way of gravitational forces. At a superficial level it can be pointed out that the mere sight of a great planet like Saturn through a telescope can create a feeling of awe and wonder in the observer. This is an “effect” produced in a person by the heavenly body in a way unrelated to its gravitational influence.

However as our knowledge of the planets is extended, it becomes increasingly apparent that the solar system is a vastly more complicated structure of inter related electromagnetic phenomena than we previously imagined. The concept of a simple “gravitational” solar system is as outmoded as is that of a fixed earth. This objection is therefore one which rests upon a quite inadequate model of the planets and their relationships to the sun and earth.

The work of K. Takashi in 1968 demonstrated that the planets were able to generate tidal forces within the sun, and that these forces were the generating factor of sun spots. This – and later work by R. D. Wood in 1972 – was published in the journal Nature. However sun spots are also a primary source of cosmic radiation, which is known to have a profound effect upon some genetic processes. Thus these understandings do in fact provide some evidence of a demonstrable link between planetary position and life processes. Links which come via the sun itself. Once more it seems that there has been established the basis for an astrological system.

3. The Zodiac is an Imaginary Structure

Here we find questioned the essential conceptual basis of the astrological structure. The objection argues that the Zodiac is not a “thing”, but an imaginary band in the heavens about 14 degrees wide. This band is arbitrarily divided into twelve sectors, and the star patterns in each sector are the “Zodiacal stars”.

However while from earth all these stars appear to be fixed in the dome of heaven, in fact their “groupings” have no existence in reality. Two apparently adjacent stars may be separated by thousands of light years of space, and a dim and insignificant point of light may be a galaxy of a million suns at the edge of the known universe. It thus becomes absurd to argue that it is possible to assign a distinct “character” to a zodiacal sign when it is composed of such unrelated stars in real space.

This argument is really more philosophical than scientific. Whether the zodiac is an effectual concept can only in the end be determined by investigation. Thus both astrology and science are equally at fault, as neither has produced sufficient data by which the question may be properly judged.

However while the structure of astrology may not (at present) rest upon incontrovertible evidence, it cannot simply be dismissed as arbitrary. Its concepts are based upon those same kind of mathematical and harmonic ideas that appear to underpin a large part of the natural world. In 1954 the great modern physicist Paul Dirac wrote, “With all the violent changes to which modern physical theory is subjected, there is just one rock which weathers every storm, to which one can always hold fast – the assumption that the fundamental laws of nature correspond to a beautiful mathematical theory. This means a theory based upon simple mathematical concepts that fit together in an elegant way, so that one has pleasure working with it”.

In his later years Carl Jung also came to the belief that the archetypal patterns which regulate both matter and spirit are best expressed through structures based on simple numbers. His disciple Marie-Louise von Franz pursued this concept in the book *Number and Time*.

It is obvious that astrology also uses “simple mathematical concepts that fit together in an elegant way”, as it seeks to examine the relationships between the structures of the solar system and human experience. That it does this through the mathematically elegant structure of the intellectual zodiac ought not – in itself – been seen as a reason for its condemnation. The final verdict may need to await more substantial evidence, but until that time the fact that the astrologer imposes upon celestial and terrestrial order some “beautiful mathematics” may well speak for his art, rather than against it.

4. New Planets

Until the year 1781 only five planets were known and the whole astrological system was erected upon these. With the sun and the moon they made up the seven celestial lights: itself a number of great symbolic value. In that year Uranus was discovered as a sixth planet. In 1846 Neptune became a seventh and Pluto was found as the eighth in 1930.

These new planets destroyed the symmetry of the old astrology and made it suspect. At the very least these discoveries implied that all previous astrological work had

been inadequate. At the worst they suggested that if right information could be obtained by using wrong tools, the whole operation was pointless anyway.

Obviously the discovery of the outer planets did put a severe strain upon astrologers. They proved however to be fairly adaptable beings, and while many in the 19th century refused to admit the reality of Uranus' existence (let alone use it in their horoscopes) Pluto was incorporated into astrological tables within three years of its discovery.

There has (as would be expected) been much debate about the meanings of these newly discovered planets for interpretive purposes. Those meanings now commonly used continue for the three outer planets the connotations indicated by the mythological associations of their names. The progression from Mercury to Saturn is one from youth to age and of immaturity to wisdom. This kind of "growth" pattern is then extended through those areas represented mythologically by Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.

This is obviously a process of unashamed analogy. Yet there is often found a "fitness" about the conceptual framework of nature, through which old myths are relived in the most advanced technological circumstances. The writer Fritjof Capra explored just such correspondences between modern particle physics and eastern mystical tradition in his work *The Tao of Physics*. To pursue meaningful analogies can be one of the most fruitful kinds of "hypothesis formation" in science. If so, then why not also in astrology?

However it may also be noted that the outer planets demand by their nature a different interpretive treatment by the astrologer from the other visible members of the solar family. Saturn is the outermost of the visible planets and requires on average one and one half years to pass through each of the twelve Zodiacal signs. However Uranus (the first of the outer planets) takes seven years to achieve this, Neptune fourteen, and Pluto twenty one. Thus because of these very long term effects it is only reasonable that astrologers should deal with them in ways different from those other planets which formed the basis of ancient astrology.

Astrology is not a "closed system" in which all of its data is accepted ready made and unalterable from the ancients. The investigation of new ideas is a continuing work and astrological journals contain a plethora of new concepts and methods. The question which needs to be answered is often not whether anything new should be used, but which parts of the new deserve further study.

The new planets came as a shock to astrologers who had become used to a stable planetary system. However they do not of themselves impose any basic threat to the art.

5. Astrology Fails to Take Into Account the Precession of the Equinox

This objection may be briefly explained in the following way. While our calendar year begins at midnight on 1st January, this corresponds to no natural event. The "natural" year commences at noon on that day of the year which marks the precise division of a day into twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness during the

northern hemisphere's spring. That is, the vernal equinox on or about the 22nd of March.

That place in the sky against which the sun is located at that time is the First Point of Aries, and is the beginning point of the Zodiac. This point – when viewed against the background stars – is found to move westward each year by about 50 seconds of arc. The result is that the starting point of the Zodiac (0 degrees Aries) is no longer in that star constellation named Aries, but is very close to the end of the constellation of Pisces. Some time in the next one hundred years it will enter the constellation of Aquarius, and the “Age of Aquarius” will have properly begun.

It is therefore argued that even if astrology were valid at one time in history, it cannot be so now, as the Zodiacal signs used by astrologers do not correspond to the actual star groups called “Aries”, “Taurus”, and so on.

As with the objection based upon the helio and geo centric systems, this argument too may be met by the fact the ancient astrologers were well aware of the phenomenon of precession. The Zodiac in the temple of Denderah in Egypt contains representations of both the fixed (sidereal) and movable (tropical) zodiacs. This edifice may be dated to the second millennium BC. Apparently Egyptian astrologers used both: the moving Zodiac for “temporal” affairs and the fixed one for the great ages of civilization .

Certainly one must admit that the later Western astrologers do not seem to have taken this particular astronomical fact into consideration, but this does not thereby invalidate their work. Their horoscopes were essentially concerned with what the Egyptians would have considered to be “temporal” affairs. It may perhaps be more a comment upon the narrowness of our own view of life that the significance of precession was lost to astrology. Only in a civilization that could stretch unbroken over millennia could such a celestial motion take on importance. In the great temple at Luxor the alignment of the central court was altered no less than four times during its use in order to correct for the changes in star positions associated with the precession of the equinox.

While there is a small group of astrologers today who use an astrology based upon the “fixed” Zodiac, the great majority remain faithful to that system which has its Zodiac marked and determined by the vernal equinox.

Nor is this difficult to explain. Astrology does not generally deal with the “stars” but with the planets of our solar system. The Zodiac it uses is a method of describing the relationships which exist in this family as it travels through space. It is quite literally the “family circle” of our system, and so its origin point is rightly determined by an event occurring within it, and which is descriptive of the earth's relationship to the sun itself.

Indeed it may be argued that astrology's general insistence upon using the tropical (moveable) Zodiac in order to describe planetary relationships, is something which should be considered to be in its favour, rather than the reverse. The moveable Zodiac establishes the planets' relationships to the earth with respect to the solar system, which is the heart of the astrological concept.

Now these five objections which we have now examined, have been based upon the real (or supposedly real) physical properties or circumstances associated with the solar system, and which – it is claimed – preclude the operation of the astrological hypothesis. We have seen however that in reality they in no way approach such conclusive refutations, nor do they demonstrate any convincing scientific reason for rejecting astrology. The next four objections however are of a somewhat different nature, as they raise a number of practical issues related to the actual practice of astrology.

6. Astrology – to be Valid – Should Deal with Conception and not Birth

The traditional birth chart is erected for the precise time of the first breath after birth, or as close to this time as can be ascertained. Yet it is evident that our nature is determined almost entirely at the point of conception. Therefore, it is argued, if astrology is to be valid it ought to deal with conception not birth. This is an idea which in spite of its theoretical appeal has – to say the least- a number of significant social and practical difficulties.

However this is far from being a new objection. There was (for example) an ancient astrological rule called the Trutine of Hermes which attempted to draw a relationship back from the birth chart to a supposed conception chart. The astrologers of the ancient world certainly recognised the problem and assumed that the answer lay in some kind of significant natural relationship between the time of birth and the time of conception.

That such a general rule exists we know very well from the commonly applied calculation that the birth normally takes place two hundred and eighty days after the first day of the mother's last menstrual period. That is, by knowing the child's date of birth we have access to knowledge about some of the circumstances which surrounded conception. If astrology is to be valid, it would seem that it is a of relationship of this kind between conditions at conception and those which surround the initiation of the birth process which needs to be postulated.

If this should be so, then a case may be made in which the astrological tradition may be considered as handling conception at "second hand". The planets at birth which the astrologer uses to determine the person's nature are not causative. The true causation may be influences upon the genetic process – the nature of which we have at present only very imprecise knowledge – but which can be linked to solar/planetary phenomena at the time of conception.

However because conception and birth are linked by determinative natural processes – and because the planetary conditions at both events are also related by the laws of planetary motion – the birth horoscope must by necessity have some kind of natural relationship to one that could be erected at the time of conception. It is this relationship which astrology has perceived and made practical in its traditions. The horoscope therefore is not imaging the causes of human personality, but is simply one way of describing what already exists at birth.

A second objection which in a sense flows from this one involves our understandings of genetic science. The astrological thesis demands that in some way there must be a correspondence between the nature implanted at the moment of conception and the planetary or solar “circumstances” surrounding conception and/or birth.

Genetic studies postulate that our characters are the result of genes, which are “a particular configuration of the nucleic acids at a particular point on the length of the chromosome”. The genetic code of the genes is that “code by which inherited characteristics are handed from generation to generation. The code is expressed by the molecular configuration of the chromosome cells”.

Yet the question of the means by which any one particular configuration of chromosome cells is determined or preferred over another remains unanswered. Not only that, but since the genes exist and operate at the molecular level – which is particularly sensitive to sub-atomic radiation of the kind generated by the sun – it does not seem impossible that factors which could be described as “astrological” could enter into the process at some stage.

The argument from genetics is also (naturally) as good as present day genetic science. Experiments by Roger Williams reported in the *New Scientist* for September 1968 indicated that genes themselves are not determinative of inherited characteristics. He postulates other factors which he terms “inducers” and “suppressors”, which actually control the genetic process.

As to the nature and origin of these he offers no suggestions.

7. Time Twins

This is the classic argument first raised by Saint Augustine. Astrology must grapple with the problems of babies born at the same time and in the same place but of different mothers. Both infants must have identical horoscopes, and therefore ought to show marked and obvious similarities in their life experiences.

The astrologer would meet this argument firstly by saying that we need to distinguish between environment and experience. This was Saint Augustine’s fault (if fault there be), since he rested his case upon the fact that one of the time twins was a the son of a slave and the other the son of the land owner. However if it could be shown that similar significant events in the lives of the two coincided, then the astrologer’s case might be felt to have some substance in it.

Unhappily there is no statistical evidence which can be presented either way. There are however a number of well authenticated cases of a thought provoking nature. I am well aware that anecdotes in the end prove nothing, yet these may not be without some value.

Samuel Hemming and George III of England were both born on 4th June 1738. Hemming set up his iron monger’s business on the day that George III came to the throne. Both were married on 8th September 1761, both fathered the same number of children of the same sex, and both were given to racing and gambling. On the day

that the king was kicked by a horse Hemming was also kicked, and both were incapacitated for the same length of time. Both became ill on the same day, and both died on 29th January 1820.

When King Umberto of Italy was introduced to a restaurant proprietor, he remarked upon the similarity of their appearance. Upon inquiry it was learnt that both had been born at the same time on the same day; both had married on the same day; and both had a son named Vittorio. The proprietor had begun his business on the same day as the accession of Umberto to the throne. The king then learnt that the man was to take part the next day in a shooting contest at which the King was to present the prizes.

However when the time came to carry out this task Umberto learned that his “twin” had been killed while cleaning his gun. He expressed a wish to be taken to the scene of the accident. Before he arrived there he was himself killed by an assassin’s bullet.

In January 1979 James Lewis tracked down his missing thirty five year old twin brother, both boys having been adopted out at five weeks of age. His brother’s name too was now James (James Springer). Both had married a girl called Linda, divorced her, and married again to a girl named Betty. Both had named their first son James Allen. Both had worked successively as a part time deputy sheriff, McDonald Hamburger employee, and filling station attendant. Both spent their holidays at the same Florida beach, drove the same model car, and had both had two confirmed heart attacks.

While this last is not strictly a “time twin” example, the fact of total separation from the cradle makes the possibility of these external events of their lives being related to genetic factors highly unlikely.

Obviously we can come to no firm conclusion with respect to this particular objection. Never the less there is some evidence that even in the difficult area of time twins the astrologer’s case still has some arguable merit.

8. Induced Births

When a birth is artificially induced it is evident that the natural “link” between conception and birth is broken. If the birth had been allowed to go full term the horoscope for the natural birth would obviously have been quite different from that erected for the time of the induced birth. As one cannot have two birth charts – and in any case it is obviously impossible to determine what would have been the “natural” time of birth (or even the place) – this would seem to put the astrologer in an impossible position.

It probably does!

The astrologer has no option but to erect a chart for the actual time of birth and to interpret that chart. Some have suggested that horoscopes should not be erected under such conditions, as astrology is a “natural” art and ought not therefore be applied to “unnatural” circumstances. The majority however would claim that the chart of an

induced birth is appropriate for the person, and that this has been vindicated by their experience.

However “experience” here is quite subjective and even among astrologers there seems to be no collected data to substantiate such a claim. To explain the validity of astrology in such circumstances it is necessary to suppose that “to be induced” is as much a part of a person’s life potential as (say) to marry under certain circumstances. Given this assumption the birth chart then becomes a valid document for the interpretation of the personality.

The objection however is really a “problem in astrology” rather than an objection to it, as the matter does not become an issue of importance unless the general validity of the astrological process in the case of normal births has already been accepted.

9. Mass Tragedies

This final objection was apparently first raised by J.B.S.Haldane in an article printed in the *Daily Herald* during September 1939. Basically it asks the question about the relationship between individual destiny and large scale events. Did the millions of Jews of the second world war who died in the death camps all have a common death written into their horoscopes?

Once again the problem is not new. Ptolemy considered that the individual’s destiny was “subsumed” to the greater destiny of the state, nation, race, or geographic area. However it appears that the actual determination of such national or racial horoscopes are fraught with immense difficulties, and while mundane astrologers still ply their trade today, the results are at the best inconclusive.

What is interesting about this objection is that it is the only one – of all those considered – that enters the realm of prediction. The astrology that has been discussed so far has been natal astrology, concerned with the individual’s birth from which certain information is extracted to describe the person’s nature and his or her likely reaction to life situations. Haldane’s objection assumes that not only should the astrologer be able to delineate the chart in a way that properly depicts character and life circumstances, but he is also able to predict the nature, date, and circumstances of death.

This is demanding prediction of a very high order and presupposes an immensely sophisticated system. Certainly it is asking astrology to display a degree of competence which no life science can hope to approach at the present time. It is also demanding a feat that the great majority of astrologers would happily admit to be far beyond their abilities.

Whether it ought to be is another question. Certainly the problem is a real one and cannot simply be dismissed; yet it is no more a disproof of astrology to demand from it an ability to handle the most recondite matters with ease, than it is a disproof of modern medicine that it cannot readily cure all known diseases. To demand such an unreasonable level of proof may perhaps be a demonstration more of the objector’s prejudices than of a genuine questioning of the astrological position.



These then are the supposed weighty and scientific objections to the practice of astrology. On examination however they appear to be far less substantial than we may have been led to suppose. Indeed, apart from revealing that there are some areas of uncertainty in astrological technique, there is little in any of them to suggest some fundamental reason why astrology cannot work.

Of course it would be possible to go on from here to talk about the work of John Nelson and the relationship between radio communication and celestial phenomena, or Professor Piccardi's physical experiments and annual celestial cycles, or of course the statistical studies of Gauquelin. All of these are strongly suggestive of a correlation between terrestrial events and circumstances and solar and planetary phenomena. These however are probably quite well known to most of us, and we have probably gone far enough for our present purpose.

The astrological thesis may certainly suggest a world which is somewhat different from that espoused by the particular 'scientific' view point which many people almost unconsciously accept today. However I think that this may well be a problem which lies elsewhere, rather than in the practice of astrology itself.

A LADY IN TASMANIA

1982

Astrologers seem in general to be very interested in the question of prediction, but very uninterested in that of predestination. Yet it is surely impossible to divorce the two. If a matter is predicable, it must – to the degree which it is predictable – also be predestined.

As one looks at history it seems that by and large astrologers have seen prediction as their particular concern, while theologians have argued learnedly about predestination. Never the less at the same time both – in the practical events of their lives – appear equally to have sought to exert their own freedom of choice and will.

This apparent confused state of mind may perhaps also have been aggravated by the various statutes which outlawed the practice of fortune telling. Thus English law from the 16th century strictly forbade any person to “exercise of any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration, or undertake to tell fortunes”.

Australia naturally followed English legislation, and all states had various Vagabond Acts which similarly proscribed fortune telling. In general astrologers tried to side step such legislation by disclaiming any ability to make direct predictions of the future, but only the ability to foresee ‘likelihoods’.

However by the mid 1970s there were many who felt the legislation to be inappropriate, and some more militant souls (not astrologers) in Australia were publicly telling fortunes and being prosecuted for their trouble. I myself had a small pamphlet published entitled *The Astrologer and Australian Law*, in which I concluded, “The problem with fortune telling lies not in that it does not work, but in that so many believe that it might”. Happily during the 1980s, these laws were repeated throughout Australia.

The issue of prediction – and hence by association predestination – was therefore one which was much alive in the Australian community (and I suspect elsewhere as well) at this period. It was also at this time that I came across Dr. J. E. Orme’s book *Time, Experience, and Behaviour*. This brought home to me the fact that the other ingredient in the Prediction-Predestination dilemma is our understanding of the nature of time.

It was these particular circumstances which led to the writing of the essay which follows.



Sometimes – for a variety of reasons – one particular event or circumstance becomes the centre around which a whole set of experiences or ideas seem to develop. For me one such focus was related to a set of detailed yearly predictions which I was asked to prepare for the year 1974 at the request of a lady living in Tasmania. For September

and October of that year I made the observations that “in some way you may yourself be involved in travel” and that “the changes (of this period) would seem to be very helpful for you”.

Some time later I received a letter from my client which read in part, “Thank you very much for my forecast for the year 1974. It is almost uncanny – considering the events which have taken place. I was offered a plane fare to England and return by one of my very old friends who thought that I was run down..... My plane reservation is booked for the 14th October”.

Being a conscientious graduate of the (English) Faculty of Astrological studies, I had always taken the trouble to include a preface with all of my written work for clients, as I had been carefully taught to do. Part of this read, “Remarks on the possibilities for the future should be understood as indicating the probable outcome of the potentials of the birth-moment only. Astrology attempts to indicate a life pattern, but the way in which this finally becomes evident in our experience must ultimately depend upon ourselves.”

There appears to me to be two things which we value above almost all else in our society. These are sex and freedom. I must confess that I am more than a little confused about both, but perhaps especially so about the latter. It was George Bernard Shaw who said that “sex makes a very great difference on a very few occasions”. Certainly the same could be said of freedom, if indeed it can be said at all.

Like most astrologers, I feel a degree of smug satisfaction if my delineation of a birth chart is greeted with an over-awed approval by the person whose horoscope it is. However my lady in Tasmania has always – in a sense – worried me.

I guess that I have quite frequently thought of astrology as if it were a kind of psychological short cut, and that astrologers and psychologists really have similar ends in view. Both seek so to understand a person’s nature and the strengths, weaknesses of that nature, so that the reactions of that person to the events of life may be both understood and anticipated. The psychologist does this by recourse to various techniques of experiential analysis, while the astrologer seeks to do it by his or her interpretation of the birth chart.

Now while such a point of view seems to be perfectly valid if one is thinking about how a certain person will react given a particular relationship or circumstance, it really falls to the ground totally with regard to that sequence of events which my lady in Tasmania experienced. There is obviously no possible analytical mechanism by which a psychologist may come to the conclusion that “next October you will be given an opportunity to travel”. This can only be said if we are prepared to use concepts concerning the way that the world works which generally astrologers – just as much as any one else – find difficult to accept.

It seems by observation that one of the axioms of a western understandings of life is that men and women possess free will, and – judging by prefaces of the kind which the Faculty of Astrological studies urges upon its students – western astrologers seem to be as anxious to uphold this point of view as much any one else. When challenged

that astrology appears to negate freedom of the will, most will defend their practices by quoting that old Latin tag which roughly translates as, “The stars incline but do not compel”. A thought of course echoed by Shakespeare’s line, “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves”.

But to return to my Tasmanian lady. It seems to me that I am faced with two alternatives. Either I must have been involved in an almost impossible coincidence or accident, or else in fact – from the chart – I did predict an event in which her own volition, her own free will, her own feelings, and her own attitudes, had no influence at all upon the circumstances which transpired. However, if matters of this kind are indeed predictable – things in which the person principally concerned has no causative part in that series of events which create those circumstances in which he or she finds herself – then it seems to me that we need to think quite carefully about our understanding of freedom of action or free will.

Now while I think that it is true (as I said previously) that the vast majority of people in our society are dedicated to the concept of freedom of action and free will, it is one of those things that we know exactly what it is that we believe until we are asked to describe it. In practice, when we come to consider any specific issue, it is often quite difficult to decide whether a particular action or decision that we have taken, has been made freely or not.

Let us take as an example, an imaginary person in prison. We will say without hesitation, “Of course, he is not free”. By this we mean that he is not free to go where he wishes, or to do as he likes. Yet are any of us? Besides, the prisoner may very well say that even in his situation he still does have some very real freedoms which he is able to exercise. He is free to sit up or lie down, to choose what he will read, or to think as he pleases.

However our prisoner – like ourselves – also suffers a second imprisonment. This is his imprisonment to his birth, his heredity, his environment, his nature, his experiences, and so on. Even within the prison’s walls, the prisoner is also a prisoner of himself. As well as within walls of stone, he lives as well in that personal prison which places its own peculiar restraints upon his ability to exercise his will freely.

Just the same, it is hard to divest ourselves of the idea that we are not free (say) to learn from our mistakes, or that we do not have a freedom to choose our relationships or at least some of the circumstances of our lives. Unfortunately, the more one thinks about this, then the more it seems to me that the whole structure of astrology argues against such a point of view.

Most astrologers (I am sure) will suggest that a person whose seventh house contains a number of badly aspected planets will not only find difficulty in one marriage, but will quite likely experience similar problems arising in any subsequent relationship. It is indeed a statistical fact – as well as an astrological one – that people have a marvellous propensity for re-experiencing the same kind of situation as that which has already given them much personal pain, and from which they have sought to escape. We have been reminded of this quite recently, as apparently the divorced wife of the notorious Yorkshire Ripper has formed a personal relationship with a man serving a prison term for the murder of his wife and family!

I think also that we need to remember that the use of the houses in astrological interpretation presupposes a world in which not only are our responses to various circumstances predetermined, but also that the actual realisation of such experiences in our lives is equally inescapable. That is, a horoscope does not simply suggest that if we happen to become involved (say) in occult associations, then our reaction to these experiences will be of such and such a kind; but that it is of the nature of our life that we will be drawn into such circumstances. It says that these things will by nature form a necessary part of our experience, and that it is of the essence of our being that such circumstances should be encountered.

Incidentally, I do not think that we can avoid this dilemma by abandoning the house structure. The Ebertin system (for example) seems simply to transfer the same interpretive structure back onto the planets and their mid-points.

Perhaps what I am saying is this. If we are concerned that the question of human free will appears to be compromised by the use of the predictive techniques of astrology, then I fear that the solution is not to give up prediction, but to abandon astrology entirely. Every natal chart is by its nature a predictive document. Indeed, if it were not, then there would be little point at all in the practice of astrology.

This was in fact the point which St. Augustine of Hippo sought to make in the 4th century AD. In his work *The City of God* he admits to the accuracy of astrological techniques. However he argues that if events in a person's life are indeed predictable, then this must obviously limit God's freedom to order the world as he chooses. This naturally poses an impossible dilemma. Therefore he suggests that astrology must be a device used by the devil himself in order to deceive us in our understanding of God's nature. It must therefore be eschewed by Christians.

Later Christian writers however modified this rather extreme view by saying that the use of astrology in areas which impinged upon God or man's free will was certainly not permissible, but that its use in the prediction of "natural" events was indeed beneficial. Thus one was allowed to predict earthquakes, pestilence, or disaster, but not when a great prince would marry. It all became rather complicated.

Still, I am fairly sure that most people – while being prepared to admit that perhaps life and the exercise of free will is a bit more complex than we generally care to admit – feel that the idea that life may be totally predetermined is quite abhorrent. Such a concept would seem to reduce us to the level of automatons running along a set of tracks from which we can never deviate, and reduces the whole process of intelligent and meaningful living to a nonsense. What point is there in trying to make decisions if we have no alternatives anyway? Or bearing hardships for the sake only of obtaining the inevitable?

Now that of course is a quite serious issue. Predictability, predestination, and free will, all involve questions that involve our basic understandings of what life is about. The lady in Tasmania challenges me to understand the meaning of my own existence. Because I seem to be the observer of a totally predetermined set of events in her life, then I must find it exceedingly difficult to argue that my own life can be an exception to this inherent structure of things.

In a matter of such fundamental importance as this, we would rather naturally expect to find a great abundance of philosophical or religious speculation available to the inquirer. Alas almost the opposite seems to be the case. Like the Victorian attitude to sex, it appears that we all know that free will exists, but that it is not proper to talk about it in nice company.

Philosophers (for example) appear to have been far more interested in the question, “How do we know what the world is really like?” than in the one, “What does it mean?” Christian religious thought has been much more concerned with the issue of whether God – by means of his infinite knowledge – is able to know the predestined eternal destiny of each individual person, than whether or not I am fully free to eat the cheese sandwich in front of me. However the general consensus of Christian theologians seems to be that by and large we are free to make choices in most every day affairs.

One of the few modern writers who has been concerned to any degree with the question of free will is a German theologian named Emil Brunner. In an essay on human nature he says, “The animals and God have no responsibility; the animals because they are below the level of responsibility, and God because he is above it. The animals because they have no freedom, and God because he has absolute freedom. Man however has limited freedom. This is the heart of his being man, and it is the ‘condition’ on which he possesses freedom”.

I think that actually Emil Brunner is saying something that reflects pretty accurately what most people – and most astrologers – believe in their heart of hearts. God can do what he likes; we can sometimes do what we like; and animals do what they have to do. We are people of limited freedom, and it is often suggested that the more a person is aware of his or her own true nature (and in such a process astrology will have an important role to play) then the more we are able to exercise freedom of will. It is only the ignorant and the unenlightened who are the victims of their own destiny. Indeed, the truly enlightened man or woman (so we imagine) must have freedoms far beyond any that we are able to contemplate.

But is it true or reasonable to say that God can do what he likes? If I say to you, “Black is white”, then I have spoken a nonsense. It is surely no less a nonsense to say “God is free to make black white”. If this were so then the whole universe would simply tumble into chaos, as there would be no ground upon which anything could continue without the threat of continual and instant annihilation either into its opposite or into nothingness.

That is, even the freedom of God is limited by the creation for which he is responsible and in which he is (presumably) still involved. If then God is not able to do freely as he might wish, it is doubtful if we are.

With this kind of thought in the back of our minds, let us return to our question about prediction and free will. What I am suggesting is not that there is no such thing as free will, but rather that freedom of the will – like every other aspect of our experience – operates in its own specific and properly defined area of our life.

You see, most people have difficulties with the idea of prediction because it suggests that the future is already set and unchangeable; and that is something that they do not wish to believe. People want the freedom to be able to mould the future in ways which will be acceptable to them, and bring to themselves personal advantage.

That is, we want the freedom to be able to change things for our benefit. We want to be free to be able to arrange our lives so that certain things will not happen. We want the freedom – and perhaps even more importantly – to have the hope of being able to change ourselves into people who will be more attractive, or richer, or healthier, or braver, or more popular than we perceive ourselves to be at the present time. Now that (I think) may not be all that much different from wanting the freedom to be able to change black into white.

On the other hand, if we take the point of view that freedom is the quality of being able to attain what is possible, we may be able to understand things in a different way. I exercise my free will when I seek to become truly myself; not when I seek to become something different. My freedom of will lies in the area of my own self, not in the area of re-ordering or changing the structures of the world about me (which is a mesh of inter-related actions and energies) simply in order to achieve what I consider to be a personally desirable goal at one particular time in my life.

One of the things that we need to recognise in this regard is that the ability to change things or to change ourselves, requires not only an ability to change the future, but also the ability to change the past. The way that I will behave tomorrow – or the events which will occur to me – are the result of processes already long under way. If it were possible for me suddenly to become immensely rich or powerful, this would require not simply the addition of some new quality into my life, but also the undoing and rebuilding of much that has made me the person that I am today.

For my Tasmanian lady, not to have been offered a plane ticket when she was – and for her progressed chart not to have suggested travel when it did – would have demanded changes to a very large number of diverse and complex circumstances. First of all it would have required that she should have been born at a different time or place; yet the circumstances of her birth were obviously themselves the end of a long process that involved a large number of complex issues. Secondly, it would also have required the reshaping of a number of events not only in her own life, but presumably also in the life of her generous friend.

Any event in our life, no matter how apparently unimportant, is always the culmination of a web of events and circumstances that stretch back and back until they are lost from sight. If we wish to have the freedom to alter the future by some present act of self decision, we need also to have the power and the freedom to reshape the past. If we accept a world in which history is fixed, we may well have to be content to accept one in which the future also may not be tampered with. Yet if the exercise of free will is of the kind which I have suggested – that is, the free acceptance of who we are and the rejoicing in our own uniqueness – then this freedom is in no way limited should the future be as unalterable as the past.

I have a kind of feeling that deep down many people may sense this to be so. All astrologers are no doubt frequently confronted by people apparently asking questions

about the future; and asking for predictions to be made from their charts. Of course simply by the fact that they have asked – and we have indicated that we will try to answer their questions – commits all of us to a predictable universe. I am sure too that should some predictions fail to be fulfilled in some gross way, we will no doubt seek to explain this not by denying the predictability of experience, but by some failure of technique or interpretation.

However if we think about these requests carefully, I am sure that we will find that in probably a majority of cases the request for prediction made by a client is really not so much a request seeking information about future events, as a seeking of information about his or her own self.

Let us suppose that we are asked the question, “Will my husband leave me?” or “Will my son die as a result of this accident?” To say simply, “Yes”, or “No”, is not in fact to answer the question in any adequate way. The question that the person is really asking is, “Should this event come to pass, what will happen to me?” The client does not so much need to know what the future will bring in detail, as to know that whatever it does bring, she will survive as a person.

In the end, I suspect, it is rather unimportant what events the future actually brings into my life. The importance of the future is that – whatever does happen – it will provide me with the opportunities I need for the exercise of my free will. That special and personal freedom of will which allows me to take a particular circumstance into my experience and through it to become more fully myself.

In this respect it is perhaps worthwhile to make the point that I am not simply talking about what we usually perceive to be the peaks (or the valleys) of our experience. Let me put it this way.

We sometimes behave as if there are two quite different sorts of decisions that we make in life. There are the major ones that determine our ultimate destiny, and the there are minor ones that simply correspond to some small and limited circumstance which has no-going effect. Thus (for example) to buy a cheese sandwich is a minor decision, and in which we may presumably enjoy virtually perfect freedom of choice since no major direction in our life will be determined by it. However to decide what occupation we shall enter is a decision which will have ultimate and far reaching consequences, and therefore may be seen to be one which is part of some overall plan or destiny. In this case our freedom may be restricted by the ultimate goals which fate has decreed for us.

In this respect cheese sandwiches do not normally figure prominently in horoscopic predictions, but work and employment are generally felt to be a quite proper subject for predictive work.

Let me briefly recount a personal story.

I was riding my motor cycle from Adelaide to Sydney, and camped at a small country town overnight. After I left in the morning the crossed a river a mile or so outside the town. When I came to the bridge I found that the river was in flood and had risen about 18 inches over the roadway. I had to decide whether or not I should attempt to

ride across the bridge, or push my motor cycle through the water and so fairly obviously get my feet wet.

I decided to attempt the former. About halfway across the bridge a semi-trailer came from the other direction, and the surge of water which this vehicle created swamped my engine. The motor stopped, and I had to push the bike across to the other side. When I got there it was necessary to disassemble the fuel system to remove the water.

So in fact I got my feet wet after all. But (dear reader) before you laugh at the apparent inconsequentiality of my failure to exercise my right to decide my fate freely, there is a little more to add.

I finally left the river an hour or so later than was my plan. In the evening of that day a truck pulled out of a side road, the driver of which did not see me on my motor cycle with the setting sun behind me. I collided with the vehicle, as it was impossible for me to brake on the road's gravel surface.

The front forks of my motor cycle were bent, and I spent the next two days hitch-hiking into the nearby large town with my front wheel and forks to have these straightened and repaired. To fill in my idle town, I wandered into the new Anglican Church, and from its bookstand took a small manual on Anglican Church belief. From that point onward I began to find my previous religious attitudes unsatisfactory. This eventually led not only to a change in my religious faith, but also finally to my entering the priesthood of my new allegiance.

Now in retrospect those series of events at the bridge obviously constituted a major turning point in my life. This being the case, one would assume that they would belong to those things which should be predictable and designated in the horoscope in some way.

However, it strikes me that a decision about whether to get one's feet wet or not is intrinsically not a lot more important than one concerned with what kind of sandwich filling should be bought. If one is worthy of predetermination, so it would seem should be the other. I have then a feeling that there may be no unimportant decisions in life, and that there are no events which happen that do not have the possibility of being the harbingers of great and wondrous things.

Now, I am what I am today because of a seemingly trivial issue in my past. I also believe that I cannot change what I am today, because I am unable to change this past. It is also fairly obvious that I cannot change the present. I cannot – at this instant – suddenly transport myself and become the master of a harem in some dark and distant land where a fate worse than death awaits any who would challenge my desires. It seems therefore to matter little if also I am unable to alter a future which I have not yet experienced. The future – in other words – is not the matter upon which free will operates. Free will is a quality of our being, not a technique or tool for manipulating tomorrow.

If there are any areas in which determination – or predestination, or predictability (call it what you will) – operates, then it seems to me that it must operate in every event in the life of every person who lives. This is the kind of rule which can sustain no

exceptions. Freedom does not comprise an ability to alter the future - any more than it is an ability to alter the past or present – but only in that quality of existence which allows us to accept what is, and then to be able to use this so that we may become what we truly are by nature.

Or perhaps to use another analogy. If you catch a train from Adelaide to Melbourne, you are not especially disturbed should you arrive at your predicted destination at the predicted time. The significance of the journey (should it have one) will rest in your reaction to it or the reason for it. It is not the knowability of the future which disturbs us, but rather the thought or fear of our reaction to it.

But what if – you may say – our astrologer should forecast that this particular train was to be involved in an accident, would we not then decide to avoid the journey? No doubt we would, but perhaps later be confronted by the news that a friend or relative had died in it. Perhaps it was proper that we should have avoided the accident in order that we could experience the other tragedy associated with it.

One is reminded of the Pope whose astrologer forecast that he would die in Jerusalem. Naturally the pontiff decided never to visit Jerusalem, only to die by an assassin's hand in the Jerusalem Chapel of the Church of St. Mary the Less. It is unwise to assume that we have the freedom to side step life's path.

We also need to remember that whenever we try to think about this question of free will, prediction, or predestination, we are also talking about our understanding of time. Dr. John Orme is one of the few people who have written to any extent on this question. His main conclusion in his book *Time, Experience, and Behaviour* is that whatever time is like, it is certainly not like whatever a clock measures. He draws a picture of our experience which is similar to a cork floating upwards in a long tube of liquid. As the cork moves upwards, experiences pass our mind and they are recognised as the present. If we reach downwards into the past we have memory, and if we can reach upwards into the future we have precognition.

Dr. Orme also suggests that there is no reason logically why we should believe that cause and effect work from past to future. It may indeed work the other way about, and the present and the past that we know are caused by an ultimately necessary future. Perhaps in the sense that we could say that our presence on the train in the Adelaide station is caused by our necessary destination at Melbourne.

I would also wish to argue that our enjoyment of the present will not necessarily be inhibited by the knowledge of a fixed future. The film which we see is no less enjoyable – and no less a present experience – because we happen to know that its end is not only predetermined, but already exists within the projector.

This is perhaps going a little bit further than is necessary for our purpose. I only want to make the point that the question of freedom or free will may contain many more issues that we may at first imagine; and that the idea of a predictable world is not so frightening or confining as we may tend to believe. Personally I believe that it is no more appropriate for me to complain that I cannot choose to be what I am not, than it is for a dog to complain that it is not a pig, or a grasshopper and elephant. To change myself – or to change the future – is not the prerogative of free will. Free will acts on

a totally different area. It acts upon will, not history. It is concerned with my ability and right to become that one truly unique individual whom I know as myself.

In this sort of context, my own free will means to me three things.

Firstly, I exercise it in being prepared to accept my given nature, dark patches, warts and all. I am free to accept or reject myself. If I do reject myself, then my life will be one of dissatisfaction and fruitless struggle to be other than what I am. Obviously in the end I cannot escape from myself, but my own nature can fight against my will until my personality is totally atrophied.

Secondly, I can exercise my free will in accepting the circumstances in which I find myself. I can freely believe that these are those particular situations which are necessary and essential if I am to become the person that I really am.

And thirdly, I can exercise my free will in seeking to bring together all the varying parts of my nature into one accepted and harmonious whole. Perhaps in the same way that an ocean is filled with varying currents and yet is still a single ocean. So all the forces and energies of my life are bound together for the fulfillment of one single nature.

Finally – to draw to a conclusion this rather rambling essay – I would also like to suggest that the responsibility of the astrologer does not end with the delineation of the birth chart, nor with the production of a set of yearly predictions, no matter how accurate these may prove to be. The real subject of astrology is not planetary aspects, houses, signs, midpoints, transits, nor progressions, but people. Astrology is a tool to use for the benefit of people, as is medicine, psychiatry, or law.

People come to astrologers because they are seeking, and their quest has often been unfulfilled by the systems of the society in which they live. People come because they want to know themselves, to understand their own lives, to find a pattern for their existence, to make sense of their tragedies, and to find an assurance about their own selves. To pass them off with a treatise about planetary aspects, or a dry list of predictions based upon primary or secondary directions is (in the words of Jesus) to give your son a stone when he asks for bread.

Perhaps I am a little critical, but I think that often the meetings of astrological societies spend too much time drawing charts upon blackboards – charts which without exception we describe as “interesting” – and then making obvious conclusions about known lives from often obscure and ill-defined astrological data. The real and final test of the astrologer is whether he or she is able to speak meaningfully – not about the chart – but to the person whose chart it is. So that in the end that person can say, “That has made my life more understandable, more acceptable, more joyful, and more hopeful”. Unless we can solve the problems of people, there seems to me to be little point in trying to solve the problems of astrological techniques.

So in the end my lady in Tasmania and her generous friend have led me to places that were as unexpected as her own travels. Just the same, I hope that somewhere along the not very well directed course of this perhaps unexpected diversion from the main

stream of astrological topics, the reader may have found a morsel of interest or perhaps even of stimulation.

Never-the-less I hasten to add that given the things which I have written, it was of course inevitable, inescapable, and necessary that you should now be reading these words. All other doors were in fact shut to you. But please take some comfort – because even in this matter – as in all the other events of your predetermined and predicable life – you have still been able to exercise your total and absolute free will.

JEWS, JESUS, AND ASTROLOGERS

1984

Having written “Wise Men from the East”, it was probably inevitable that I should be drawn back to the question of the astrological content of the Bible as a whole.

Generally in this matter one is faced with two diametrically opposite points of view. One states that there is absolutely no possibility of any astrological content in scripture, save those passages (especially in some parts of Isaiah) which condemn its use. The other sees the Bible as an almost totally astrological document. I have in my possession (for example) a reprint of *The Astrology of the Old Testament or The Lost Word Regained*, by one Karl Anderson, who claimed to be a “professor of Chaldean, Arabian, and Egyptian Astrology”. It is not especially edifying reading.

In writing this essay I therefore tried to steer a very circumspect path, and only to refer to those parts of the scriptures which seem to be unquestionably astrological in nature. The thing which I had not expected to find – and which greatly surprised me – was that without question the most astrologically orientated books of the Bible are the four Gospels themselves. This is also clearly not because the writers had any particular astrological axe to grind, but because they reflected factually the teachings and actions of Jesus.

This is not in any way to claim or suggest that Jesus was an astrologer. It is simply that one seems to be drawn inevitably to the conclusion that he was very aware of astrological symbolism – as presumably were his disciples and listeners – and quite consciously used it as a part of his teaching technique. This was often in the form of acted parables. Since astrology was seen as very “non Jewish” by the strictly orthodox hierarchy, this may well have been a very real cause for some of the authorities’ displeasure with Jesus, and one which appears to have been entirely neglected by scholars to date.

In this regard one may also wonder whether it may not be part of the reason for Saint Matthew including in his gospel the account of the visit of the astrologers to the infant Jesus. This was to ‘set the scene’ for the astrological content in the later events of the Messiah’s life.

The “inspiration” to prepare the essay was finally triggered by the statement of Fr. Concetti mentioned at its beginning. This seemed to encapsulate all the enmities and prejudices of traditional religion in our present day towards the practice of astrology. One can only wonder what Jesus’ own response to the good father would have been.



In January this year the newspaper of the Vatican – *L’Osservatore Romano* - published an article by the Franciscan theologian Fr. Gino Concetti. It said in part that “Christian morality warns us not to put our faith in horoscopes”, and that belief in

horoscopes is contrary to Christian teaching both on theological and anthropological grounds.

One may perhaps excuse the good father for overlooking the fact that in the 13th century St. Thomas Aquinas wrote in *De Judiciis Astrorum* that “it is not unbefitting to make use of judicial astrology with regard to natural occurrences”. St. Thomas was a Dominican you see, and Franciscans and Dominicans have never been noted for a charitable understanding of each other’s point of view.

However I fear that one must reluctantly admit that it is probably true that orthodox Christianity today casts a more than somewhat cold and disapproving eye upon astrology. In general it appears essentially to say that if one wishes to be involved with astrology two qualifications should be possessed. The first is that one should be intellectually deficient, and the second is the one should be morally corrupt. Now while I can be as stupid as the average citizen and enjoy a tippie of depravity with the common herd, I actually do object that the two above qualifications should be seen as totally descriptive of my character.

And what is more, I believe that I have some quite good grounds for objecting.

So the purpose of this short essay is to look rather quickly at the biblical records upon which the Christian Church erects its theological structures, and to try to discover if they are quite as anti-astrological as people like Fr. Concetti would have us believe.

You see, most Christians tend to take the bible rather seriously. Therefore should we in fact find that even in the scriptures themselves astrological themes are present, then perhaps not only should anti-astrological Christians have some cause to ponder their position, but even humble and innocent astrologers may be given some degree of comfort.

I must however first of all confess that I tend to wince when I come across books titled something like *Astrology and the Bible*. These I usually find to be little more than an exposition of the author’s theories of how almost every verse and certainly every prophecy of the bible is totally and utterly astrologically based. Now this is obviously nonsense. The bible does, however, record first of all the history of a people – the Jews – for a period of about 1,000 years. It then later records the life of a person – Jesus – and other events at the beginning of the Christian era.

We know that during the whole of these periods astrology was a vital and influential force in the ancient world. This being the case, then it would not be surprising to discover that some how, and in some place, this influence is also evident in the written records of those times. Should we in fact find that there are astrological concepts incorporated into the foundation documents of the Christian religion, then it would seem to me that whatever charges one may wish to lay against astrologers, the one that could never be sustained is that their practice is anti-religious, or more specifically, anti-Christian.

Now for many people this is actually a quite serious and personal matter. I know (for example) of a clergyman who has publicly stated that he will not give Holy Communion to any person who comes to the altar rails wearing an astrological

necklet. But even if the matter should not be for the reader such a personal issue, I still hope that the exercise of trying to discover whether or not there are astrological concepts contained in that book which has had such a singularly important influence upon our society and culture, will not be altogether unprofitable.

To begin we really need to try to do two things at the same time. Firstly to remind ourselves of the earlier developments of astrology, and secondly to have some idea of what was happening to the Jewish people during those centuries.

Jewish history seems to have begun properly somewhere about 1,600 to 1,500 BC. A tribe or clan led by a man called Abram (later Abraham) wandered as nomads from the area at the top of the Persian Gulf (specifically Ur of the Chaldees), gradually working its way through what is now present day Palestine. The people finally settled more or less permanently in an area of the Nile delta in Egypt.

Abram and his clan had come from a highly astrologically orientated society. It was about this time that a set of tables called the Enuma-Enu-Anlil series came into being. These contained about 7,000 celestial observations and associated omens. The astrology with which Abram would have been familiar would have been one that relied heavily upon the position of the planets in certain areas of the sky (that is, the concept of “planets in signs”), together with a set of regularly occurring lunar phenomena, and the appearance of sudden and unexpected events such as comets or eclipses.

The so-called “intellectual zodiac” – the zodiac of 360° which allows the establishment of the concept of angular relationships – had not yet been developed. At least not in Babylonian astrology. Whether Egyptian astrology held such concepts at this time is very difficult to know. Babylonian astrology was apparently pretty public, whereas Egyptian astrology was very much a preserve of the priestly castes, and its techniques unknown by the common people.

Indeed whether the Egyptian astrologers were in possession of concepts much in advance of their Babylonian counterparts – and if so whether they were the originators of these or simply the custodians of a system which had come from a far more ancient source – is a fascinating area of speculation but one unfortunately that is much beyond the scope of this essay.

The stay of these people descended from the clan of Abram, who had become known as Hebrews, apparently lasted in Egypt for about 400 years. We know very little about their circumstances beyond that it seems that in general they occupied a place in Egyptian society at the level of common labourers. It is therefore unlikely that any of the knowledge or techniques of Egyptian astrology would have been known to them, and if they had any astrological lore or practices these would most probably have reflected the earlier ones of Babylon which had been brought with them several centuries before.

There are in fact two records in the Old Testament which come from this period, and which do reflect such a Babylonian style of astrology.

The first is from a very ancient passage (Genesis 49:3-27) in which Jacob (said to be Abram's son) blesses his own twelve sons. Each blessing has a strong astrological colouring, and can be fairly easily related to an appropriate zodiacal sign. We will not worry about them all, but several are especially interesting.

"Simon and Levi are brothers, their spades became weapons of violence, for in their anger they killed men, wantonly they hamstrung oxen." The two violent signs of Aries and Scorpio are "brothers", both being governed by Mars. But what is really curious is that Levi was the priestly tribe in later history, and so exempt from warfare. Thus the blessing does not reflect the history or status of Levi and his descendants, but rather a strictly astrological pattern.

"Judah you lion's whelp and Issachar lying down in cattle pens" plainly reflect Leo and Taurus. But "Let Dan be a viper on the road, a horned snake on the path" reminds us that the origin of the glyph for Aquarius was two snakes; one black and one white, and not ripples of water as it is drawn today. The snakes reflected the good and bad sides of wisdom. One recalls the Garden of Eden legend in which the serpent was "more crafty than any other wild creature".

"Zebulun dwells by the sea shore, his shore is a haven for ships" is obviously strongly Cancerian. Yet in the actual geographical division of Palestine among the Jewish tribes, the area of Zebulun was land locked. Again astrological symbolism would seem to be more important than geographical accuracy.

The second are passages that remind us that it was during this period that the most important of all Hebrew festivals commenced. This was what we now call Passover. Its date is the 14th day of Abib. This is the first month of the old Hebrew year, and its commencement was marked by the first new moon after the spring equinox. Thus Passover is a full moon festival.

A later story concerned with David (about 1,000 BC) also emphasises the importance of the lunar festivals. In this King Saul is incensed that David should absent himself from the new moon sacrifice and feast without the King's permission.

About 1,100 BC the Hebrews left Egypt, and this is the period in which we read of Moses, the plagues of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and so on. They entered Palestine and established themselves in a series of bloody conflicts with the original inhabitants, until about 1,000 BC they were able to create a kingdom for themselves with Saul as their first king. He was followed by David after a brief civil war, and David by his son Solomon.

After Solomon's death in about 900 BC, the nation was plunged into civil war between two of Solomon's sons. In the end the country was partitioned into a northern kingdom called Israel, and a southern one called Judah.

While the southern kingdom of Judah (in which the city of Jerusalem stood) was small and impoverished, the northern one of Israel was rich and prosperous. It had a thriving trade, and because it was situated across the trade routes between Egypt and Babylon it became a cosmopolitan nation. As a result it also became a very mixed

religious community, and this stirred up the more conservative religionists who followed the old Hebrew God Jehovah.

One such person was a prophet named Amos who lived in the period 800 to 700 BC. In one part of his writings he says:

He who made the Pleiades and Orion
Who makes Taurus rise after Capella
And Taurus set hard on the rising of the Vintager
He who does this, the Lord is his name.

There are two very interesting things about this passage. The first is that it contains some pretty accurate astronomical observations about the rising and setting of certain star patterns. The second is that Amos deliberately makes use of astrological symbolism. The Pleiades are in the constellation of Taurus (the Bull). Why does Amos mentions this sign three times in the short passage?

The worship of God under the form of a Bull was widespread in both Babylon and Egypt at this time. It had also been taken into the worship of the people of Israel. In another part of his writings Amos says “Your calf-gods stink, O Samaria, my anger flares against them. What sort of god is this bull?”

Thus Amos, by deliberating invoking astrological symbolism, says in effect, “Remember, the earthly bull which you worship is itself only a shadow of the heavenly one. Yet the heavenly Bull – which contains the Pleiades – rises and sets only at the bidding of the Lord”. This would have been powerful and persuasive imagery. However the fact that the prophet was able to write in this ways shows that astrological symbolism was not only familiar to him and his readers, but that also its use was not offensive.

Now the years around 700 BC marked the beginning of a period of great turbulence in this part of the world. The rich northern Jewish kingdom of Israel was crushed by the Assyrian empire and disappeared forever (thus vindicating dramatically Amos’ prophecies). The Jewish nation survived only in the poor southern kingdom of Judah. Astrologically this period marks the beginning of that remarkable set of developments which brought modern astrology into being. The zodiac was divided into 360° and the whole of the structures of astrology as we know them – angles, aspects, houses, progressions, all appeared in a relatively short time.

Either Babylonian astrology suddenly took a quantum leap and the new knowledge spread from there to Egypt; or else for some reason now unknown a hitherto secret store of Egyptian knowledge was released and eagerly taken up firstly by Babylonian astrologers and then later by Greek. This is a matter about which you are free to come to you own conclusions.

However, just as this activity was reaching its peak in Babylon another event of enormous importance occurred to the small Hebrew nation living around Jerusalem. The nation was over-run by the Babylonian army and in a kind of 2,500 year prelude to Nazi Germany, the conquerors decided upon a “Final Solution” of their own. The entire nation – apart from the very illiterate and peasant classes – was transported to Babylon some 1,500 miles away.

Sitting in exile in Babylon a Jew could choose one of two ways. Either he could seek to preserve his traditions for the time when he hoped that he would be able to return to Jerusalem. If he chose this path he would exclude with the utmost vigour all foreign Babylonian influences upon his life and culture. He would turn his back upon this wicked civilisation and seek solace in the faith of Judaism. Or else he could look around this great Babylonian civilisation in which he found himself and begin to absorb concepts and ideas that were both new and exciting. And the civilisation of Babylon was one in which astrology was the queen of the sciences. Now it would seem that the Jews in fact took both paths.

It was from this time that much of the Old Testament as we know it today was collated, and that form of worship which is found in the synagogue was developed. So well did these two endeavours keep Judaism alive in Babylon, that later they were also able to preserve the faith through 1,900 years of exile in western Europe as well.

But on the other hand the prophet Ezekiel – writing from this time of captivity in 580 BC – is more than happy to make extensive use of astrological symbolism. He has a vision (Ezekiel 1:4-15) in which he sees God on a throne supported by four creatures. “Their faces were like this.(they) had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right, (and) on the left the face of an ox and the face of an eagle.”

You will no doubt immediately recognise that the Man represents Aquarius, the Lion Leo, and the Ox Taurus. We need also to recall that the ancient glyph for Scorpio was an Eagle; a symbolism which has much to recommend it.

Moreover these four signs are all Fixed signs, and so very appropriate for those which support the throne of God in the heavens. But further, those on the right – Aquarius and Leo – are Positive Fixed signs, while those on the left – Taurus and Scorpio – are Negative Fixed signs. It seems difficult to believe that this is all simply by fortuitous chance.

Obviously Ezekiel not only had an understanding of a well developed astrology, but found this to be quite compatible and helpful in his religious teaching.

Later he also uses a “day for a year” progression (Ezekiel 4:4-5). “Now lie on your side and I will lay Israel’s iniquity on you: you shall bear their iniquity for as many days as you lie on your side, allowing one day for every year of their iniquity.”

As would be expected, some of Ezekiel’s co-religionists did not like this Babylonian based astrology at all. About 540 BC Isaiah complained, “But no! in spite of your many wives you are powerless. Let your astrologers, your stargazers who foretell your future month by month persist.” Month by month forecasting suggests a pretty sophisticated professional astrology at work. An astrology which – if we are to judge by Isaiah’s grizzles – was more than a little popular with a great many of the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

About 500 BC the Hebrew people were allowed to return to Jerusalem. One hundred years later we find a person called Nehemiah complaining that no one seems very keen on the idea even then, as life was probably a whole lot more interesting in

Babylon. In fact for many centuries after 500 BC the central religious and cultural authority of the Jewish nation lay not in Jerusalem but in Babylon. It would seem that this Jewish Babylonian connection continued into Jesus own day, which is a matter of some importance as we shall see in a moment.

In the 400 years preceding Jesus' birth little more was added to the Jewish biblical writings, but what was seems not infrequently to have at least some sort of astrological "flavour". "For everything its season, and for every activity under heaven its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:1) is really a summary of astrological theory.

In our very hurried trip through biblical history we need now to turn away from the Old Testament – the history of the Hebrew people from about 1,500 BC to close to the beginning of the Christian era – and look first at those New Testament books called the Gospels. These are the records that tell us what we know of the life and teaching of Jesus.

It is not only curious but I think rather suggestive, that the most astrologically significant record of the whole of the bible is associated with the birth of Joshua ben Joseph, or Jesus as the Greek translation has it.

I guess that we are familiar with the general outline of the story in Matthew's Gospel, in which astrologers come to the court of King Herod seeking news of a new born king whose star (they say) has been "seen in the east".

It seems probable that the astrologers would have begun their journey from Sippar – somewhat north of Babylon – where a great school of astrology had existed for many hundreds of years. It was one of the most famous centres of the ancient world and its fame was established long before the Jewish people were taken captive to Babylon.

There is no need to repeat the examination of the details of the account, and the reader is referred back to the essay *Wise Men from the East*. It is sufficient to say that the 'star' was most probably a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces at the dawn of the Piscean age. This leads to the highly probable birth date for Jesus of 27th May 7 BC.

However for our present purpose, we may simply note that the Christian Gospels begin with a piece of detailed and accurate astrological writing. But what is perhaps more interesting is that astrological concepts are picked up strongly in the gospel accounts in ways that attribute astrological themes directly to Jesus himself. The two great astrological themes of the Gospels are firstly (as we might suspect) the Piscean one, and secondly its polar opposite, Virgo.

I do not want here to press the belief that Jesus was born of a Virgin, even though one could perhaps invoke the suggestive symbolism of Jesus being "heavenly born" of Pisces and "earth born" of Virgo. Rather I want to look at those things which fall under the rulership of the two signs. Once it has been stated that Pisces is the ruler of fish, fishermen, wine, sacrifice, and the spiritual life; and Virgo of corn, bread, and healing, one is aware that almost the whole of Jesus' life is contained within these terms.

Let us just look quickly at a few examples.

Six times in the four gospels the writers record that Jesus took some bread and fish and fed great numbers of people. By using the same words as he used at the Last Supper with his disciples – Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it – these miracles stories were obviously meant to indicate the four actions of the Church's Sacrament of the Eucharist (the Mass, Holy Communion). It is impossible to believe that neither Jesus, nor his disciples, nor the crowd, would have failed to understand the astrological significance of the association between fish and wine. The miracles are purposely astrological parables of the sacraments, deliberately used by Jesus and the Gospel writers.

The same thing happens after the resurrection as well. Here again there are two stories of the disciples recognising Jesus after he provides them with a breakfast of bread and fish.

There are as well some other curiously “fishy” stories.

In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus pays the temple tax by the unusual method of catching a fish in whose mouth he finds the coin with which to pay the tax. This arose after a discussion with the authorities about the propriety of the tax. One may surely interpret this as an astrological parable suggesting that those of the new Piscean age receive their spiritual associations as a free gift from God and not as a result of their paid up membership of the religious institution of Israel.

In another part Jesus asks, “Is there a man among you who will offer his son a stone when he asks for bread, or a snake when he asks for fish?” Again our bread and fish theme is present.

Now I would want to suggest very strongly that this astrological flavour of Jesus' ministry reflects a genuine tradition. It would certainly have angered the religious orthodoxy of his age, who fought strenuously to repress any outside influences reaching into their religious society. One may guess however that those of the ruling political circles (like Herod's court at an earlier time) were of a much more liberal mind, and probably much interested in astrological philosophy and similar matters. As well the common people, being close to the earth, would have responded easily and naturally to astrological symbolism.

Jesus then may have represented in Jewish society those ideas which appealed both to the liberal minded Jew and to the common person, but which were offensive and heretical to strict orthodox Judaism. His willingness to espouse and use Babylonian astrological concepts may indeed be at least one key to understanding the hatred which he obviously engendered among the religious leaders of his age. It may well have been this (at least in part) which they saw as having the potential to undermining their rigid and restrictive religious structure. Perhaps it was Jesus' astrological allusions and parable, as much as his kindness and disrespect for religious authority, which led eventually to his trial and execution.

And that – as they say in the classics – may be something to think about.

There is just one more thing to add. The earliest Christian symbol was the fish. It is our common tradition today to explain this by saying that it was invented by the first Christians as their symbol because the letters of the Greek word for fish could be made to represent the first letters of the phrase, “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour”.

In view of what we have said, I would want to suggest that the fish came first and the explanation later. The fish became the symbol of Jesus because of its startling appropriateness. It spoke through its astrological connotations of the style and content of Jesus’ life and teaching, it reflected the central Eucharistic mystery of the faith, and it portrayed the emergence of a new religious age.

Much of the rest of the New Testament was written by St. Paul, a convert from strict Jewish orthodoxy. His thought forms were quite alien to those which could happily accommodate astrological concepts, and Paul never mentions them. Rather he dwells almost entirely upon legal arguments and parables based upon the Old Testament to explain the new faith.

Astrology emerges only once more, and that is in the last book of the bible, the Book of the Revelations. Once again Ezekiel’s vision appears, with God’s throne supported by the four astrological creatures. In another part we find a vision of the “heavenly city” built upon a twelve fold foundation. The implication of zodiacal correspondence is had to ignore.

So my dear reader, that is why I find it hard to agree with Fr. Concetti that “horoscopes are contrary to Christian teaching both on theological and on anthropological grounds”, whatever that latter actually means.

There is (I would claim) an astrology which is a discernible part of both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian bible, and most especially in the teachings of Jesus. It would seem to be a dangerous thing for the Church to find itself in a position where it is quite clearly implying that its founder was at the best misguided, and at the worst grievously deluded.

Of course I am sure that there are some ways of understanding and using astrology which may well be opposed to Christian ethical and theological positions. There are also no doubt some understandings of Christianity which are unable to countenance any form of the astrological concept. However I am convinced that the first is as just as bad an astrology, as the second is a bad Christianity.

I personally do not find any great problem in talking about “Jews, Jesus, and Astrologers” in the one breath. Nor do I believe that any of these three would have any cause to feel uncomfortable in the other’s presence.

IS IT TRUE?

1986

While this essay is (I trust) fun, at the same time it deals with an issue of continuing importance – as well as continuing frustration – for astrologers.

It would appear on the surface to be a reasonable stance to adopt, that if a sufficient number of people vouch for the truth of a certain thing, then the matter is something which should be treated with some seriousness. Not only can astrologers point to many thousands of years of tradition, but can also find any number of people today who will say, “Yes, astrology works.”

They are therefore sometimes surprised when their personal conviction is rejected, and they are told that they are being completely unscientific and that there is no valid acceptable evidence to support their claims.

To a degree the dilemma is of astrology’s own making. Astrologers often make much of the fact that their study is quite unlike the occult arts (with which it is frequently associated). They are built upon intuitive or mystical processes, whereas those of astrology are strictly mathematical. This seems to imply that astrology may be better considered as a science rather than an art, and to have its ‘scientific’ nature rejected out of hand is therefore particularly hurtful.

This I think became very evident when the Competitions (dealt with later in this essay) were launched, and the astrological response to them was totally rejected. What I have tried to suggest is that some of our discomfort is probably due to our misconceptions about what science can and cannot do, and what it can and cannot handle.

I am sorry that the original correspondence which took place in 1981 and 1982 was lost by the time that the essay was written. Recent attempts to track down copies of the *Astrologers’ Forum* have also not been successful. However this does not materially effect the nature of the arguments presented, although it certainly denies the reader the delights of Dr. Dean’s often vivid prose.



Astrologers in general seem to take themselves rather seriously.

I have a complete set of the Journals of the Federation of Australian Astrologers from Volume One, Number One. If the readers of this publication did not take astrologer seriously I doubt if they would find in the pages of these journals much that could be considered to be of a high level of entertainment.

I fear therefore that this essay may somewhat lower this accustomed high standard, and offer rather lighter fare. It is certainly in one sense quite serious, but also (I must admit) somewhat tongue in cheek. So the reader must make of it what he or she will.

Let me begin therefore by asking that most terrible and fearsome question which all astrologers quake to hear, and the more serious they are about their discipline the less they wish to hear it. It is that simple question, "Is it true?"

The mid 1970's were quite exciting days for many astrologers. Michael Gauquelin had produced several statistical studies on the relationship of rising planets to professions, and a number of other authors had drawn our attention to a whole series of correspondences between events in the natural world and solar, lunar, and planetary configurations. There was also the work of Nelson who claimed that radio transmission was adversely affected when planets formed "hard:" aspects, but was enhanced by "easy" ones .

Astrologers rather naturally felt that their discipline had suddenly gained a high degree of scientific respectability. Some dared to suggest that even if astrology had not actually been proven to be scientifically true, then at least the gateway for this to occur had been well and truly opened and astrologers could now work with confidence towards this much desired goal.

Late in this period Geoffrey Dean and Arthur Mather published their book *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology*, a compendium of recent astrological techniques. It was however a book really quite critical of astrology, in that it saw the vast majority of astrology's claims to be unsubstantiated. One area that drew their particular attention was the claims made by astrologers for the effectiveness of the zodiacal signs in character delineation. As a result, in 1980 they offered a prize of \$500 to anyone who could demonstrate the validity of the signs in astrological work. Alas - in their judgement - no entry was worthy of the reward.

In late 1981 they offered a second prize - this time of \$1,000 - to anyone who could validate the effectiveness of the signs. The rules for the contest were quite specific, and appeared simply to require an unambiguous demonstration that the zodiacal signs were an effective technique for the determination of character. When the time came in late 1982 for the announcement of the winner's name to be made, once more astrologers had been found wanting in the eyes of the prize givers

Geoffrey Dean made this astrologically disappointing announcement - among other places - in a small broadsheet called *Astrologers' Forum*, which was being published privately at that time by an astrologer named Dymock Brose in New South Wales. Presumably having nothing better to do with my time, I wrote a letter to the broadsheet in which I suggested that I thought that perhaps the whole thing had been a joke by the prize givers on astrologers, which they (in their serious self-importance) had failed to see. It seemed to me to be obvious from the terms of the contest that the prize could never be won.

This provoked a marvellous and furious correspondence for over a year in the news letter. I had hoped to be able to produce for the reader's delight some of the more interesting of these literary gems, but I am afraid that my own copies of the

correspondence seem to have been lost, and I have unfortunately been unable to find copies elsewhere. So the best that I can do is to try to reproduce for you the saga as I saw it from my point of view, and deny the reader the pleasure of Dr. Dean's often colourful responses. However I hope that the drift of my arguments will be perceived just the same.

The rules for the prize contained - in part - the following clauses.

1. The entry must demonstrate that the tropical sign hypothesis is true it is not enough to show, for example, that soldiers tend to be born under Sun Sign X..... The entry must demonstrate that each sign is of a different nature.
4. The entry must be supported by facts whose interpretation is unambiguous.

Now of course the temptation for astrologers to take up this challenge is very great indeed. I suppose all of us can quote the cases of any number of people whose character and actions reflect in remarkable ways some prominent sign in their charts. However, being rather innocent souls we may not have actually realised what we were being asked to do by the prize givers, should we have decided to become involved in such an exercise. Or that should we have failed to attain the judges' requirements, we could then be hoist with our own petard. That is, our critics could turn the tables and say that astrologers had been totally unable to demonstrate the scientific validity of a concept central to their work.

Let us begin by taking the second of the conditions, The entry must be supported by facts whose interpretation is unambiguous.

Facts of course are always unambiguous, that is why they are facts. However their interpretation is very seldom not ambiguous. Let us take the simple example of the sun, which is a pretty obvious fact. For many thousands of years people interpreted their observations of the fact of the sun by saying that it moved around a fixed earth. Today we interpret our observations by saying that the earth moves around a fixed sun.

The facts and the observations are unchanged. What we observe is quite unambiguous, but obviously the interpretation is not. The thing that has swayed our opinion towards the acceptance of the concept of a fixed sun is neither fact nor observation, but mathematics. If we wish to predict planetary positions, then the mathematics are far easier and more accurate if we use a helio centric system. Thus our unambiguous scientific fact that the earth moves around the sun is - in the end - really not much more than a mathematical convenience. The thought that science may decide what is true or untrue on the grounds of what is convenient (or inconvenient) for its systems, should not be disregarded too quickly I assure you.

Of course we now happen to believe that our solar system is itself at the edge of a rotating galaxy that is moving through space at enormous speed. Yet it all still looks the same, and we have not yet found it convenient to take into account the movement of our whole system through space in our mathematical calculations.

Various scientific models or theories change the way that we look at the world, but they do not change the world itself. Science is a way of interpreting nature (and of course not the only way) but it is not nature itself. Indeed the whole history of science is a history of the re-interpretation of nature. There is no totally true scientific theory. There is no interpretation of nature which is not in some way ambiguous. Professor John Wheeler of Princeton University - in a collection of essays concerned with science's present understanding of issues related to particle physics entitled *The Physicists Conception of Nature* - wrote, "The review one by one of the fixed points of physics has not left a single one unquestioned". If science cannot find one unambiguous principle for itself which is not open to question, it is perhaps rather unfair to ask astrologers to do this for a prize of \$1,000.

My own sun is in Aquarius and I have Pisces rising with a number of planets in that sign. As an Aquarian I can point to the facts that I was an engineer and am an astrologer. All most appropriate. As a Piscean I can also draw attention to the fact that I am a priest. Again appropriate. Now those facts - both astrological and personal - are quite unambiguous. But can there ever be an unambiguous interpretation of them? It is no more possible to demonstrate unambiguously that my Aquarian sun has a relationship to my engineering vocation, than it is to demonstrate unambiguously that there is no relationship. One may hope to hold possibilities or even probabilities, but to hold certainties one must first seek to lay hold of the very heart of the universe itself.

So be of good cheer, should we fail to demonstrate the tropical sign hypothesis by "facts whose interpretation is unambiguous" we stand in the very best of scientific company.

But this particular issue is (I fear) but a by-path to the central demand of the prize rules; that is, to demonstrate that the tropical sign hypothesis is true. Or as our title has it, "Is it True?"

This challenge requires us initially to have some sort of fairly clear concept of what science is, what scientists do, and what scientific knowledge is. In a book titled *What is This Thing Called Science* Professor Chalmers of Sydney University describes the commonly held idea of science in these terms. "Science starts with observation. The scientific observer should have normal unimpaired sense organs and should faithfully record what he can see, hear, etc., to be the case with respect to the situation he is observing, and should do this with an unprejudiced mind. Statements about the world, or some part of it, can be justified or established as true in a direct way by an unprejudiced observer's use of his senses. The statements so arrived at then form the basis from which the laws and theories that make up scientific knowledge are to be derived". This is known as inductive science, in which a law is induced (or deduced) from the results of a series of observations.

Our picture of a scientist is then of a person conducting a series of experiments or observations centred upon some event in nature. He does this with a totally open and unprejudiced mind - noting carefully and accurately the results of his observations - and from these is able to make a general statement about the way that the world works. We then say that this statement is scientifically true.

If we were to apply this method to the question of zodiacal signs, one would presumably select a large number of people with undeniably “Aries” characteristics, and if all of these persons were then found to have a strongly emphasised Aries sign in their birth charts, one could then inductively form law about the sign of Aries which would be scientifically true.

However Professor Chalmers goes on to point out a number of rather large gaps in this process. In the first place it is obvious that the scientific observer is not and cannot be without prejudice. The observations which our scientist makes are done to develop a certain law or to prove a certain theory. He is not simply “looking at nature” at all, but he has actually already decided only to look for one particular thing and ignore all the rest. He has already decided what is important and what is unimportant. He has already decided what can - and what cannot - influence his observations.

The scientific method therefore is not and can not be unbiased or unprejudiced. Always it knows what the results ought to be, or what it wants them to be, and will often discard a large number of observed facts in order to maintain its predetermined theories.

Secondly, the scientist does not simply observe, but is always a participant in the operation. To observe nature, he must do things to nature. Just the year before last a real scare was thrown into the scientific community when it was suggested that a number of fundamental assumptions about cell and tissue structures were wrong. This was because the processes used to prepare specimens for the electron microscope significantly altered their structures, and so the theories had then been based upon observations which did not reflect the true state of things.

This particular scare seems to have gone away, but the issue still remains. The experimenter is a part of the experiment. The scientist is therefore neither impartial nor passive in his observations. This being the case, the results obtained are not as unprejudiced or beyond challenge as some would wish us to believe.

But there is another and more serious flaw in the process. Let us suppose that you have read a great many books on astrology, and found them all without exception to be totally boring. You may then decided to induce the general law, “All astrology books are boring”. Now this is an astrology book (of sorts), so it is quite logical to conclude, “This book will be boring”. The trouble with the commonly accepted scientific method is that it is in fact illogical. How does a series of past events determine the nature of one that has not yet occurred?

Bertrand Russell told the tale of the inductivist turkey. This turkey found that on the first morning in the turkey farm he was fed at 9 am. However being a good inductivist, he did not jump to conclusions. He waited until he had collected a large number of observations under a wide variety of conditions - on different days of the week and under different weather conditions. Finally he concluded, “I will always be fed at 9 am”. He made this inductive conclusion on the 24th of December, and on the 25th of December he was Christmas dinner.

The trouble with induction is that if you want to believe something is true, it appears to give you sound evidence for doing so. If you do not want to believe something, you can always find a logical reason for not believing. This is because in the end induction cannot prove that something will always be true, and so you can have any number of perfectly good reasons for not believing what you do not want to believe: insufficient examples, incorrect method, unsound assumptions, and so on. Rule Number One for the \$1,000 prize stated, "The entry must demonstrate that the tropical sign hypothesis is true." Considered in this light, it may be somewhat more difficult to attain this goal that we at first suspected.

Of course our dilemma is not one confined to astrologers, but one that gnaws at the vitals of all scientists. So it was that a philosopher named Karl Popper suggested that if it is indeed the case that we are never in the end be able to prove anything to be true, then perhaps we can prove that something is not true. That is, should you find that this essay is a scintillating intellectual delight, then obviously our law, "All astrology books are boring," has been proved to be untrue.

Thus if astrologers should claim "A person with the sun in Aries will in all cases clearly display the nature of that sign in character and attainment", then it would not (I suspect) be too difficult to disprove that statement. However should we say, "People with Aries prominent in their charts are above average in its corresponding nature", then I think that it would be a far more difficult operation to falsify that statement. And if it cannot be falsified, then it may properly remain as a reasonable working hypothesis until it is.

One wonders therefore how many successful entrants there would be for a \$1,000 prize addressed to the scientific community whose rules stated that "The entry must demonstrate that the tropical sign hypothesis is **untrue** and must demonstrate that each sign is **not** of a different nature, and that people with prominent signs are **not** above average in corresponding nature".

If it is appropriate for science to see its action as that of advancing sensible working hypotheses about the way that the world works, and to retain these until they are shown to be false in some aspect, it is perhaps not too unreasonable to allow astrologers to do the same.

But unhappily - or perhaps happily, I do not know which - life is not even as simple as that. Let us take an example;

Thesis : All cats have four legs.

Observation : Yesterday I saw a cat with three legs.

Conclusion : The thesis that all cats have four legs has been shown to be false.

The trouble with the idea that science can only really know what is not true, is that you have to know that the way you have proved a thing not to be true, is itself true! And as we cannot prove that anything is true, that is rather difficult.

Now the end result of all this - and which Professor Chalmers writes about in his book - is that science is not the definitive without question true blue way of looking at the world, but simply a way. One way among other ways. It is a framework which can handle a great many events successfully and well. But it is limited in its methods and

theories, and there are many things that it cannot handle at all well, and even some which it cannot handle at all.

Things are “scientific” if they fit into this framework, and “unscientific” if they do not. But this has nothing whatever to do with whether or not they are true; because science can no more prove a thing to be true than it can prove a thing to be untrue. Science is a tool for achieving certain physical goals, and its worth is determined not by questions about “truth” but by how well it assists us to achieve these goals.

However because it has in fact been so successful in its proper field (it has enabled us to do a great many very interesting and amazing things) there has been a tendency to want to allow it to become the arbiter for the whole of life. Thus if a thing is described as “unscientific”, this somehow denigrates and casts a shadow of suspicion over it.

For this reason both astrology and religion have sometimes sought science’s blessing, and both have usually been offended when they have had their overtures treated rather shabbily. But I would suggest that the proper test for astrology is not whether all or some parts of it are scientific (which is really little more than a question of intellectual curiosity) but the same test that we apply to science itself. That is, whether or not it is a good tool for achieving those goals which are inherent in its framework and nature.

The fundamental difference between the scientific framework and the astrological framework can be fairly clearly seen in the way that both go about their business. First of all, both accept belief in the usefulness of a certain way of going about things. And both - in a strict philosophical sense - may be in equal difficulties in proving that their results are ultimately true in some way never to be questioned ever again. However both may claim with equal justification that within their given framework their systems work.

Now the scientific process goes something like this. Our scientist first of all evolves a theory. Let us suppose his theory is that grape juice, naturally fermenting, will reach an alcoholic content of about 12%. He therefore buys a large assortment of wines - different brands, different grapes, different colours, from different areas - and tests each for its alcoholic content. All have about 12%. The theoretical assumption is now able to be generalised as a scientific law.

But next consider a wine judge. He will take all those same wines because they have a 12% content. That is his starting point, not the end of his journey. He will then assess each wine individually: its taste, colour, aroma, dryness, crispness, and so on. He will gradually eliminate bottle after bottle until finally he has chosen what he believes to be the most perfect example of wine.

For the scientist that one bottle is an undifferentiated unit which carries in itself no particular scientific significance. To the wine judge it is the final goal of his whole process.

I would suggest that the astrological process is not dissimilar to that used by our wine judge. When we first look at a birth chart we begin with its gross functions : “Your sun is in Aries and you have Sagittarius rising”. From that point we begin a process

of refining, adding, subtracting, and qualifying until eventually we have a delineation that as far as is possible reflects the nature of one unique human being. Science sees us in our commonality; astrology tries to see us in our uniqueness.

There is then a very real sense in which the goals of science are diametrically opposed to those of astrology. Science, by the essential nature of its methods, cannot deal with the unique but only with the common. We all know that when we try to reduce astrology to its common forms we end up with bad astrology. But that means that the only astrology that science can handle is bad astrology; because as soon as it becomes good astrology it becomes bad science.

This is perhaps well illustrated by Michael Gauquelin's books. He appeared to demonstrate quite clearly that certain planets rising corresponded to certain professions. In his book *The Cosmic Clocks* he wrote, "Planetary heredity seems to point the way to a scientific study of individual destiny". What is interesting is that nothing of the kind has happened. Both scientist and astrologer said of Gauquelin's work, "Well fancy that!", and promptly turned away and went on with other things. The reason for this apparently surprising neglect of such an important work, may lie in the last six words of the quotation, the scientific study of individual destiny.

The scientist does not want to study individual destiny any more than he wishes to study a wave or an insect as an individual. The Gauquelin results are an interesting scientific curiosity, but one that really leads the scientist nowhere. He does not wish to progress along the path of individualisation.

But the astrologer likewise has found no way ahead in Gauquelin. As a technique Gauquelin's work is far too imprecise to be of any practical value in specific cases. Thus as a scientific validation of astrology it is a doorway that neither scientist or astrologer really wishes to open any further. "Science" and "destiny" are not easy bed fellows.

So we return to our question, "Is it true?"

I think that I have simply wanted to suggest that this is not a question that can be answered by performing some kind of sophisticated statistical process. One does not find truth by performing experiments.

Of course on the other hand I would not wish to discourage any one from pressing along that enticing road that leads to the holy grail of astrology: the quest for the perfectly reliable failure free astrological system which is in some ultimate way, true.

However I think that truth - unlike facts - is a very personal thing. Facts we can all hold in common, but truth must possess qualities of meaning and satisfaction that bare facts cannot.

In June 1983 yet another prize was offered in the series. This - curiously - had rather different rules. These stated, "The prize will be awarded for convincing evidence that the accuracy of chart interpretations cannot be explained by non astrological features." For the present purpose 'convincing evidence' is that which is convincing to the judges.

So perhaps in the end astrology does not have to be true after all, to be of value even to those of a scientific turn of mind. Rather it needs to be personally convincing.

Now that is surely a most interesting concept, even though it may indeed be considered by some as a rather novel scientific principle.

PATHWAY THROUGH THE DESERT

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN ASTROLOGY

1988

Perhaps curiously, this seems to have become one of the more useful of the essays.

There are a great many people today who are both active members of one of the denominations of the Christian Church, but who are also attracted to the astrological concept. This latter may vary from simple interest or curiosity, to quite deep involvement and technical ability. They see astrology as helpful and useful, just as they find their religious involvement to be helpful and useful in their personal lives. Unhappily they are also aware that almost without exception their religious home will offer no welcome to astrologers.

This is obviously deeply distressing to them.

It is common - for those with religious authority - to pronounce against astrology in terms similar to those used by Fr Concetti and quoted in a previous essay. It implies that the Church condemns the practice of astrology as anti-Christian, foolish, and immoral, and that this has always been its position. Thus those who may be drawn into such an involvement are being warned that in doing so they clearly step outside the historical Christian tradition.

The point of this essay is to say, "That is totally untrue, and is a statement made out of ignorance of the history of one's own faith." The history of western astrology is inextricably linked with the history of the western church, as is the church's history with astrology. The astrologer can call as witnesses for his or her defence Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, and Theologians, some of whom have been elevated as Saints of the church. The witnesses for the prosecution on the other hand carry no such weight.

I have therefore tried to say to those troubled in this manner, "Take heart, you stand in great company"

But for those for whom these particular things do not represent an area of personal conflict, I hope that you will still find the essay to be of interest. Astrology has a great history that sweeps through the panoramas of western civilisation. All of us stand at the end of a long and honourable journey. As it has been said, 'If we can see further, it is only because we are standing on the shoulders of giants'.



We sometimes tend to forget that astrology is about a lot more than the various techniques designed to manipulate and interpret charts and symbols, but that it is also

about people. It is about astrologers, and any kind of history of astrology - no matter how abbreviated - is really a story about those people whose attitudes and aspirations and actions and follies have brought us to that place where we are today.

It is a story about a journey. A journey that was for a long while difficult and daunting, and which few had the inclination or the dedication to undertake. It was a journey that, at the beginning at least, offered the travellers little reward; like those who may commit themselves to travel through a desert and for whom only the conviction that the end to be reached is of sufficient value, vindicates the difficulties encountered.

I therefore would like to think just for a very short time, about some of those people who have been especially responsible for bringing us to that particular place where 20th century astrologers in the western world now find themselves. Those who committed themselves to journey through this desert, and at the end of whose pathway we ourselves stand today.

In this regard it is probably good for us - as in a great many other human activities - sometimes to remind ourselves that we do in fact stand at the end of a long process. We often have a tendency to fore-shorten history and to ignore the middle bits. To jump straight from the time of Claudius Ptolemy (in the 2nd century AD) to that of Alan Leo at the beginning of our own, as if the two had talked to each other over their back fence. A great many very important and very interesting things happened in those 1,800 years, and while it will obviously not be possible to condense almost two millennia of history into a short essay, I hope that at least something of value will be achieved and perhaps another perspective briefly opened up.

I also have a belief that the story of western astrology is often itself its own best defence against those who would criticise its practice as some strange, immoral, irreligious, or unnatural intrusion into our modern well-ordered society. There are of course no doubt some grounds for reasonable and serious criticisms either of astrology or some of its practitioners, but that is another matter. A good, long, clean track record must always be a matter of merit, and should demand some serious consideration of the subject in question.

I would like to begin our journey about the beginning of the Christian era. This is not because of any religious perspective (although as we shall discover, it is in fact impossible to separate the history of western astrology from the life of the Church) but rather because this also represents a kind of gateway between ancient and modern astrology. By the commencement of the Christian era all the essential frameworks of astrology had been constructed and put to use: the intellectual zodiac itself, and the interpretive meaning of planets, aspects, signs, and houses.

Ancient observers and practitioners had perfected over a long period of time all those basic concepts and processes which underlie astrology today. Modern astrology can be viewed as a variety of attempts to refine and develop these structures, and one may reasonably argue that it was from this time that the peculiar character that is recognisably "western" was given to it, and which distinguishes it from other kinds of approaches that have taken place in other world cultures.

The Greeks overcame the Persian empire in the 4th century BC, and were in turn overwhelmed by the Romans about the year 60 BC. The Greeks had absorbed eagerly the astrological knowledge of the Chaldean empire over which they ruled, and the Romans themselves no less enthusiastically and quickly embraced this new wisdom from their Greek vassals. In this way the Chaldean astrological tradition entered the world of the Roman empire, where especially in the 2nd century AD it was to receive an enormous impetus from the writings of Ptolemy. And it is from this empire - for most practical purposes - that our present western culture has sprung.

This new wisdom immediately attracted a great following and had a significant influence upon those who moved in the upper levels of Roman society. Thus (for example) Cato forbade the overseer of his estates to consult “Chaldeans” (the then common term for astrologers) when making decisions that affected the management of his property, and the poet Juvenal cautioned his readers against consorting with a lady “who is always casting upon her ephemerides, who is so good an astrologer that she has ceased to consult and is already beginning to be consulted”. Had astrology not already established itself as a significant influence in society, there would have been no need to issue such cautions.

In 33 AD the emperor Augustus expelled all astrologers from Rome, through fear that they could provide his political opponents with unacceptable advantages. He himself was committed to the effectiveness of astrology, and had his birth sign (Capricorn) placed upon the coins which were struck during his reign. The edict itself appears to have had little effect, as astrology flourished openly in the metropolis. Pliny the Elder dealt with medical astrology in his *Natural History*, and the poets Horace and Manilius both eulogised it in verse.

Claudius Ptolemy was born in Egypt in the year 100 AD, and lived most of his life at Alexandria. By the time of his death in 178 AD he had earned the title “The Divine Ptolemy”. His two greatest writings were the *Almagest* and the *Tetrabiblos*. The first consisted of a great astronomical treatise of thirteen books, which remained the mathematical basis of all astronomical calculation until the 17th century. The *Tetrabiblos* (or The Mathematical Treatise in Four Books) was a summation of astrological knowledge to that time, augmented by his own mathematical genius and great learning.

Its four parts outlined in great detail the casting of the horoscope, its interpretation, and techniques for prediction; not only for individuals but also with regard to the whole range of mundane issues that could be placed before an astrologer for consideration. Its influence was immense, and probably no other single writing has been of such importance in the history of astrology.

One branch of the new Christian faith at this time - known as Gnosticism - had itself an elaborate philosophical system which combined a Pythagorean understanding of the universe with astrological techniques to provide the believer with the required knowledge (or gnosis) to enter the heavenly spheres. More orthodox Christian views also espoused astrology. A writing called the *Clementine Recognitions* of the 3rd century AD held that the patriarch Abraham was an accomplished astrologer. In the next century Bishop Synesius of Ptolemais was an open supporter of astrology.

In the 4th century Christianity had two major rivals. One was a Persian cult called Mithraism and the other the newly arrived Asian faith of Manicheism. Both were permeated with astrological and symbolic traditions. Manicheism proved to be surprising long lived, and did not finally die out until the 12th century.

A devotee of Manicheism was a young man named Augustine. In 387 AD he was converted to Christianity and eventually became one of its most influential thinkers and theologians. Augustine developed a theology which was committed to the concept of human free will, and both because of this and because of his rejection of his old faith, he developed a trenchant opposition to astrological practices.

In Book Seven of his *Confessions* he developed the famous argument against astrology called the “Time Twins” problem. He quoted the example of the child of an estate’s master being born at precisely the same time as the child of a slave. One child lived (as he said) “in the sunnier paths of the world”, while the other continued in his “mean position”. Since the two persons would have possessed the same horoscope and yet their lives obviously differed so markedly, Augustine argued that astrology was a delusion, and that when astrological predictions did in fact come to pass, this was “by chance and not by cunning”.

In his later writings however he admitted that it was indeed possible for an astrologer to predict some future event. However this was evidence of the devil himself working through the astrologer’s art, and not a demonstration of the effectiveness of the techniques themselves.

Augustine’s influence upon the early Church (which itself totally dominated the whole of society) was immense, and once he had pronounced against astrology there were few so daring or foolhardy as to speak for it. Never-the-less astrology itself was never formally proscribed by the Church and there were - here and there - a few able and honest scholars who sought to keep its knowledge alive in Europe.

We have already mentioned Bishop Synesius in the 5th century who was open in his support. At the same time a writer named Firmicus Maternus sought to reconcile astrology with the Christian faith, and Proclus produced a paraphrase of Ptolemy’s famous work *Tetrabiblos*.

However for roughly five hundred years astrology fell into serious decline in the Christian world. Certainly after Augustine’s writings no more direct attacks were made upon it. Its neglect stemmed not only from his condemnation of its practice but also as a result of its unquestionably “pagan” origins, which caused it to be despised by the intolerant and bigoted Christianity of that age. It was therefore across the waters of the Mediterranean in the Arabic world that astrology was kept alive with some of its previous dignity and vitality.

The forces of the Prophet had captured Alexandria in 640 AD. They found a city with four thousand palaces, four thousand baths, and four hundred theatres. The great library which had once been the city’s crown was (alas) no more. It had been destroyed much earlier by Christian mobs at the instigation firstly of the Emperor Theodosius in 389, and then again later by Bishop Cyril. The rationale for these acts

of barbarism being that the books were the product of heathen minds, and should they contain anything of value, this would be found in any case in the Christian scriptures.

The Arabs were not only impressed by this evident luxury which they had inherited, but also by the size of the Alexandrian merchant fleet. Its acquisition was to be the beginning of their delight in mathematics, through the demands of navigation which they now needed to master. From this they developed not only a thorough knowledge of mathematical processes, but also of geography and astronomy. And from the growth of their astronomical understandings they were led quite naturally to astrology.

This search for knowledge set them to the task of translating into Arabic as many of the ancient Greek writing on astronomy and astrology as they could lay their hands on. Under Caliph Harun Al-Rashid translators were paid in gold equivalent to the weight of each of the manuscripts which were translated.

Harun's son - Abdullah Al-Mamun - turned Baghdad into a great seat of learning, with its own library and observatory. To check Ptolemy's statement that the circumference of the earth was 18,000 miles, he had his astronomers measure the actual overland length of one degree of latitude on the plain of Palmyra, north of the Euphrates River. Their calculations produced a figure of 23,180 miles, which compares not unfavourably with our presently accepted one of 24,900 miles

Without this Arabic enthusiasm a great store of ancient knowledge would have been lost forever.

There was however still a small amount of astrological work being conducted in Europe, and it is evident that while the mainstream scholars paid little attention to it, no attempt was made to persecute those who continued its study. In the 7th century Bishop Isadore of Seville composed several astrological works, as did the Venerable Bede in the 8th century, Alcuin and Paul the Philosopher in the 9th, and the Abbot Aelfric in the 11th century.

But it was not from Baghdad that astrology re-entered the western world, but from the other end of the Mediterranean. For centuries Christians and Muslims had lived beside each other on the Spanish peninsula. In spite of their great cultural and religious differences they were inescapably influenced by each other. An important part of the flow from Arab to Christian cultures was the corpus of astrological knowledge.

This first became apparent in the 10th century when the future Pope Sylvester II had his education in Spain. Later as Pope he converted one of the towers of the Lateran Palace into an observatory.

As the 11th century progressed interest in astrology quickened among western Christians. Ibn Ezra - a Jew living in Spain - was enormously influential. He wrote many highly regarded works which ensured the spread of Arabic astrological methods and techniques throughout Europe. Along with his writings, the works of the older authors upon which they were based were also copied and promulgated.

By the 13th century a new climate had settled over Europe. The Muslim thrust had lost its impetus and a revitalised spirit of enquiry now sought to tap the great scientific and philosophical treasures of the Arabic world, which now lay so conveniently to hand in Spain. Michael Scot was an excellent scholar with a fine working knowledge of Arabic. Through his translations the works of the great Muslim astrologers were able to exercise a tremendous influence upon this renewed interest in astrological matters. He was offered an Irish bishopric but refused it: preferring instead to remain as court astrologer to the emperor Frederick II.

In England the learned Robert Grossteste - Bishop of Lincoln and first Chancellor of the University of Oxford - stated categorically that astrology not only enabled men to inspect the future, but was the controlling influence of every aspect of life on earth. He urged its study in relation to the weather, chemistry, medicine, and agriculture.

Grossteste's pupil Roger Bacon was really more interested in magic than philosophy. However he did try to defend a scientific approach to astrology. His imprisonment by the Franciscans followed shortly after the publication of his book *Speculum Astronomie* in which he sought to trace an association between astrology and ancient magic.

On the continent the Dominican scholar Albertus Magnus was the Magi of the middle ages, and his works the standard text books of his day. He stated that the use of astrology was "not a fault, but rather serves a useful purpose and saves many things from harm".

Albertus formulated a statement of astrology which allowed its reconciliation with Augustine's dogmatic rejection many centuries earlier. As we have seen, Augustine was committed to the concept of free will. The Church therefore adopted a position which allowed the use of astrology in medical and natural phenomena, but not in a way that detracted from human free will. As a result of this doctrine, professorships in astrology began to appear in European universities. Bologna had a chair of astrology as early as 1125.

However the true giant of this century was a student of Albertus Magnus, the great Thomas Aquinas. His writings still exercise a strong influence over many parts of the Church to this day. Like his teacher, he asserted that astrology affected the physical and biological structures of the world, and that such influences were entirely in accord with the Christian faith. In several of his books he argues for astrology at length, and gives the use of what he called Judicial Astrology the seal of his approval, particularly in his work *De Judiciis Astrorum*.

He underlines the orthodoxy of his position by upholding Augustine's dogma of free will, "however it behoves us to bear in mind at all times that man's will is not subject to the compulsion of the stars, otherwise free will would be destroyed".

Officially the Church adopted the Augustinian position on astrology as expounded by Thomas Aquinas. In practice it conducted a remarkable amount of discussion and argument on astrological themes that went far beyond the limits imposed by the Angelic Doctor. Even Pope John XIX did not find it inconsistent with his high office to write on astrological themes under the pen-name of Peter Hispanus. The Papal

Chaplain to Pope Urban IV was Johannes Campanus, an accomplished mathematician and astrologer whose system of house division was the first major development in western astrology since the beginning of the Christian era.

At first this new interest was confined to the universities and scholastic circles. But from these it quickly spread to the courts of Europe, and from the courts to the common people. Before the 14th century was half over astrology had dominated the life of the continent, both within and without the Church.

A typical astrologer of this century was Guido Bonatti. He was astrologer to the city of Forli in central Italy. Like many other Italian cities it was racked by partisan strife; in this instance between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. Bonatti claimed that peace could be restored if the breached city walls were repaired at a time designated by himself. A representative of each of the two families was to cement a foundation stone in place at this precise moment.

In due course 50,000 people assembled to bear witness to the event. Bonatti kept his eyes on the instrument he held in his hands, and at the auspicious moment cried out, "Now!" The Ghibelline representative obediently set his stone in place, but the Guelf one hesitated, and finally threw his trowel to the ground declaring the whole thing to be a Ghibelline hoax. "God damn you!" Bonatti is recorded as crying, "and the whole Guelf party with you. This constellation will not rise above our city for another five hundred years!"

On another occasion he insisted that the army take a circuitous and time consuming route to battle, which was almost lost because of the late arrival of the forces involved.

Today Bonatti is remembered in two ways. His work, *The 146 Considerations* may still be purchased in astrological bookshops, and readers of Dante's *Purgatory* will find poor Bonatti being tormented in the Fourth Chasm of the Eighth Circle.

By the 15th century debate about the appropriateness of astrology had ceased entirely. For both Church and State it had become the accepted basis of western society and thought, and for the next two hundred years it totally dominated every aspect of life. From parish priest to Pope, none questioned the efficacy of astrological techniques. Pope Leo X prided himself that during his pontificate art and astrology especially flourished. His successor Pope Paul III refused to hold a consistory with his cardinals until the date and time had been chosen by his astrologer.

The names of many of the astrologers of this time are still familiar today, which suggests something of the awe with which they must have been held in their own time. Johannes Muller (using the name Regiomontanus) was professor of astrology at Vienna. Michael Nostradamus was astrologer to Catherine de Medici. Some time ago in a local supermarket I came across a paperback copy of Paracelsus' book *Natural Philosophy*. Jerome Cardan was held to be the greatest astrologer of his age. Cornelius Agrippa was employed in 1520 by the Queen Mother of France to be her personal astrologer, and his considerable correspondence with the great scholars of his day is still extant

In England there were two royal astrologers during the last years of the House of Tudor. The first was Nicholas Kratzer, who was astrologer to King Henry VIII. However the most famous was the court astrologer to Elizabeth I, John Dee.

Dee was invited to calculate the horoscope of Mary Tudor when she became queen, and later performed a similar service for Elizabeth. At her request, he chose her coronation date of 15th January 1559. Dee's own diaries record the many informal visits of Elizabeth to his house in Mortlake, and their conversations about mathematics and astrology. Unhappily Dee also dabbled in other less acceptable studies, and his victimisation by his unscrupulous assistant Kelly makes sad reading.

There are two other important names in the 16th century. The first is Nicholas Copernicus, who revived the Pythagorean view that the sun was fixed and that the earth and other planets revolved about it. This was really a mathematical rather than an astronomical concept, as Copernicus was searching for a simpler system for calculating planetary positions than the very complicated one of Ptolemy which was still in use after sixteen hundred years. However Copernicus' writings were not published until after his death in 1543 for fear of the Church's reaction.

Tycho Brahe was the most accurate observational astronomer since Hipparchus in the 2nd century BC. His tables of the movement of Mars were to become the basis of Johannes Kepler's later work.

Brahe was a quite extra-ordinary person. He had lost his nose in a duel when twenty years old, and there after wore a gold replacement. He rejected the Copernican view of a sun centred system, and was a fine astrologer. He wrote that "astrology is not a delusive science when kept within the bounds and not abused by ignorant people".

Johannes Kepler was born in Weil der Stadt, Germany, on 27th December 1571 at 4.37 am, as he recorded in the calculations for his own horoscope, after "a pregnancy lasting 224 days 9 hours and 53 minutes". When he died in 1630 his contributions to astronomical knowledge probably exceeded that of any single person in history. He is remembered today chiefly for his Three Laws of Planetary Motion, formulated between 1602 and 1619.

Today's folk-lore tends to portray Kepler as the first of the great modern scientists, brushing away the darkness of the ages which had preceded him. He certainly did not see his work in that way himself. His great goal in life - reflected in his major work *Harmonicis Mundi* - was to construct a grand harmony of all things, divine, celestial, and terrestrial. His mathematical theories were some of the tools for this process; a process in which astrology also played a key role.

Galileo Galilei was in one sense more important than Kepler; not because of his contributions to knowledge so much as that he became the unwitting catalyst to a point of view which had a profound effect upon the western world. He was born seven years before Kepler and died twelve years after. Galilei in many ways got caught up in a series of events which were not of his making, and certainly not of his choosing.

In 1604 he published a book on the Law of Free Fall. In this he was able to treat a falling body in mathematical isolation from its surroundings, which properly places him at the beginning of that line of scientific theory and practice which seeks to separate the part from the whole in order to study and explore it. However it was the publication of his observations through his telescope of the lunar surface, of sun spots, and of the Jovian moons which aroused the anxiety of the Church.

By 1611 his friend Cardinal Bellarmine was becoming increasingly concerned about the implications to scriptural authority of these discoveries. In 1616 Galilei clashed with the Jesuits whom were staunchly Aristotelian and upheld a geocentric universe.

In 1621 Kepler published his *Handbook of Copernican Astronomy* which the Vatican promptly banned. However the next year Urban VIII was elected Pope. He was a liberal man, and thus there was hope that attitudes might soften. He was also a practising astrologer, who amused himself by predicting the date of the deaths of his own cardinals. When one aging cardinal returned the compliment by hiring an astrologer to predict the Pope's own death, Urban failed to see the joke. He issued a Bull forbidding the astrological practice of predicting the deaths of popes, princes, and members of their families. Cardinals were not apparently included.

Galilei, incidentally, was also himself a professional astrologer who was employed by the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Galilei published his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* in 1632, which argued strongly for a helio centred system. For a variety of reasons - not the least being that Kepler on whose work Galilei's arguments were based was a Protestant - Galilei was immediately summoned to Rome and told to abjure his works. The rest is pretty well known I suspect.

Probably the true successor to Kepler was Isaac Newton. In his work *Principia* published in 1687 his statement of the Gravitational Laws provided the physical dynamics for Kepler's mathematical propositions. But also like Kepler, Newton sought to find the great unifying principles of natural experience. He wrote extensively on philosophy and religion, and while there is no direct evidence that he was involved in the practice of astrology, he did have an extensive correspondence with John Flamsteed. Flamsteed was the first Astronomer Royal, and also a competent astrologer. He erected the electional chart for laying the foundation stone of the Greenwich Observatory, so it is highly probable that Newton would have discussed astrology with his good friend.

Never-the-less it was Newton's Gravitational Laws which appeared to provide a rationale for the neglect of astrology. These laws seemed to demonstrate that the direct physical influence through gravitational forces upon the earth by any planet would be so minimal that their effect upon any individual would not be measurable. Astrology could therefore be spurned as an unscientific foolishness.

However I think that we would be wrong to believe that astrology declined in the western world because there had been discovered physical laws which apparently demonstrated its incorrectness. Rather, western Christian society had changed its mind about astrology and cast about to find a justification for this new point of view.

Western religion was breaking up into the partisan bickerings of the Protestant revolution, and western society was re-aligning itself into the many isolated and separate states which finally defined the borders of present day Europe.

Astrology offered a philosophy of life which was built upon concepts of unity and coherence and purpose. This was not what western society wanted to hear. What it wanted was a philosophy that could justify division, separation, and self interest. The philosophy of deductive science offered just this.

This can be seen no more clearly than in the manner in which we still treat the writings of those two men whom we uphold as the fathers of western science: Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton. We exult and praise their mathematical and scientific insights, but totally ignore all that they wrote about that great and harmonious framework which they believed their work enlightened, and which they saw as the ultimate goal and crown of their labours.

Of course astrology did not die overnight in western society. Jean Baptiste Morin was astrologer to Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th century. At Padua Placidus de Tito was professor of mathematics, and devised that house system which is still favoured today by many astrologers. In 1666 William Lilly in England was summoned before parliament because of the accuracy of his predictions concerning the Great Plague in 1665 and then the Great Fire of London in the following year. Presumably this was because that while one cannot generally start a plague, one may well light a fire.

In England the bell tolling end of astrology was probably sounded by Jonathan Swift's satirical attack upon an astrological almanac publisher named John Partridge.

Using the pen-name Isaac Bickerstaff, Swift wrote a pamphlet entitled *Predictions for the Year 1708* in which he predicted Partridge's death. After the appointed day for this event had passed (and John Partridge was still in good health) Swift wrote another pamphlet *An Account of the Death of Mr. Partridge, Almanack Maker, Upon the 29th Instant, in a Letter from a Revenue Officer to a Person of Honour*. Partridge's life became intolerable, and his name was even removed from the roll of the Stationers' Hall. The death of astrology came not at the hands of science but of satire.

Astrology simply fell out of fashion. A few almanac writers plied a tiny trade and their works were purchased largely by poorer agricultural workers, but for the next one hundred and fifty years there were few people of any intellectual standing who gave it even a passing glance.

The first signs of renewed life came in the 1850's when R.J. Morrison (using the name Zadkiel) published an almanac, re-issued some of the writings of William Lilly, and adapted the nautical ephemerides for the use of astrologers wishing to cast an horoscope.

In 1875 the incredible Madame Blavatsky launched her Theosophical Society in New York. Her two books - *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* - not only drew extensively upon eastern religious ideas, but also relied quite heavily upon astrological concepts.

This had two effects upon the study of astrology. Firstly the new cult provided it with a social acceptance which had been lacking for almost two centuries. Occultism, eastern mysticism, and the exciting and esoteric ethos of the Theosophical Society had a strong appeal to a large number of people who had discovered the emptiness of living in a society which lacked a great philosophical framework by which to interpret its experiences. With the patronage of Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, astrology could be seen as one part of an intellectually exciting new age.

Secondly, through her links with eastern thought Madame Blavatsky was able to solve what was then considered to be a great intellectual problem confronting astrology.

The planet Uranus had been discovered in 1781, thereby destroying the ancient seven fold structure of astrology, with its seven heavenly bodies determining human destiny. In 1846 yet another planet - Neptune - was identified. These discoveries appeared to throw into confusion the whole astrological tradition.

Madame Blavatsky pointed out that Indian astrology in fact postulated no less than twelve planets, thus so far from being dismayed by these new discoveries, astrologers should on the contrary be delighted with these new tools at their disposal. The visible planets had governed the ancient world, but for a new age it was appropriate that new ones should be revealed.

However Madame Blavatsky - and her successor Annie Besant - were far too busy with the running of their Society to be concerned about the development of astrology. They needed an official astrologer, and William Frederick Allen was more than happy to fulfil this role. Writing under the name of Alan Leo, his works are still popular today. Thus it was that under the impetus of Alan Leo and his less well known contemporary Walter Gorn-Old (who called himself Sepherial) astrology was reborn in the 20th century in western society.

That it re-emerged not as the proud successor of the highest culmination of western intellectual endeavour, but as the foster child of eastern mysticism and occult interest, has of course had a profound effect upon the way that its rebirth has been accepted and viewed by certain sections of our society today. Certainly for many parts of the Church it has once more been condemned (as it was some fourteen hundred years ago) by its perceived associations and origins rather than by any serious consideration of its content.

But that is another story. And since those who have contributed to astrology's regrowth since the work of Alan Leo and Sepherial really belong to a time too recent to be decently called history; it is probably appropriate at this point to draw our journey to a close.

We have glimpsed some who were giants in their own generation, and whose names even today are still given respect. They may indeed at times have walked a solitary pathway through the desert, but what mighty travellers they were.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF WISDOM

1990

I have on occasion been asked, “Do you preach about astrology?” The answer is both ‘never’ and ‘always’.

I believe that astrology is essentially one evidence of an all encompassing philosophy of existence. This philosophy rests upon several fundamental tenets that are able to hold together all experience in a satisfying pattern of understanding and meaning. Astrological practice itself in this sense parallels to the idea of the sacramental, in that it is the outward expression of these inner or underlying foundations.

As an Anglican clergyman I have never preached about astrology in the sense that I have from the pulpit publicly advocated its practice. However my exposition of the teachings of Jesus is almost invariably coloured by the great themes of personal integrity, of one’s relationship to creation and other people, of the unfolding purposes of life, and the need to find the wholeness in one’s own nature. These I am quite sure were also Jesus’ own understandings of the world in which he lived, and which are as fundamental in his own teachings as they are in the astrological concept.

The essay itself had its origins in an unpublished manuscript (and which is certainly destined to remain that way) which in part contrasted the way in which the world will be perceived by an astrologer - with an emphasis upon relationship and unity - and by our present western culture with its emphasis upon division and separateness. An invitation to present an address to a Jungian Society provided an opportunity for me to talk about astrology in a philosophical way, and to draw together some of these basic tenets which will mould one’s understanding of personal experience, should one embrace such an astrological view of the world.



In 1952 Carl Jung - together with his friend and physicist W. Pauli - published a book of two monographs entitled *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*.

In his own essay Jung sets out a concept which he terms “Synchronicity”, and which he advances as a necessary corollary to the usually accepted idea of causality. He wrote, “I have picked on the term Synchronicity to designate a hypothetical factor equal in rank to causality as a principle of explanation”. He saw this principle as acausal in nature, and made evident by meaningful sets of co-incidental events.

His investigation of synchronicity led him firstly to an examination of the oriental prognostication technique of the *I Ching*, and then later to astrology. “The meaningful co-incidence we are looking for”, he wrote, “is immediately apparent in astrology, since the astronomical data that are said by astrologers to correspond to

individual traits of character; and from the remotest times that various planets, zodiacal signs, and aspects have all had meanings that serve as a basis for character study or for an interpretation of a given situation”.

The essay then contains a quite extensive study of the relationship of the Sun, Moon, Ascendant, and Descendant in the horoscopes of 180 married couples. Jung concluded that from a statistical comparison of the charts “there is sufficient ground for assuming a synchronistic phenomenon”. Others however have questioned the significance of his results.

However I believe that the importance of Jung’s essay lies not in any possible significant statistical result, but rather that he felt compelled to look seriously at astrology in the first place. He recognised that it was more than an ancient predictive technique, but that it represented a systematic way of examining both the world and human experience.

In his essay Jung clearly stated that he believed that the view of the world espoused by scientific causality is inadequate for handling the diversity of our experience, and that something beyond this is required. So it was that he developed his concept of an acausal principle, and examined astrology as one possible evidence of this.

Speaking of the 20th century he wrote, “One of the most problematical and momentous centuries the world has ever known separates us from that still medievalistic age when the philosophising mind believed it could make assertions beyond what could be empirically proved. It was an age of large views, which did not cry halt and think that the limits of nature had been reached just where the scientific road-builders had come to a temporary stop”.

It is about that kind of understanding of things that I would now like to consider for a little while, for I think that at its heart, astrology is really another way of looking at the world: an alternative to that held by Jung’s “scientific road-builders”.

The advocates of astrology today are often anxious to remind their critics that the great founding fathers of the western scientific tradition were themselves practising astrologers; Kepler and Galilei being two notable examples. Astrology’s detractors however may counter this by suggesting that while these persons were pioneers of the scientific method, yet each was still in many ways a prisoner of his age. Thus their astrology was clothing carried over from a previous era, its falseness yet to be fully recognised.

In one sense at least I believe the critic to be right. Had Galilei lived 50 or more years later I think that it is unlikely that he would have practised astrology. Not because something had happened to astrology, but because something had happened to society itself.

The fall of astrology and the rise of western science was not the result of conflict between two opposing concepts in which one was the victor, but rather because both events were themselves the product of something else that was happening in society. That “something else” was a move in the philosophical basis of western culture.

The 17th century in Europe saw a gradual moving away from an understanding of the world which was explained principally in terms of unity and relationship, to one which elevated the concepts of individuality and separateness. This began initially with the growth of national aspirations, and with the establishment of clearly defined cultures and boundaries. Wars were fought over lines drawn on a map, and people who lived but a few miles apart now found themselves as aliens to each other.

In religion too not only did this philosophy of separation lead to the growth of denominationalism - with its strictly defined statements of faith - but also to the "modern" Christian missionary movement.

In earlier centuries missionary activity had been a broadly based religious, political, economic, and cultural activity. Now it became an outworking of a theology of separateness. In this the heathen stood outside the Church's fold, and the real task of the Christian was to convert the heathen mind to the true faith and to remove all possible vestiges of an unacceptable culture.

In science the new philosophy was the conceptual justification for a method which encouraged parts to be studied independently of the whole. Perfect spheres moved on frictionless surfaces: a leaf was examined apart from the tree: and the branch was distilled to determine its basic chemical composition. Of course it has been a process which has been enormously effective and successful within its proper limits. Certainly for the first 200 years it delivered unimagined treasures.

Against such a background a discipline which demanded the concept of the unity and inter-relatedness of people and things could expect little popular support. It was simply going in the wrong direction. If you were about to lay a charge of grape-shot into the guy who lived across the river, then you needed to be reasonably convinced that he was a very different person from yourself. The divisions, the boundaries, the separations needed to be hard, clear, and firm.

You see, I think that astrology is really two quite different things.

On the one hand it is a set of techniques used to obtain certain information about people's intrinsic natures, and possibly about the events which may await them in the future and their probable reaction to these. On the other hand it is an effectual image of a philosophy of the universe. It is a sign, an icon, a parable of what everything is about. It is astrology in this second garb that I want to try to consider for a while.

For the sake of having a title for this essay, I have chosen that of "The Four Pillars of Wisdom", which while it sounds a bit pretentious is intended to suggest that it was upon such a philosophical understanding of nature that the most stable and long-lasting civilisations that our world has witnessed were based. Indeed - if I may be allowed to mix metaphors - to draw a long bow with tongue in cheek; one may propose a sociological rule which holds that the stability of a civilisation is directly proportional to the strength of its astrological practice.

As a professional religious person, I will also now and then attempt to contrast the implications of these pillars with some of the attitudes that have come to us through the last 300 years or so of our Judeo-Christian society.

I would like to suggest that the four pillars upon which a satisfying understanding of experience can rest - and of which astrology is one reflection - are those that we may call Relationship, Change, Individuality, and Symbolism. I also feel that the renewed interest in astrology which has occurred in the last 40 or so years has largely been due to a rediscovery of these concepts by many people in our society, rather than to any general or widespread belief that astrological theory or practice actually “works”.

So the first of our astrological pillars is Relationship.

Even the most casual observer of astrology will soon perceive that the aim of its techniques is to bring to light differing relationships which exist between the planets as observed from particular locations on earth at particular times.

Astrological techniques assume that relationship is the rule of nature. The universe is one thing, and therefore each part of it must be in relationship to every other part in some way. Astrology draws our attention to one of the most spectacular of these sets of relationships in nature: those that bind “heaven” and “earth”.

However, such a grand concept cannot be limited to one set of experiences only. There is no way of telling (for example) if a particular horoscope is that of the birth of a human being, of a dog, of a ship, or of a nation. All are in some way “born” into the world. As Jung wrote elsewhere, “Whatever is born or done in this moment of time, has the qualities of this moment of time”. Thus astrology demands not only “vertical” sets of relationships (between the planets and terrestrial events) but also “horizontal” ones. Everything is bound to everything else, because all things are born of time. This binding together finds perhaps its highest symbol in the relationships delineated by the astrologer.

However in this all pervading mesh of inter-relationships, the human participants may experience in a self conscious way this sense of belonging.

Let us take the very unsophisticated example of two people who share a common birth date. One may say in conversation, “My birthday is on the 6th of February”. The other may make one of two responses. The non-astrological one will simply be, “Oh, what a co-incidence. So is mine”. The other perhaps will be, “So is mine. We are both Aquarians”.

Now this second response implies far more than the first. It is a statement about sharing. A sharing of things which astrologically are held to be innate in the nature of these two persons. It is an admission of understood weaknesses, as well as of strengths. It is as well a statement of belonging.

To belong is perhaps the greatest of all human needs, and the cruelest punishments are those which isolate the offender from the rest of his or her society: whether the punishment be solitary confinement, excommunication, or being “sent to Coventry” in the workplace. Each is a way of saying, “You no longer belong”.

It can be argued that one of the underlying reasons for the rebirth of astrological interest in our society is associated with this ability to engender in people this feeling

of belonging. In this acknowledgment of an astrological relationship between our two imagined people, there is a concept of a "belongingness" which stems not from social structures or from adherence to a religious or national or political creed, but from the heart of nature itself. It is a "belongingness" which is a part of the way that the world is put together, and springs from the stuff of creation.

However it is also quickly apparent that these "natural" relationships may extend beyond those who fortuitously happen to share - if not a common birth date - at least a common birth sun-sign.

Let us assume that the response to the statement, "My birthday is the 6th of February", was, "Mine is in October".

In this case one reasonable response would simply be, "Oh!"

On the other hand the other response could be, "Ah, so you are probably a Libran". Now this again is a statement of relationship, yet of a quite different order from our first example.

While it is certainly again a statement of "belongingness", it is also a declaration that such a "belongingness" encompasses a range of natures, attitudes, and circumstances far different from those which we ourselves (being Aquarians) know and experience. Those with whom I may hold only little in common are still within the framework. Those in whose life nature may have expressed herself far differently from the way that she did in mine, still belong. There are no strangers.

Obviously this second kind of "belongingness" ought to create in us a deep sense of tolerance. To accept the astrological concept at even a superficial level demands the recognition of a range of human expression - some of which may be quite opposed to my own points of view - as legitimate and belonging by natural law within the proper boundaries human experience.

Astrologically orientated societies ought therefore to be tolerant societies; and it does not seem to be unfair to make the observation that in our own western Christian culture, as astrology declined so intolerance grew. If astrology is taken seriously, then it will require that firstly we allow as proper that fact that there will be those who will disagree with - and even find abhorrent - some of our most cherished beliefs and ideas. This is the way that nature operates, and such individuals - just as much as ourselves - truly belong.

It is also important to remember that this "belongingness" (as we have called it) properly extends beyond the human condition. Astrologers cast "horoscopes" not "anthroscopes". All things have their origins in time, and the astrological concept speaks equally well of relationships not only in human affairs, but in "inter-family" matters as well. Thus it follows that the astrologically orientated person or society will be by nature sensitive towards the whole of nature. For with it he or she holds an intrinsic and unbreakable relationship; no matter whether it be its human, animal, botanical, or geological forms .

Again it does not seem to be improper to suggest that in our society the decline of astrology was paralleled by a growing indifference towards nature. It is hard (for example) to imagine a 19th or 20th century Christian poet penning a modern equivalent of St. Francis' "Hymn to the Sun".

Praise to thee my Lord for all thy creatures:
Above all Brother Sun
Who brings us day and lends us his light.
Praise to thee my Lord for Sister Moon and Stars,
Which thou hast set in the heavens
Clear, precious, and fair.
Praise to thee my Lord for Brother Wind,
For air and cloud, for calm and all weather,
By which thou supportest life in all thy creatures.

Indeed present day Christian theology has been almost totally silent with regard to the world of nature. It is essentially a people centred religion, and once the fact of God's creation has been established in the first two chapters of the Bible, any meaningful reference to those marvellous and often intelligent creatures with whom we share this planet will largely be sought in vain in the scriptures.

One may in fact suspect that a future Moon colony will provide an almost ideal environment for the practice of the Christian religion, as the inconvenience of other life forms can be entirely ignored. On a lifeless world, most traditional Christian theology and practice would suffer not the slightest diminution.

Such an attitude is contrary to the basic assumptions of the astrological concept; as it is also apparently unsatisfactory to many people in our society today. The attraction which astrology obviously exercises may in part lie in its ability to re-awaken feelings of relationship and belonging in a society which for so long has lived in separation and division.

My second pillar I have called (not very happily), Change.

This involves our understanding of time, since the measurement of time is a part of our perception of the essence of change. There are however two very different ways in which time itself may be understood, and the conceptual difference between these involves quite far-reaching consequences. These two concepts may be called Linear and Cyclic time.

If one is talking about the age of a person or the age of the universe, then one is thinking about time in its Linear sense. This images time as a kind of straight line, beginning at A and ending at Z. For a person A and Z correspond respectively to his or her physical birth and death: for the universe to an initial Big Bang and a final ultimate Black Hole.

Time in this sense is simply a measurement along the line from A, but in which the final point Z must remain unknown and unknowable until it is actually reached.

Now this is essentially the concept of time held by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus the Christian dating system represents not only a convenient starting point for

the numbering of years, but also the point of intervention by God into the affairs of mankind through the act of redemption. It is the starting point of salvation history; the final point being the unknowable time of the Second Coming.

Against this Linear concept of time measurement stands the Cyclic one. Instead of viewing time as a straight line it is now seen as a circle; and time is measured as the distance from a constantly recurring station on the circle. This concept was of course quite common to us in the age of pre-digital clocks. Here time was described either in terms of something “past” an hour, or something “to” an hour. In this last case time is not seen as a measurement from a past event, but as that which remains of an acknowledged cycle to be completed.

Perhaps more importantly, Cyclic time is “natural” in a way that Linear time is not. Linear time always depends upon the selection of some more or less arbitrary starting point. Cyclic time rests upon precise and observable natural stations.

The ancient astronomer marking the start of the year at the vernal equinox, seems to me to be performing a more rational and natural function than the Lord Mayor waiting to wish the assembled crowd a “Happy New Year” when the town hall clock strikes midnight on 31st December - unfortunately (in Australia at least) forgetting that Summer Time is being observed and so anticipating the new year by one hour!

There is however another important aspect which differentiates the two concepts. This is that events in Linear time are irregular and unpredictable, while those in cyclic time are both regular and predictable. Linear time events must (by definition) be non-repeating; but the essential repeatability of events in Cyclic time is the essence of its structure.

Cyclic time will therefore allow us to understand and handle time (and therefore change) in a way that is quite different from what is possible using the Linear time concept. The former asserts that nature works in patterns, rhythms, and harmonic cycles. Some of these may be of great complexity, yet in all there is still a theme of order and naturalness. While change is indeed the law of nature, it is not unbounded, uncontrolled, unreasonable, and unpredictable, but always within properly defined and essentially knowable boundaries.

On the other hand the adherent of Linear time views the future with a degree of fear and apprehension for that unknowable event that forever lurks in the darkness ahead, waiting to entrap and bring down the individual soul.

Obviously Cyclic time is the time frame of the astrologer, which enables one to handle change in a way that Linear time cannot. This is so because Cyclic time always contains within itself the shadow of the future. Cyclic time looks forward as much as it looks backwards; whereas Linear time is essentially orientated towards the past.

An astrological time concept is therefore able to make the future “comfortable”, not by creating some myth about a golden age ahead, but simply by reminding us that the future in fact differs little from the past. By knowing the past we have - in a sense -

come to know the future. Indeed, “past” and “future” are only different ways of talking about the same clock face.

The future contains many knowns. It need not be terrifying, and only asks that we should enter it willingly, accepting in our own experience the same rhythmical and cyclical patterns that underlie the whole of nature.

Thus the ‘belongingness’ of the astrological tradition includes not only a set of static relationships, but also dynamic ones. Change, goodness, badness, light, darkness, fortune, misfortune, are all the essential tools of life. The constantly changing patterns of the planetary system are (for the astrologer) simply images and icons of the constantly changing patterns of life: to be neither dreaded nor avoided, but rather accepted as one facet of the ground of our experience.

The astrological concept therefore holds that change lies at the very foundation of life. There are no constants, and to seek for such is to seek for a chimera. In this regard it is interesting to reflect that such a position is being increasingly taken by modern science. Professor John Wheeler writing in a series of essays entitled *The Physicist’s Conception of Nature*, says, “I have not been able to find any more reasonable way to state the situation than this; nature conserves nothing. There is no constant of physics that is not transcended; or - in a word - mutability is a law of nature”.

The question for many who live in our society, is how they are personally to come to terms with such unceasing mutability in their own lives. The astrologer I think, offers one possible solution.

The third of my four pillars I have simply called Individuality.

Jung wrote elsewhere in an essay in memory of Richard Wilhelm, “Astrology represents the summation of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity”. No matter what opinion may be held regarding the validity of various astrological techniques, there can be no question at all regarding the subtlety of its insights into the nature of human personality. Certainly no modern system of personality classification has approached the complexity of the astrological one.

The process of interpreting a horoscope is one of determining an initial personality “type” which is related to the zodiacal signs of the Ascendant and Sun, and then increasingly refining this so that the “person picture” becomes less and less general and more and more particular. The result is a chart interpretation which is virtually unique to one particular person, and can only be shared by another person who was born at virtually the same time and place within quite narrow limits.

Astrology therefore seeks to deal with the individual in a way which is quite unusual in our society. It is a discipline which is pre-eminently concerned with the individual and his or her specific destiny.

While we often speak at length about the “rights of the individual”, in practice - in both our social systems and in our laws - people are generally only dealt with as they fall into certain recognisable classes. This is especially evident when we consider the assistance available to people in our community who are in distress. The needy

person must be able to demonstrate that he or she belongs within a recognised category before aid can be given. Some find themselves rejected, not because their needs are not real, but because their circumstances are difficult to classify within the accepted parameters.

The process therefore to which we are commonly accustomed is that of reducing the seemingly infinite variety of human personality to a small number of generally agreed categories. The art of the “analyst” (no matter whether he or she be a psychologist or an interviewing officer at the Department of Social Security) is to apply a number of tests in order to determine which of the approved boxes will best suit the person concerned. When this has been achieved, a standard set of procedures appropriate to that class of person (client) will then be activated.

The astrological process is however almost the precise opposite of this. It begins with the easily applied general principles of zodiacal classification, and then through a set of other processes seeks to describe the person in uniquely individual terms.

Astrology is therefore totally committed to the uniqueness - and thus to the unique value - of each person. This commitment to individuality leads on to what I believe to be three important understandings of human nature.

Firstly, it requires that we accept what might be termed the doctrine of the in-equality of all people. If each person is uniquely individual, then obviously each one of us is different from each other person. Some of these differences will involve our inner nature, some our outlook on life. Some will be in the way that we react to certain circumstances, some may be significant differences between generations. It is very hard therefore for an astrologer to accept a concept of human nature which presupposes some kind of equal basic “proto-person” within each of us: the obvious and almost endless varieties of human nature being something like clothing which each of these “proto-persons” wear.

This is however apparently the assumption which many of our social or religious institutions seem to make. For example, in a democratic society it is assumed that in each person there is an equally politically responsible proto-person. In traditional Christian belief it is assumed that no matter how unequal people may be in their nature or circumstances, they are equal proto-persons in sinfulness and in their ability to respond to the Gospel.

It would seem to me that any social system which does not take seriously the basic inequality of people will often fall into serious error in the manner in which it treats or judges those with whom it deals.

Secondly, astrology requires that we adopt a non-judgmental attitude towards people. Generally - and especially in the Christian tradition - we assume that there is an archetypal “ideal” human being who possesses a number of highly desirable qualities. As we possess a greater or lesser number of these qualities we are judged to be a better or worse human being.

Should there be a significant number of omissions of these desirable qualities in a particular person, then he or she is to be pitied, condemned, converted, or “helped to adjust”, as we believe the circumstances require.

However an horoscope is not a moral document. It may indeed contain areas of difficulty, fortunate influences, indications of gifts or talents, or suggestions of perversities: but these are not moral judgments. If this were the case we would then be led to the preposterous conclusion that it is morally wrong to be born at certain times or on certain dates.

No one blames a person born with some physical handicap for that unfortunate affliction; yet we frequently blame those who are born with a mental social or spiritual one. That is not an astrologically reasonable position to adopt.

Thirdly (and because of these sorts of things) astrology would suggest that the goal of human life is not to attain to some almost supernatural ideal personal standard, but rather to fulfil the potentials which are born in us; and which the astrologer would claim to be able to delineate by his or her interpretation of the birth chart. We need to become what we are. In this sense “perfection” or “fulfilment” implies the attainment of that which is possible in our nature, given the tools with which we have been endowed at birth.

The “perfect” human being then is not necessarily a saint of great holiness, but rather someone who has learned to become fully what they were potentially. The horoscope speaks not only about what is, but also about what is possible. It is in the fulfilling of the possible that our goals should lie.

An astrological society would be one which is careful to allow to each person the freedom to be able to pursue that goal in life which is the fulfilment of his or her own nature. The zodiacal pendant so often worn should mean not only “I belong” and “to live is to change”, but also “I am becoming myself”. This latter is an affirmation which too few people seem able to make, and that is a great pity.

The last of my four pillars I have called Symbolism.

This is perhaps the most difficult of the four to discuss, as I feel that the great majority of people who are a part of our present day western culture do not really perceive what the nature of symbolism is, or what its place should be in human experience.

The significant work of an astrologer is not the erection of a chart, but its interpretation. An interpreter is an intermediary, who tries to convey what has been said in one language to those who understand another. In all interpretation there is a loss of some part of the original, as the original is in the end the only proper expression of what is wished to be said.

Thus the subtleties of Shakespearian writing can only be fully enjoyed (I am sure) by those who are fluent in English; as the proper language of Shakespeare is English. In the same way the proper language of particle physics is mathematics, and the proper language of astrology is zodiacal symbolism and harmonic relationships.

Astrological symbolism is deeply emotive and wide ranging; whereas our spoken and written language is quite narrow and precise. Much of the astrologer's art lies in seeking to select those particular interpretations of the symbols which are appropriate for a given situation. But a symbol interpreted is rather like our 19th century science: we have allowed our attention to be concentrated upon a part, and forgotten the whole complex of ideas which gives the symbol its true life.

Let us take an example. One may look up "Sun in Pisces" in any popular paperback astrology book, and be told that the person whose sign this is will probably be sympathetic, impressionable, artistic, emotional, or sometimes impractical, secretive, timid, or deceitful. Yet how much stronger and more emotive is the symbol of Pisces itself: which is two fish tied together swimming in opposite directions.

The other thing is that a symbol is a dynamic statement of the way things are, whereas words are static. The symbol by nature is constantly open to re-interpretation as the circumstances about it change; or itself is able constantly to re-interpret events.

Perhaps an example of this is the concert musician. Here the musical score is the symbol which demands constant re-interpretation. At each performance the player may feel compelled to re-interpret the symbols somewhat differently, even though the score itself remains unchanged.

The zodiacal signs - like the performer's music - are dynamic symbols that make a statement which itself never needs to be re-stated, but yet needs to be constantly re-interpreted. They provide a set of unchanging patterns from which the meaning of experiences can be extracted. They are symbols of power, and as symbols of power they are able to reach across the millennia and still claw at the soul.

Perhaps an example of the difference between a symbol of power and one which is not, is the contrast between the swastika of Hitler's Third Reich, and the invented symbols of later Nationalist parties. The former seemed to have a life and converting power of its own, whereas the latter usually appear rather childish. The manipulation of a symbol of power can be an immensely effective tool.

In contrast, we have tended in our society to look for static statements about our condition. The quest of science for the last 300 years has (in the main) been for the 'immutable laws of nature' (to quote Professor John Wheeler once again), which once codified will remain forever unchanged.

The Church too has succumbed to this concept of seeking static rather than dynamic statements of faith, with its beliefs defined by set and invariable formulae. The ground of religion is sought in a static history of Jesus, and the cross (a universal symbol of dynamic transformation) has become a static symbol in the realistic and historically fixed crucifix.

Perhaps it is because of the strength of its symbolism that astrology has survived to our own age. Beneath the events of life, beneath the circumstances that surround us, there are the hidden streams of the ground of our being. Jung speaks of these as the archetypes. These are things which lie beyond the power of normal language adequately to define or describe. As he wrote, the unconscious must always be the

unconscious or else it ceases to be what it is. One can only begin to approach such areas through symbols which in some way allow us to begin to handle the stuff from which life is made.

Symbols become effective when they enable us to begin to touch the very ground of nature. Indeed, perhaps symbol is the only way that this ground can in the end be approached, because that is the way that the world is put together.

Symbolism then lies at the heart and core of nature. In the 1970's Michael Gauquelin did his extensive studies of the correspondences between the careers of a very large number of professional people and their horoscopes. In the end the thing which disturbed him the most was not that there were obvious correspondences between the location of certain planets in significant parts of the birth charts and these persons' chosen careers; but that the planets in question were indeed the ones associated with such careers in astrological tradition.

It had been the assumption of historic and scientific writers that the ancient astrologer assigned the various characteristics and rulerships of the planets as the result of a number of quite random and unrelated accidental characteristics.

Thus Mars - being red - had been simplistically related to blood, war and fighting. Venus - being white and beautiful and bright - to love, peace, art and beauty. Jupiter - being large and majestic - to law and the church. But Gauquelin's work demonstrated that these were in reality the character traits that were governed by these planets. That is, they actually symbolised what they governed. Symbolism thus exists at the very heart of nature.

Until we are able to examine our experiences symbolically as well as clinically, nature will most assuredly hide many of her most precious treasures from us.

These then are my four pillars of wisdom which I believe form the conceptual framework of astrology. Relationship, Change, Individuality, and Symbolism. Personally as a Christian I would hold that these ideas are very much in accord with the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. To heal division, to change the lives of those who followed, to elevate the dignity of each man and woman, are essential to his teachings. And he who fed 5,000 with Bread and Fish (and whose followers chose as their symbol the Pisces) did things through the symbolism of his actions that were only hinted at by the parables which he told.

The astrologer, in spite of his or her failings, prejudices, ignorances, and foolishnesses, has preserved for our age a way of looking at life which is still deeply meaningful. Astrology is concerned with a wholeness of creation and with the uniqueness of each man and woman. On the other hand science and religion have often denigrated human nature and pushed it to the background. One fears that for both of these latter, "being human" is nothing in which to rejoice.

Our value is that we are. Astrology - in its funny old way - tries to talk about this wonderful and fearful uniqueness which each one of us possesses. If this is really the case, then perhaps it is still able to offer a cup of cool water to those who thirst in the parched deserts of our generation.

“COUNSELS SECRET TO US”

THE LIMITS OF ASTROLOGICAL PREDICTION

1991

In an earlier essay I tried to talk a little about what must be the nature of the world in which we live and the scope of free will, if astrological prediction is possible.

That the future is predictable is of course an almost unquestioned fundamental assumption of astrology. Very few issues of any astrological magazine appear which do not contain at least one article which is concerned with the matter in some way. The most common of these involve the examination of some recent notable event in the life of a public person. The author will use various predictive techniques on the subject's birth chart, and by these be able to demonstrate a number of clear significators for the event. What has always worried me is that using the same techniques, the author or anyone else will be far less confident when trying to pin point significant yet-to-occur events in the life of that person.

Astrological prediction always seems to work better in retrospect than in prospect. Which - you must admit - is not good for prediction.

However the other aspect to this - as with the case of my “Lady in Tasmania” - is that there are a not insignificant number of occasions on which astrological prediction works with considerable accuracy, and in which the possibility of chance or coincidence is almost too remote to be considered. Why is it then that predictive techniques - all predictive techniques - seem to work on some occasions, but conspicuously not on others? Is there some wall, some barrier, that limits the astrologer's access to the future?

A chance introduction to the concept of Chaos Theory raised the concept of unpredictability even in a strictly defined mathematical process. With a little help from the *Articles of Religion* of the old Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, the following essay came into being. It might be important, but I am not sure. You will need to think about it yourself.



Predictive Work

When commissioned to do predictive work, the member will ensure that the client is aware of the distinction between the astrological event, which can be precisely calculated, and its interpretation which depends upon the judgement of the individual astrologer.

CODE OF ETHICS ; Federation of Australian

Astrologers

In a previous essay I raised the issue of what sort of world we live in if it is possible for the astrologer to make predictions about some future course of events in a person's life, if these events concern things than an ordinary intelligent astrologer could not reasonably guess by knowing something of the circumstances and background of the individual involved.

A world in which the future is predictable is a world in which the future is predetermined, and this is a concept which generally does not sit easily with us. Most western people hold to the idea of human free will, with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm. We like to believe that we have the freedom to achieve the goals which we have set ourselves, and the idea that we have only the freedom to do what we are predestined to do is usually difficult for us to accept.

The argument has in fact raged throughout the history of Christianity. In the early centuries of the Church there stood on one hand the monk Pelagius who held that the human soul at birth was like a clean slate, and what was written upon it was the total responsibility of each person. On the other side stood Augustine who taught - in the words of the Anglican Prayer Book - "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby he hath decreedto deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen out of mankind." As Augustine is now Saint Augustine and Pelagius largely forgotten, obviously he won the argument, and the concept of a predestined universe also lies at the core of the western Christian tradition as much as it does in eastern religious thought.

However if one accepts the idea that the world is predestined in some way, one invariably then asks the question if whether what is predestined is also knowable. That is, are the events of our life predictable?

The Articles of the Anglican Prayer Book from which the above quotation came, rather suggests that they are not, because the full text goes like this: "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby he hath constantly decreed by his counsels secret to us to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ our of mankind." That is, things are predestined and God knows what they are, but he is keeping it to himself.

Well, I guess that is one point of view.

The astrological point of view is however somewhat different, and rests I think upon some other suppositions.

The first of these is that the universe is indeed a universe, and that there is a natural relationship between all of its parts. The nature of these relationships is often very subtle, and the uncovering of them has really been the quest of all the sciences since the beginning of human thought. However if one understands some of these relationships then certain things are possible. For example, one may examine some particular circumstance at a distance (as it were) by examining the conditions of a different but related set of circumstances.

Things like palmistry, astrology, iridology are obvious examples, but so are such things as ultra-sonic scans, in which bodily functions or organs are examined at a

remove by examining the relationships that our squishy bits have to sound waves under certain conditions.

The second supposition - and the one which is of particular importance to astrologers - is that if the relationship is properly understood between two differing sets of circumstances (and that one can be sure of the way in which one of these sets of circumstances is going to change or develop in the future) then one may be able to make statements about the way that the other set of related circumstances will also develop. This of course is the basis of astrological prediction.

However these two suppositions also define the two great quests of astrology. Since the two related circumstances in this case are the human condition and the motion of the planets, the first quest has been that of determining planetary motion and position with greater and greater accuracy.

We tend to dismiss the heavenly structures proposed by Claudius Ptolemy - in which the Sun and planets revolve around a fixed earth in a series of small circular orbits which themselves rest upon larger circular orbits inside a crystalline sphere - as a rather primitive and unimaginative structure. This is especially so when we are reminded that in the 5th century BC Pythagoras expounded the concept of a Sun centred universe.

But we ought to remember that until Johannes Kepler in the 17th century (1,200 years later) rediscovered the Greek mathematical concept of the ellipse - and used it as a basis for predicting planetary orbits around the Sun - no mathematical system had even come near to the accuracy of Ptolemy's in predicting planetary position.

Now I think that probably even Ptolemy probably wasn't all that keen on the mechanics of his system, but just the same the maths were pretty good. By using his approach it was possible for a first rate astrologer to do some sums and to predict planetary positions with a degree of accuracy that most would find (for all practical purposes) to be entirely acceptable even today.

Now of course this first great astrological quest has been drawn to a conclusion, and our computers can provide us with future planetary positions with remarkable accuracy for any date we wish to choose. In practice this means that we know what the future conditions of one of our sets of circumstances will be with very great precision.

The other quest therefore is that one in which we seek to establish the nature of the relationships between these two sets of circumstances (that is, the planetary events and the human condition) with equal accuracy. Now if we are able to do this, then it would appear that we should then be able to open the door to the future and to see it with the same clarity, accuracy, and detail as we can any other event that now occurs before our eyes. That is the holy grail that seems to lie close to our grasp. A chalice which for so long has seemed to be oh so near, yet which for some curious reason (even after so many years of searching) still always remains just out of our reach.

I suppose what I really want to ask is this. Is this grail in fact attainable; or are there indeed in this oh so unspiritual world (as the old Payer Book would have it) “counsels secret to us.”

It is (I think) interesting to remind ourselves just how much this quest has determined the history of astrology itself. To a very large measure, its history is hung - as it were - on the names of those people who sought to take the process of advancing the relationship between our two sets of conditions one step further.

The astrology of the very ancient world was that of the omen aspects of planets, their associations with significant stars, and various lunar phenomena. The invention of the intellectual zodiac in about the 5th century BC gave an enormous impetus to the mathematical side of astrological practice. A horoscope could now be handled as a mathematical entity. The need for constant and tedious observation was greatly lessened, and the birth chart could yield to investigation in a manner - and with an accuracy - quite impossible prior to this

Sometime just before the Christian era a new concept was introduced by some adventurous thinkers. Petosiris of Egypt proposed in about 140 BC that it might be possible to have a supplementary division of the ecliptic - complementary to the twelve signs of the zodiac - but having as its reference point the degree of the Ascendant instead of the First Point of Aries. This secondary division (being “tied” to the terrestrial horizon) would offer particular information with regard to the mundane events of the life of the person represented in the horoscope.

This concept was eventually taken up and expounded with great ability by Claudius Ptolemy in the 2nd century AD in his great work *Tetrabiblos* - the “Four Books”. It is in the third of these that he describes in detail what we now term the Equal House System. By providing a whole new set of related circumstances, the concept of mundane houses offered a far more accurate tool for both delineation and prediction than an astrology based simply upon the zodiacal signs and planetary relationships.

A most significant step in the quest for predictive accuracy had been made.

The *Tetrabiblos* was translated into Arabic in the 8th century, at exactly the same time as notable advances in geometry and trigonometry were being made by Arabic mathematicians. *The Elements of Astrology* by Al Biruni of the 11th century describes all the techniques of Ptolemy, but as well adds to them the 28 lunar mansions and what we today call the “Arabic Parts”. These latter are essentially a series of mundane houses erected by dividing the ecliptic into 12 sectors and taking as their first point the degree of the Sun, Moon, or one of the Planets in turn.

Again it was an attempt to introduce increasing refinement in order to enable the astrologer to deal more specifically with certain relationships. In this sense it bears comparison to the concept of mid-points introduced this century by Reinhold Ebertin: not in their actual nature, but in the sense of multiplying the number of sensitive areas on a chart from which one may extract information. It is again a working out of the supposition that the more detail you can learn about a particular circumstance the more accurately you will be able to predict its development. The logic of the concept seems to be beyond reproach.

But let us retrace our steps a moment.

The Arab writers had a great influence upon Europe both in astrology and in mathematics. In the 13th century Johannes Campanus was Chaplain to Pope Urban IV. Somewhat after the time of Ptolemy an astrologer named Porphyry suggested that as the Ascendant and the Mid-heaven were significant parts of the mundane chart, it would be logical to create houses by dividing the ecliptic into three equal divisions between each of the four great angles.

The suggestion did not find favour, as the effect was to create “unequal” houses in space, which destroys the symmetry of the zodiacal concept.

Campanus realised that the impasse had come about by the confusion of two spherical geometrical systems. The ecliptic was associated with the apparent annual motion of the Sun about the earth. The four angles on the other hand, were related to the daily motion of the earth about its axis.

He therefore divided the celestial sphere into four quadrants which were determined by the plane of the equator and the plane vertical to it which passes through the West and East points and the Zenith and Nadir. This great vertical plane is called the Prime Vertical. Campanus then divided this equally into twelve sectors, and using the mathematical tools now available to him was able to calculate where these sectors would intersect the ecliptic for various latitudes. By this means he produced the Campanus House System.

It was an attempt to use the most up-to-date mathematical tools to refine - and presumably therefore increase the accuracy of - astrological technique.

Two centuries later the professor of astronomy and mathematics at the University of Vienna - Johannes Muller - refined Campanus' work. He argued that if the houses were related in fact to the earth's daily motion, it would be more logical to base their division upon the plane of the Sun's daily motion - that is, the celestial equator - rather than the intellectual concept of the Prime Vertical.

He therefore developed a house system based upon the equal division of the celestial equator into twelve equal sector, and printed tables of houses giving the degree of intersection of these divisions with the ecliptic. Muller wrote under a rather grandiose pen-name, and his work is today published as the Regiomontanus House System.

Once again we see this search for increased accuracy at work.

Let us mention just one more name. In seeking to walk this same road in search of the holy grail of ultimate accuracy, in the 17th century the monk Placidus de Tito abandoned the concept of the houses being equal divisions of space entirely. Instead he used the time taken by the Ascendant degree to reach the Mid-heaven.

Thus if 25° Scorpio is the Ascendant at 11 hours 13 minutes, and is the Mid-heaven at 15 hours 31 minutes, the time taken is 4 hours 18 minutes. Thus 25° Scorpio will be

on the cusps of Houses XI and XII at 1 hour 26 minutes intervals (1/3rd of 4 hours 18 minutes).

This is a very widely used house system, but is conceptually quite different from anything which had gone before it. Its popularity however is due not to its intellectual, mathematical, or conceptual superiority but to quite another issue.

You will notice that our little example did not find the cusps of Houses XI and XII when 25° Scorpio was the Ascendant, but rather the times when 25° Scorpio was the degree of the cusp of House XI and House XII. Using just tables of the Ascendant and the Mid-heaven, we could do the same for every degree of the zodiac for every latitude, without ever having to do any more than divide, add, or subtract. It was an ideal house system for a person with no mathematical skills to be able to reproduce. This was the case in 1821 when R.C.Smith (or “Raphael”) first published them, and the Placidian Tables became widely and cheaply available.

The popularity of the Placidus system therefore lies not in any demonstrated superiority, but rather in the simplicity of its reproduction for an astrologer with a limited mathematical background 150 years ago. This does not necessarily give the system a theoretical advantage for the astrologer of today.

There have of course been other attempts to refine the astrological system through greater sophistication of the house divisions. These include the systems of Natural Graduation, the MC Houses, Morinus, Axial Rotation, Zenith, East Point, Alcabitus, and Birth Place.

The other direction has been to add to the number of celestial points which may be considered in the processes of delineation or prediction. Reinhold Ebertin introduced the concept of planetary mid-points, thus increasing the number of potentially sensitive areas enormously. Others have used harmonics, the asteroids, or the hypothetical outer planets.

I would however like to look at one more attempt in a little more detail, as I feel that it is quite revealing in several ways.

In 1972 Wendel Polich, Nelson Page, and Alexander Marr published in Buenos Aires their *Tables of the Right Ascension of the Ecliptic and a Manual of Primary Directions*. It may be helpful to say that “Right Ascension” is measuring the degrees of the zodiac on the ecliptic (our normal measure) by projecting them onto the celestial equator and using a 360° measurement from the East point. Thus (for example) 8° 25’ Virgo is 160° 03’ Right Ascension. So you will appreciate the point of including tables of Right Ascension with the Manual.

However the major intention of the Manual is to introduce the authors’ system of prediction; which is the use of primary directions based on their own new house division system.

Primary Directions is that system when predictions are made on the basis of the motion of a planet in right ascension, rather than on the ecliptic (which are its secondary directions). Primary directions may either be interpreted on the actual

daily motion of the planet equating to one year in real time, or 1° motion in right ascension equating to the year.

The Topocentric House system (as the authors' name their development) is a variant of the Placidian one. The difference is a bit technical, and introduces some trigonometry into the house cusp calculations. To be brief and not very accurate, if one should try to draw a three dimensional picture of the Placidian houses, the house cusps would converge and meet at the north and south poles. In the Topocentric system they would converge on the north and south poles of the plane of the horizon of the observer. Hence the name, "Topo" (place) Centred.

While special tables are necessary to use the system, in practical terms the variations from Placidus are usually quite small.

However the point of the exercise is that the authors claim remarkable accuracy for predictions made from a chart erected using the Topocentric House system in conjunction with Primary Directions.

May I quote from my own translation, as I do not think that the work is available in English:

It is marvellous to verify experimentally how (primary directions) are manifested not only in the destiny of the native himself, but also in persons associated with him through natural ties..... When an impersonal event of much importance occurs to one of the parents (for example, an accident), in the directional matter of one of the houses of the native there will be discovered a Primary Direction which is indicative of a painful encounter within an orb of 3 minutes of arc.

But a little later:

In order that the Primary Direction may be able to indicate with accuracy the actual date of the event, it is an indispensable condition that a natal map which has been exactly rectified should be prepared. This is for many an insuperable hindrance. Never the less this obstacle can be quickly removed, because with the Topocentric System of House Division every astrologer is able to rectify any natal map by means of 2 or 3 events occurring suddenly within the limit of one day (without great individual importance) but being noted with a precision of four seconds of time. (For example, the instant of a payment, an accidental breakage of some article, a fall, a mistake, a coughing attack, hiccoughs, an injection, etc.).

The authors then go on to provide examples of their predictive methods using both forward and converse directions, taking as their subject Queen Elizabeth II.

In one example there is an Uranus/Mars opposition in $20^\circ 51'$ Leo, on the 9th of September 1952. Using converse primary directions the date of the 6th of February 1952 is obtained, which is the date of the death of her King-Father.

Other examples using primary directions involve the birth of Prince Charles, Princess Anne, and Prince Andrew; all with similar accuracy. One may note that the calculations are quite demanding, and the writers have devised several formats to

assist in these, in order that astrologers may arrive at the desired end result. Apart from Primary Directions involving cusps and planets, it is also necessary to use solar returns, arabic parts, and sometimes the fixed stars. However if one may - through these processes - obtain a precise prediction of future events, I assume that few would begrudge the effort.

Yet there are several things that cause me to hesitate. The authors claim to have calculated 70 other events in the Queen's life with precision by their method, yet give examples of none of these. They say they have given five worked out examples of specific predicted events, but in the end only one - the death of the Queen's father - is shown in full detail.

Lastly, to obtain their results they have found it necessary to rectify the birth time by almost half an hour. It is difficult to accept that - if the rectified birth time is supposed to represent the physical birth time - that such a gross error could have been made in recording the birth time of the heiress to the English throne.

I think that this is a revealing example, because it seems to illustrate the law of diminishing returns. That is another way of saying that the application of more and more complex procedures to the astrological chart will not necessarily provide anything like an equivalent increase in accuracy. In fact one almost feels that the reverse might be true. We can become so dedicated to our techniques that when they fail to provide an appropriate answer, instead of stepping back and examining just what we are doing, we simply plunge into even greater complexity.

Let me give you a very simple personal example.

Years ago - when I lived in the country - I began doing for fun a twelve month rainfall prediction for the area in which we lived. This was simply prepared by taking the entrance of the Sun into each of the signs, seeing what planetary aspects had been formed, and interpreting the chart according to astrological weather tradition.

For a few years I achieved quite acceptable results. A few farmers actually did plant their seed on a couple of occasions on the strength of these predictions, and things came out quite well for them in the end. Something of a local demand grew up, and the work became known as the Gospel According to St Ralph.

So I decided that I could do better, and began doing lunar charts as well, superimposing these on the ingress charts. My predictions were certain more detailed, but alas generally less accurate. We left the district soon after this, but if I had continued the exercise I think that I would have reverted back to my first and simpler form.

Which brings me back to our original problem. Is there some sort of limit to the accuracy of prediction? Can one go on and on refining astrological technique and developing new tools, being confident that each one brings us a step closer to that time when we can name the day and the hour and the minute of any particular future event? Or do we find ourselves in a situation in which we may do a hundred more complicated calculations than the earlier astrologers were ever able to contemplate, but our predictions in the end are likely to be not one wit more accurate?

Are there in nature - in the words of the old Anglican Prayer Books - “counsels secret to us?”

I now want to skirt around an area concerning which - although I have some sort of mathematical background - is still one which I must confess is a great mystery to me. This is what I understand Chaos Theory in mathematics to be saying.

I think it goes something like this.

Once we held to the idea that if you knew enough about something, you could in the end describe it and its actions with total accuracy. Thus for example, we know the mechanics of wave motion and the mathematics necessary to describe the movement of each molecule of water. Therefore it should theoretically be possible mathematically to describe every wave that breaks on the shore, because the movement of each molecule of water is strictly governed by mathematical equations. More than this, one should be able to predict the shape of each wave, because we are fully aware of all the forces which create it and are able to express these in mathematical terms.

To draw an astrological analogy, if I am fully aware of the motion of the planets and know precisely the relationship of these to human nature, I ought to be able to be able totally to describe the actions of the person under consideration.

But we find in fact that the world is not like this. No matter how much you may know about the mathematics of wave motion, you can never predict how any one wave will actually behave. There is even in some of the most simple mathematical formulae an inherent “either/or” factor. The formulae for wave motion (for example) may say in effect “if this happens, then this happens, and then this other happens”, but it may also say, “but if that happens, then that happens, and then that other happens”.

Nature, while behaving in a strictly mathematical manner, has often built into the very foundations of its mathematics some totally unpredictable options. It always behaves according to its laws, but its laws have counsels secret to us.

This means in effect that while we can describe the general vistas of nature, there are parts that will always remain unpredictable because there is at the heart of the natural world a chaos factor. Let me use two rather strange and curious diagrams to help me illustrate this in a way that may be helpful.

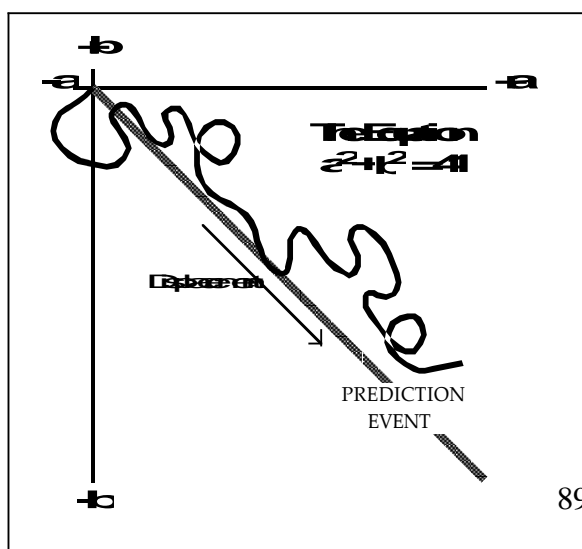


DIAGRAM ONE

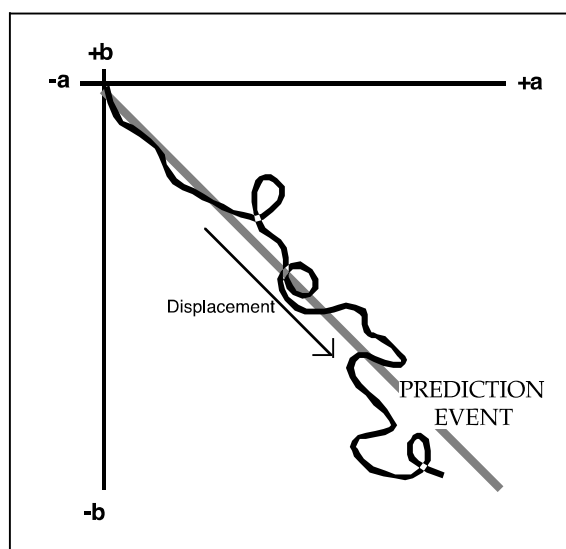


DIAGRAM TWO

What I have tried to do is to demonstrate - or perhaps better, to give an analogy - of chaos theory as I understand it.

I have begun with a simple algebraic equation, $a^2 + b^2 = 41$. Now the thing about that equation is that it is perfectly good maths, and perhaps it could be used in a set of equations to describe what happens to our wave breaking on the shore. The only problem is that it has four possible solutions, all of which are correct.

If “a” is 4, and “b” is 5, then a^2 is 16, and b^2 is 25, which gives the answer 41. However if “a” is -4, a^2 is still 16; and if “b” is -5, b^2 is still 25. So “a” can be + or - 4, and “b” can be + or - 5. Thus there are four ways to work out the equation, all of which give the answer 41.

$$(+4)^2 + (+5)^2 = 41$$

$$(+4)^2 + (-5)^2 = 41$$

$$(-4)^2 + (+5)^2 = 41$$

$$(-4)^2 + (-5)^2 = 41$$

Now what I did was this. I made two discs, one I called “a” and the other I called “b”. I then placed a plus and a minus sign on the opposite sides of each of them. Next I simply played “two up” and wrote down my results. For example, the first throw in Diagram One would have been “-a” and “-b”. So I went down four tiny units and then left five tiny units, and placed a dot at that point.

From that point I displaced myself diagonally down towards the right bottom corner a set amount, repeated the process and placed another dot. I did this quite a number of times and then drew a curved line through all of the points which I had established in this way. The result was the funny curve in Diagram One.

I then repeated the process a second time and obtained Diagram Two.

Now mathematically this was simply a game of chance, and the average of all the results should follow the diagonal line which I have labelled the “Prediction Event”. One therefore strongly suspects that had I continued the operations which resulted in Diagram One a little longer, there would have been a sudden drop down to the Prediction Event line.

I would just like to make a few comments.

The first is the obvious one, that while we have performed the same mathematical operation in the same way a number of times in both examples, we have attained totally different results. And no matter how many times we repeated the process, each time the result would be different from all others. Nature - as it were - has taken its own secret counsel each time the equation was applied, and there is simply no way that the result can be predicted with any degree of certainty.

However the second one is that even while this may be so, chaos nature still remains within fairly obvious limits. One can still have a pretty good idea of what is actually happening, and even (to a degree) a sense of where things must go next.

The third is that if one likes to think of our simple equations astrologically, what we have is the inter action of symbols, each containing two possible interpretations; which is not too bad a picture of what we often have to work with. This being the case, what we are looking at can be viewed in one sense as an icon of our predictive astrological work.

Let us imagine two astrologers faced with the same request to make predictions from a given chart. Both apply their techniques equally to the material in front of him or her. Astrologer Number One in his or her work has crossed the Prediction Event line twice, and has thereby achieved two good accurate predictions. Astrologer Number Two on the other hand has crossed the Prediction Event line six times, yet is not in any way a better astrologer. Both simply reached the limits that nature allowed, and there is no technique ever which will allow either of them to perform better.

The fourth point is that if you take the results of our little experiments (that is, you start with the finished squiggle and work backwards) it is quite possible to isolate any bit of the curve and determine in that particular instance what the values of “a” and “b” actually were for that “event”. In other words, we can isolate the factors which produced that part of the curve.

There seems to me to be here some sort of parallel with our ability rather easily to find the promittors which astrologically describe some event which has already occurred, but yet have far less success in using the same techniques to predict events in the future. It is a similar situation as that of being able to describe mathematically why a wave took a certain shape once it has been formed, but not being able to predict its exact shape before the event. This is not because our tools are inadequate, but because we are faced with one of those limits of nature - like the speed of light - beyond which one cannot go in the natural world as we know it.

That is, developing an astrological technique which will allow us to describe a series of known events by manipulating a birth chart in various ways, in no way offers any guarantee that effective results will be obtained by using that same technique on another birth chart to predict a series of yet unknown events with any degree of accuracy.

Indeed, if the techniques of prediction are essentially mathematical, then the likelihood of chaos theory eventually occurring at some place in the process is overwhelmingly possible. When this occurs, the limits of predictive accuracy have been attained. If one wishes to lift the veil of the future further, then it will be necessary to become involved in processes which by pass the mathematical ones.

Now a little while ago I suggested that our simple equation could be compared to an astrological process in which we have an inter action of two symbols, each carrying the possibility of two interpretations. You may well object - and quite rightly - that in our use of astrological symbols we are not often confronted by two equally valid alternatives. That perhaps raises the most important issue of all.

It seems to me that often it matters not too much if an astrologer uses the Equal Houses system, or the Placidian Houses, or mid-points, or some other system in which he or she feels at home. Good astrologers usually get good results, and bad

astrologers usually get bad results. And I think that this is because the kind of road taken by Polich and Nelson Page in their Topocentric Primary Directions, is really a mirage. You will not become a better astrologer - or make more accurate predictions - just because you have done ten times more calculation than your neighbour in order to achieve your results. That is simply not the way that nature works.

That is, we cannot improve the accuracy of our predictions by endlessly refining our techniques or changing our house system, because it is likely that the limits of astrological accuracy in prediction have already been reached. And may indeed have been reached a very long time ago. The good astrologer is one who is able to accept this, and then to do the best that is possible within these limits which nature has imposed. Limits that come not from a lack of knowledge or refinements in technique, but from the very way that the world is put together.

A good sailor (for example) does not need a computer to tell him how the waves are going to form in a certain situation. He has learned his trade, and is able to sense and feel what nature is about. He may not be able to forecast what each individual wave will be like, but he can give you a pretty good idea of what sort of trip you are likely to experience.

I think therefore that the best astrologers are those who have a good conceptual understanding of the basic tools of their trade and what they are actually doing when they use certain astrological processes, and who have the ability to perceive the way that the currents of life are running in the person with whom they are dealing. I also believe that the best astrologer will have a clear understanding of the limitations of his or her art, and not be deceived by the enticements - and perhaps the false hopes - of ever more complicated calculations. Nature has her own counsels, and I am yet to be convinced that she has entrusted them all even to the most sophisticated of astrological software programs.

In the final analysis, it may well be that the gleaming ultimate holy grail of totally accurate prediction is really an illusion, and we can only regret the enormous waste of astrological effort which has occurred because we have tried to discover an Eldorado which is simply not there.

Astrological prediction - and the practice of astrology in general - is not so much a tool by which we can discover the future, but one by which we can discover ourselves now. It is about making sure that whatever the future holds, we will be able to understand what it is about, and why, and what this means for us. In the final analysis I do not mind a great deal if nature does have some counsels secret to me, providing I understand enough about myself and what my life means to be able to accept even an unknown future with the confidence that in it I will remain a whole person.

I personally have little doubt that the future is "there" in some way, and that it is indeed probably possible to find it. However I think that the task of finding it in crystal clear detail may properly lie with others following different and more intuitional or mystical paths, rather than in the hands of the astrologer.

Just the same: if we can't resist the temptation to do our transits, our primary directions, our progressions, our solar and lunar returns, our converse directions and

progressed angles - and when after one marvellously accurate prediction we get the next hopelessly wrong - I hope that at least we will not lose our sense of humour.

I hope that we will be able to acknowledge our mortality with good grace, and that we will be able to smile and raise out hats to those counsels of nature which are now (and I suspect ever will be) “secret to us”.