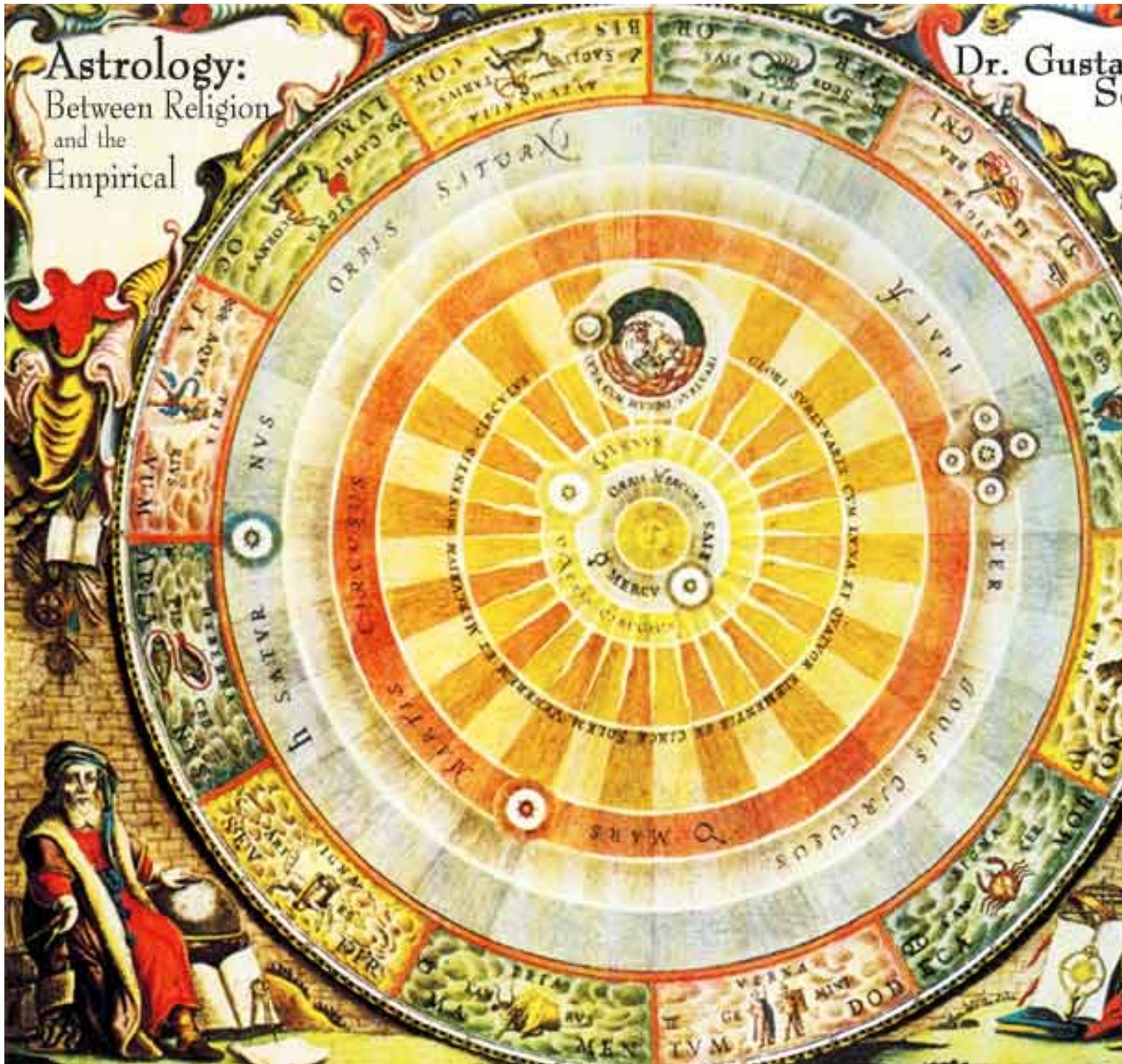


Astrology: Between religion and the empirical.

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Astrology: Between Religion and the Empirical

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Preliminary remarks

In hardly any other area of religious studies today does so much disagreement prevail of astrology. What does astrology have to do with religion? Does it not belong rather to the—wrongly understood—natural sciences, particularly to astronomy? These questions are asked when one speaks of astrology. These are then followed by further, rather practical questions as well: is astrology really founded on experience, as followers claim, or is it not rather a naïve and false observation of the heavens, long surpassed by our modern astronomy?

The following article would like to attempt a clear and understandable answer to these questions. It is obvious that the author answers the question of the origin and essence of astrology in connection with religious concepts; otherwise, this article would not be appearing here.

As much as astrology is anchored from the beginning in European religious history, it is experiencing a certain renaissance again today. In connection with the press and with the media, a quite simple variety presents itself to the public eye, which promises "stress on the romantic evening" and often thereby refutes itself. But this is not the whole story of astrology. Also in connection with new religious movements and in the framework of Christianity, the framework of spiritual interpretations of the natural sciences as well, astrology has become current in the past years and decades. That this present concern with it is not only shown by daily horoscopes in newspaper columns is shown by views such as those of the Benignus Father Gerhard Voss, who speaks out in favor of astrology in a Christian context in his book *Astrologie christlich* [1].

It is therefore worth following the footprints of astrology through history and the present to get an impression of where its roots lie and what still makes it so attractive today.

that astrology attempts to join a basically mythical world view with scientific observations to serve us as a guide. At the same time, it is interesting to follow the way in which astrology regards the traditional religions and, on the other hand, how these react to astrology.

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A large portion of this article will be devoted to the history of astrology, for the main purpose is to give an overview of this millennia-old phenomenon. As already mentioned, there are many disagreements on this subject, which can often be traced back to a very specialized and one-sided view of astrology. The reason for this is not so much the one-sidedness of these views as the great diversity within astrology itself. Religious and mythological, psychological and natural-scientific statements intersect in it. If we look in an encyclopedia of the natural sciences we find under the heading "astrology" that we are concerned here with a misguided application of orbital mechanics, because astrology also takes an interest in orbital mechanics and is not seen as a phenomenon of the natural sciences [2]. If, on the other hand, one consults an encyclopedia of theology or religious studies, its mythological and polytheistic content is referred to, whereby the belief in a multitude of star-gods is then underlined [3]. Recently, with an esoteric emphasis, astrology is viewed in its psychological, therapeutic sense, where organic life is seen in one great spiritual context [4].

To understand modern astrology, it is therefore necessary to trace the way in which the mythical picture of the cosmos picks up natural-scientific, medicinal, and psychological knowledge, as well as nature-mystical and spiritual ideas, and forms all of these into a unique world view. But first a provisional explanation of what astrology actually is.

What is astrology?

If astrology is a tightrope walk between religion and scientific astronomy, then we need a first definition. First of all: insofar as it views cosmos, humans, and nature as being created and guided by powers and forces from beyond, astrology is religion. All the events in the sky and on earth are linked together by an invisible magic bond. Only on the basis of this magical connection can astrology assume that the stars have something to do with our lives, with our talents and weaknesses.

In this regard, astrology is related to the nature religions. These also assume that nature is inhabited and governed by magical powers, demons, and gods. Like the nature religions, astrology believes in a multitude of gods; it is polytheistic at its core. Each planet and sign of the zodiac is the expression of a particular god or demon. But astrology is also sometimes practiced by religions which know only *one* creator-god, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In these religions, many star-gods become angels and demons which are subordinated to the one God, understood as "instruments" of God.

But in its scientific side, astrology is also very sober. It divides the heavens into geometric sectors, calculates—like every astronomer—the orbits of the planets, and employs complicated calculations to obtain from the manifold movements of the earth and celestial bodies the horoscope. The word horoscope goes back to the Greek and means roughly

into the hour." By this it is meant that the astrologer, in accordance with the exact time of day, observes the heavens and calculates all the planets, as well as the sign of the zodiac over the eastern horizon—which is then identified as "ascendant." He then prepares a horoscope which indicates the astronomically exact positions of the stars in relation to the planets. Astrology is thus also quite simply astronomy, or better: its religious understanding of the cosmos is based on exact scientific calculations.

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This double nature has long been known to scholars of religion concerned with the meaning of astrology. The classical philologist Franz Boll said it concisely: "Astrology is the synthesis of religion and science at the same time; that marks its essence [5]."

By the time astrology became "religion and science at the same time"—the oldest known personal horoscope is from the year 410 BC [6]—it had already undergone a long period of development. But before we have a look at the history of astrology, a peculiar fact should be pointed out. Astrology is not just a phenomenon of European religious history; it is present in all the great religions and in all cultures—in more or less complex forms. Those who visited the "EXPO," the 2000 world exposition of nations in Hannover, Germany, might have noticed the Indian pavilion and noticed the astrologer's stand. This is surely not such a major phenomenon as it may appear from the viewpoint of a characteristically secular society. Astrology is still a constituent part of a religiously influenced way of life in many parts of the world. Whether in India or South America, even some scientists first consult an astrologer before embarking on longer official trips.

But in this article, primarily the astrology of European religious history shall be featured. After all, it is the main source of the many contemporary schools of astrology in Europe and North America.



During birth the horoscope of the child is immediately calculated by astrologers. Woodcut from J. Rueff, *De conceptu et generatione hominis*, 1587.

Origins

In the course of its almost five thousand-year history within the framework of European astrology developed just gradually into a comprehensive world view with divinatory astrology has its roots in the first known cultic reverence of the heavenly bodies. One preliminary form of astrology is thus the astral cult. Some scholars of religion see in this reverence the vestige of all subsequent religions on earth [7]. This generalization may be somewhat exaggerated if we look at the first and oldest records of religious reverence of the stars, something which we can speak for this speculation after all: around 3000 BC, the Sumerian cuneiform, which is a pictographic script, was developed in the Mesopotamian region—around the area of modern Iraq. Later, the pictographs were transformed into the so-called "line-form." Here the word "God" is a star-shaped arrangement of lines [8]. One could conclude from this that the word "star" have the same linguistic root in the Sumerian cuneiform. Later Babylonian astronomical inscriptions reveal a connection between "God" and "star" or "constellation" as well as the oldest reliable record in which stars are provided with names is known to us, however, only around 1800 BC [10].

Certainly, with this Sumerian and ancient Babylonian identification of "God" and "star" we cannot yet speak of astrology, for the latter presupposes a mathematical calculation of the positions of heavenly bodies as well. This astral mythology shows merely that there is a cultic reverence of the stars which shapes the world view of astrology in advance. If we search for a beginning of astrology which time on the heavenly bodies were also observed and calculated, we find as the earliest of evidence a record of the Sumerian ruler Gadea of Lagash (ca. 2143-2124 BC), who

how gods showed him in a dream which planet constellations were most favorable for the planned building of a temple [11]. This presupposes that these planet constellations were observed. Thus we know that around 2100 BC the observation of the positions of the planets was already taken for granted. – Other reports refer to revelations that were granted to several individuals in ancient Egypt. These indicate a time around 2500 BC in which astrology was beginning.

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The origins of astrology are therefore not only to be sought in the Mesopotamian or Babylonian-Sumerian culture. Ancient Egypt also lays claim to being astrology's land of origin. In the Hellenistic era and late antiquity, astrologers were often called "Chaldeans" and "Babylonians," which suggests an origin in Mesopotamia. On the other hand, many authors were convinced that astrology had been transmitted to the Egyptians long ago by the god Hermes Trismegistos. It is hardly to be determined today which tradition the one or the other or if the two run parallel to each other. The extant historical material is not sufficient for our purposes.

And now to a few special features of Mesopotamian and Egyptian astrology.

Mesopotamia

We thus know with certainty that stars had been equipped with names of and enjoyed reverence by 1800 BC at the latest. The three brightest planets, the sun, moon, and Venus (the sun and moon are referred to in astrology even today as planets), play a significant role in the later omen interpretation of Enuma Anu Enlil (seventh century BC) [12]. There we find that the properties of certain gods are the same as those of the planets. Thus, the properties of the ancient Babylonian life and light-giving god Shamash correspond to the properties of the sun, the generally favorable properties of the god Sin to those of the moon. The love and beauty goddess, the healer and helper of vegetation Ishtar corresponds then to Venus [13]. It is remarkable that in the most ancient of times the moon god (Sumerian Nanna) had priority. This changes later, and in some hymns the goddess Venus (Sumerian Inan) is seen as the queen of the heavens, crowned by the heavens and with the earth beneath her feet. The queen of the heavens returns as well in the Egyptian goddess Isis and in the Christian figure of Mary. These three are seen as father, mother, and divine child. Similar divine parent and divine child are known from the Egyptian cult of Horus and, later, from the Christian cult of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child.

But also the other four planets, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, are known in the Enuma Anu Enlil (seventh century BC). In the Babylonian creation myths of Enuma Anu Enlil (1500 BC), the Babylonian god Marduk takes over leadership of the pantheon. In still later times, when culture and science bloom, the god Nabu takes on an outstanding position. The properties of Marduk are assigned to the planet Jupiter, and those of Nabu to the planet Mercury.

The planet gods each have certain spheres of influence which vary over the course of time in the Sumerian-Babylonian culture, but which stabilize into a uniform picture in the astrological omen inscriptions of Enuma Anu Enlil (seventy clay tablets of the comprehensive list).

Assurbanipal, 669-626 BC, king of Ninive). The myths of the star-gods describe which and capabilities these gods possess. These characteristics and spheres of influence are various and encompass influence upon natural phenomena, plants, animals, as well as fields of human activity such as craftsmanship or the political or cultic sectors. A study of these characteristics looks something like the following: the sun embodies life and light beyond death, but also the death-bringing drought. The moon is beneficial for life and general; Ishtar-Venus embodies as evening star, love, and as morning star, struggle; war and death; Nabu-Mercury, knowledge and science; Marduk-Jupiter, priestly and and Nimib-Saturn, difficult (field)work and everything difficult and transitory [14].

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Kundurru (boundary stone) of the Babylonian king Melichipak II. with sun, moon and Venus. From: W. Knappich 33.

In the course of the expansion of omen interpretation based on planet positions beyond the borders of Mesopotamia, the names of the gods were adapted to the various cultural languages, but their characteristics remained for the most part unchanged. Thus due to the Greeks "Nergal" became "Ares," and in the Roman era "Ares" became "Mars." Throughout these times he remained the planet-god of war and death. "Ishtar" became "Aphrodite," then "Venus"—and though her warlike side from the Babylonian era disappeared, she always remained the goddess of love and of horticulture. "Marduk" became "Zeus" and "Jupiter. [15]" The planet remained the same, and its elevated position as represent

kingly-priestly power remained in essence unchanged as well.

These at first Greek, then Roman planet-gods survived European religious history, to the present. Our seven-day week is—clearly traceable above all in the Romance languages—named after the seven planet-gods. In the *Practicae*, annual astrological forecasts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these Roman planet-gods often appeared with their syncretic form of woodcuts. At this time, it was still held that the planets were ruled by gods.

The astrology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well, lies completely within the tradition. Even if the majority of astrologers no longer speak of star-gods, but understand them rather as "powers" existing in humans, the entirety of nature and the cosmos, the principles of the Babylonian star religion had already formulated, remain basically unchanged. But that is the subject of that in the next section.

The Babylonian star-cult is the core and the archetype of subsequent astrology. It is at this cultic-religious core that not only the seven planets but also the fixed stars and the fixed stars—united as constellations—are revered as gods. We know of many boundaries dating from the period around 1200 BC which show various numbers of constellations being introduced into them. The whole vault of the heavens is littered with constellations, and the number of gods is, accordingly, indeterminably large.

A clear order is first established when the wide ribbon of the annual course of the sun is divided into twelve equal parts at 30° each. These sectors now divide the width of the solar cycle into a clear number of so-called zodiac signs. Together they form what in ancient Greece was called the "zodiakos." Translated, zodia means life-form. This shows that "life" is granted to each sign; it is revered as a divine (or demonic) being. Also given to these animate zodiac signs and planets, are certain properties and spheres of influence which correspond, in part, to the gods.

How the formation of the zodiac signs came about has not been completely explained. The classical philologist Franz Boll takes the view that the signs were not merely transferred from the constellations onto the ecliptic—the latter consist of several fixed stars and are, in contrast to the signs of the zodiac, variously large—but rather came about through the spatial division of the apparent solar orbit [16]. The zodiac signs are thus—viewed astronomically—the result of the intensive observation of the annual course of the sun. This begins with the spring equinox, continues through the summer solstice, the autumn equinox, and completes the cycle again at the beginning of spring, whereby a cross of four cardinal points came about, designating the beginning of a sign of the zodiac.

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The twelve-part division of the zodiac is first reported in a cuneiform inscription from 419 BC [17]. But how it came from the quartering of the solar-orbit cycle to this twelve-part division can hardly be reconstructed today. Yet together with the planets, it forms the basis of astrology up to the present in the European tradition.

In addition to the cultic reverence of the heavenly bodies, which in the Sumerian a

Babylonian age revered the planets and signs of the zodiac as gods or the residence of the gods. The scientific branch of astrology was also taking shape—observational and calculating—was reserved exclusively for the priests. The temple constructions served not only to honor the star gods, but also for the purpose of observation and calculation of the visible celestial bodies. This calculation was thus not merely science in our sense of the word, but belonged to the practice of religion. It served the study of the will of the star gods, viz., whether they portended war or times of peace, illness, hunger, or abundant harvests. The omen texts of Enu-ma-anki-enu also report the calculated positions and movements of the planets and their constellations and other planets [18]. Dated specifications of the especially feared eclipses are known to date back to 747 BC [19]. Likewise, the center of the sky, the zenith, and the rising in the east, the direction of the wind, could be precisely determined. From this time on, we can speak of an astrology in the combination of scientific observation and reverence of the stars as gods.

Even if not all the details can be explained here, it is thus clear how closely the cult of the heavenly bodies is tied to observational science, how astrology wants to be religious science at the same time. The basic principle that makes up astrology is thereby our the heartfelt faith that the cosmos is divinely ordered and governed, and that everything that happens in the heavens and which is calculable stands, mysteriously, in close relation to events on earth.

The Mesopotamian astrology, with its developed methods of calculation, spread rapidly during the Hellenistic period throughout the whole Mediterranean region. In 280 BC, the Babylonian Marduk priest Berossos founded an astrology school on the Greek island of Kos. He impressed the Athenians with his forecasts so greatly that they dedicated a statue with a sword in his tongue to him [20]. Around this time individual-birth astrology also caught on. When the public interests of the state and natural events—such as the weather and earthquakes—had been observed by astrologers, horoscopes were now additionally produced for individuals. Horoscopes were produced for the time of birth and in consideration of the birthplace. They were supposed to provide information about the course of one's life and predispositions. The oldest known surviving individual birth horoscope—as mentioned before—dates back to 410 BC.

It can be said, in summary, that: characteristic of *Sumerian-Babylonian* astrology is the pronounced cultic reverence of the heavenly bodies as gods and the contemporaneous development of precise methods for calculating their paths. About the *Egyptian* traditional astrology, we know that the precise calculation of the planets was less important. It also recognizes the religious unity of cosmos and human beings as its main concern. In terms of details it accentuates other aspects.

Egypt

The sources which are able to inform us about the Egyptian astrology date back, for the most part, no earlier than to the Hellenistic period. Many of these reports have today been collected in the twelve-volume *Catalogus codicum astrologorum Graecorum* [21]. Franz Cumont

specifically the Egyptian astrology [22]. Some astrologers of late antiquity from Egypt Claudius Ptolemy (100-178 AD) – see in Egypt the original homeland of astrology [23] claims are uncertain with regard to their historical value.

In contrast to the Sumerian-Babylonian astrology, the Egyptian variety recognizes a more or less identifiable founder. According to many Hellenistic writers, Hermes Trismegistos (Hermes "Three-times-as-great"), who was revered as a god, taught selected disciplines of magic and science, writing and astrology [24]. Other writers – for example, Ps. Manetho report that Hermes Trismegistos carved the teachings of the magical effects of the heavenly bodies into the walls and columns of the most holy of temples. It has been handed down in the second century AD that a comprehensive collection of literature attributed to the Egyptian Hermes-Thoth is said to have existed. Clemens Alexandrinus (150-211 AD) mentions several important books by Hermes, of which four were devoted to astrology [26]. These lost writings are known as the "Hermetica."

Hermes Trismegistos is also the Greek epithet of the Egyptian god Thoth. He, in turn, is connected in earlier times with the moon, later with the planet Mercury (Hermes). In Hellenistic writings, he is the last representative of the dynasty of the gods and the divine being [27]. Here a direct connection is made between gods (Thoth) linked with planets (moon, Mercury) and the transmission of astrology as a doctrine. Thus here, too, the tradition points to astral-religious sources.

Historically, the doctrines of Hermes can be connected with the doctor and pyramid builder Imhotep, who lived in the court of the king Djoser (reigned 2668-2649 BC) during his reign. The emergence of Egyptian astrology thus lies around the middle of the third millennium BC, as can also be conjectured of the Sumerian-Babylonian astrology.

Hellenistic writings report further divine revelations to selected individuals. Thus, writings were widespread in the Hellenistic era and in late antiquity under the names Nechepso and Petosiris [28] are supposed to be traceable back to such revelations. The astrologer Valerius Maximus (second century AD) reports that Nechepso himself—pharaoh in the twenty-sixth century BC (672 BC)—described his revelation so: "It appeared to me, as I prayed the whole night up to the heavens, that the sky opened up and out of the heavens sounded a voice. A blue robe, which depicted the night sky, wrapped itself around my body. And thus I perceived the whole immortal order in the movements of the universe. [29]"

According to Firmicus Maternus (around 335 AD), Petosiris is also supposed to have received Hermes-Thoth's revelations of the teachings of astrology. Historically, he was probably a priest from the fourth century AD [30]. Many astrological writings name Petosiris in connection with Nechepso, but they are also known as individual authors in the Hellenistic period. In the "Hermetica," their writings constitute the "Hellenistic Vulgata."

The astrology of Nechepso and Petosiris was thus received through nature-mystical revelation. Here, as well, knowledge of the "order and movements of the universe" is based on a religious relationship of man and the universe. The Egyptologist Jan Assmann c

relation as "cosmotheism. [31]" The planets and stars are, as in the Sumerian-Babylonian mythology, revered as gods, among whom especially the sun god Re takes on an out position. The worship of the sun god was so cultivated that, for a short time during Amenophis IV (Echnaton) from 1364-1347 AD, it was supposedly the only god of Egypt. The ancient Egyptian moon god Thoth (later Isis became the moon goddess) and Mercury performed important functions as well. In addition to these, there were many bright fixed stars and constellations that were revered as deities.

But much more important in Egyptian astrology than the planet gods are the so-called decads. Similar to the way the Sumerian-Babylonian astrology divided the solar orbit into twelve signs of 30° each, the Egyptian astrologers arranged the annual solar orbit into thirty divisions of 10° each. The Egyptians were familiar with the 365 days of the year and divided them into thirty-six weeks of ten days each. A ten-day week was dedicated to a decade-god or demon belonging to it. The oldest known decades date back to the fifth dynasty, 2500-2350 BC. Dendera's depiction of the Egyptian zodiac with the decade-gods has become famous, and can now be seen in the Louvre in Paris (see illustration).

Later the Egyptian astrology took over the Sumerian-Babylonian zodiac signs and added the decades to this system. Thus, each of the 30° signs of the zodiac was now subdivided into three decades of 10° each.

We still find this combination of zodiac signs and decades in horoscopes in some parts of the world when the predictions for individuals born under a particular sign are divided again into three parts. Thus, some forecasts for the week or month read as follows: "Aries, first decade, second decade...", and so on. People born under a certain decade-god or demon of its name and were consequently connected with it throughout their lives.

There was yet another division of the heavens in the Egyptian astrology. Each degree of the cycle of the solar orbit was likewise specially named and assigned to a god or demon. These degrees were called monomoiriai, and they were also considered in horoscope interpretation. The Roman astrologer Firmicus Maternus (335 AD) traces this division back to Hermes Trismegistus, who is supposed to have revealed this doctrine to Asklepios in twelve books.

Thus, the zodiac was populated by a multitude of gods and demons which were not directly connected to the planets or fixed stars, but which occupied the sky systematically divided into regions of the sky. These gods and demons then became decisive for humans when the sun passed through their particular region of the sky. But with this the interpretation of horoscopes became a complicated affair. For every point through which the sun passed was determined by three gods or demons. The deity of a zodiac sign reigned a whole month, namely as long as the sun was passing through this sign. At the same time, the sun passed through one of the three decades of a sign of the zodiac, each one lasting for ten days. And on top of that were the three degrees which the sun passed through in a day. (By the way, the Egyptian astrology included with further divisions of a region with its particular gods—the so-called borders: divisions of variously large degrees—so that actually more than three gods determine the quality of a particular time of day. But these will not be further discussed here.)



The old-Egyptian zodiac of Dendera with the Gods of the decades. From: Gundel, board V. 8

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The special thing about the Egyptian astrology, as we know it from the Hellenistic period, is that it developed a markedly sophisticated system of medicine: the Iatromathematics. Such astrological writings of this period carried this designation in their titles. Each stone or organ, each animal was assigned to a particular astral god; that means: in this stone or organ the power of this god was at work. Likewise, every human body, every organ, every large part and each of the further subdivisions into which it was divided was assigned to a god, a sign, a decade-god, or a monomoiriai-god. If an organ became diseased, the cause was connected with the corresponding deity or demon. This would be healed by administering the corresponding plant or animal products inhabited by the same god. Or antidotes were sought which would battle the demon causing the illness. – This iatromathematics (the Greek designation for doctor, and in the ancient world, but also in the middle ages and modernity, every type of star observation and calculation was called mathematics) was common in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but also into early modern times *the common* and is currently being rediscovered in various astrological and alternative medicine.

Like the Sumerian-Babylonian astrology, which attempts to describe the great world as well as individual persons, in connection with the divine order of the cosmos, the Egyptian astrology attempts to see this connection above all from the therapeutic or medicinal (*heilkundlich*) perspective. But in Egyptian astrology, wellness (*Heil-Sein*) does not mean recovery from individual infirmities. The truly basic thought is a comprehensive one: every person is a microcosm in which all the divine powers of the cosmos are present in the organs and parts of the body. If these powers are in harmony with each other, the person is healthy and lives in harmony with the macrocosm in which the same divine order prevails.

Both currents of astrology, the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian, flow together in the Hellenistic period, are stimulated by other religions and philosophies, and find entrance into the major religions—into Judaism and Christianity, and later Islam as well.

The world view of astrology in the Hellenistic period

As Alexander the Great conquers the orient and large parts of the Mediterranean region in the fourth century BC and unites them into one empire, a lively cultural exchange takes place. Astrology, as well, forges ahead unhindered from its Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources into Greece and, later, further westward. In this Hellenistic period, astrology has already entered into a fixed world view. Despite differences from Mesopotamian and Egyptian astrology among Hellenistic astrologers as well, there is nevertheless something which they have in common:

1. Astrology recognizes gods in the planets, fixed stars, signs of the zodiac, and deities which express their will through their corresponding positions and constellations. The earth is thereby the center of the world; the heavens with their star deities move about the earth on a closed sphere.
2. Astrology assumes that its truth is proven through experience. This can be established by comparative observation of life on earth with the movements of the sky.

These two statements need to be briefly explained.

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Hellenistic astrology wants to see human beings, nature, and cosmos in one comprehensive accord. The question that we ask ourselves today, namely how this accord of stars, planets, and humans is actually supposed to work, is answered by astrology by way of the principle of sympathy: according to this, the gods are not only bound to the heavenly bodies but are invisibly present in the entire cosmos. Thus, the god of the sun, who grants us light and warmth, is also present in us humans. If we encounter a person who conveys an exceptional "warmheartedness," "the sun" is at work in him. The human heart has become the sun. The presence of the sun's power was also thought to be in plants and metals which corresponds to the brilliance of the sun and therefore the sun's power is at work in plants which were held to have exceptionally strong healing powers, the sun was like

All the other planets and signs of the zodiac were also thought to be connected to certain characteristics and organs, animals, plants, and metals. In this way, an entire system of relationships between the heavenly bodies and the things on earth was established. The world view of astrology up to the present. Each particular thing we see exists for the astrologers in one animate, divine context. Also in modern astrology, it is always essentially *analogous* relations are described and not—as is often assumed—the direct relations to the stars.

Closely connected to this sympathy and analogy of all cosmic powers is an astrology which might better be called astral-magic (*Astralmagie*). We encounter it in a variety of papyrus scrolls concerned with magic, where only marginal use of astronomical calculations was made. More important here are the names of the individual gods of the heavenly bodies which are used in a magical way – in medicine as well [32].

Hellenistic astrology thus assumes that all of nature has a "spirited" (*beseelt*) or animating power. And without this, the analogy would not work. Those who today cannot believe in the "spiritedness" (*Beseeltheit*) of all nature will have difficulties taking astrology seriously. Those who believe in this animate nature—as is the case with the nature religions and many nature movements—have good prospects of accepting at least the world view of astrology.

The world view of astrology just described refers only to the visible cosmos. The gods and demons or divine powers belong completely to this world. From a Judaeo-Christian perspective, we would say: the gods of astrology belong to the Creation. They are not creators of the heavenly bodies or of humans, but rather they were themselves created by the creator god. The philosopher Plato speaks likewise in his dialogue "Timaeus" of how the creator god created the world and then the gods of the heavenly bodies.

Astrology is thus thoroughly capable, by nature, of comfortably adapting its world view to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; for the creator god of these religions, who created the world, also created the heavenly bodies and their gods. On this basis, the great monotheistic religions were also able to accommodate the polytheistic astrology without thereby infringing their central creeds. And so it happened as well that astrology was taken up in all three religions. It did not happen without conflict—astrology was in part fiercely combated—but time found new followers.

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An important point concerning the acceptance of Hellenistic astrology among ancient peoples is also its compatibility with the geocentric world view of Greek natural science and cosmology. Claudius Ptolemy (100-176 AD) attempted, in his astrological text "Tetrabiblos," to adapt the divinatory astrology in the Egyptian tradition to the natural-scientific world view by excluding all references to revelations and limiting himself completely to a sober presentation of facts. A contradiction arose thereby, for Aristotle, whose scientific authority in cosmology and astronomy remained unchallenged until the early modern period, likewise saw gods in the luminous spheres whose effects reach beyond the ether into the sublunar world. Other astrologers of antiquity viewed astrology in connection with the wisdom of the priests. Thus, Marcus Manilius held that it was gods who had inspired the priests on the Euphrates and on the Nile to their knowledge of the laws of the cosmos [34]. Stoic influence is clearly recognizable in Manilius' astrological world view.



Here Saturn and his children, performs official duties by farmer, craftsman, banker etc. From: Garin 100.

On the empirical foundations of astrology in ancient times

With its mythical and natural-philosophical world view astrology is not yet complete. It would like to make concrete statements about imminent events or about a person. And it thus assumes that such prognoses and statements can be made in terms of the positions of the heavenly bodies. To demonstrate this with a very simple example: if Mars and Venus stand in opposition to one another, i.e. if they are located at a 180° distance from each other, then not only is the god of war Mars battling the goddess of love Venus, but there is an analogous situation on earth, where it is a question of the battle between war and peace.

Now astrology, from its beginnings on, claims that it relies upon *experience*. Already Mesopotamian omen interpretation, as we know it through the omen tablets of Enlil, makes clear the importance given to empirical confirmation. This reliance upon experience is put forth as the main argument by all the great astrologers of the ancient world, but also in modern times. For example, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) argues in defense of astrology: "Belief in the efficacy of the aspects (the positions of the heavenly bodies is meant) is conferred above all by experience, which is so clear that only someone who has not examined it with their own eyes can be deceived" [35] – One can object here immediately: if astrology is so plain to see, then why are contemporary scientists convinced of it? – But this objection lies on yet another plane. It is important to note that astrologers in all epochs rely first of all upon experience when they put forth justification for astrology.

The above-mentioned omen tablets of Enuma Anu Enlil, part of the library of King Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC, king in Nineveh), show us an amazing system of astronomical observations. Astrologers worked according to the following method: an observation in the sky was recorded with date and time of day and its characteristics were described exactly. Parallel to political and naturally occurring events were likewise recorded. This was continuous and in this way continuous records spanning many centuries came to be, records were minutely checked the phenomena of the heavens against the events on earth, compared with older records, and completed them with new observations. The Assyriologist Carl Neugebauer, who translated a large portion of these clay slabs, describes this so: "Whenever the predicate p applies to subject S in the skies, also on earth the predicate p applies to subject s. [3]

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Here is another simple example: "If on the fifteenth day of the month the full moon is seen together with the sun, the mighty enemy will level his weapons against the country. On the fifteenth day the full moon was seen with the sun ... May the king know and consider." In the first part of the text, the general observation is described: whenever on the fifteenth day of the month there is a full moon and the sun and the moon can be seen simultaneously, hostile actions will follow. Then comes the concrete observed case: it has now been seen – and the empirically established forecast: there will thus be hostile actions. Many texts that describe the forecast with the addition: "...and the expected event indeed took place."

The truth content can no longer be checked today. However, many of the researchers concerned themselves with these texts are in agreement that the Babylonian astrologers endeavored to erect an astrological system that rested completely on empirical data. The position of the astrologers must also be considered. They were simultaneously priests and performed an important political function in the government. The example above shows that the astrological forecast was meant for the king. We can therefore assume that astrology was an important method for making important political decisions.

Time and again over the course of astrology's history and up to today, there have been attempts to justify astrology empirically. Likewise, since around 200 BC certain philosophers and astronomers have criticized astrology. This critique sometimes only takes aim at particular statements of astrology, whereby it is fundamentally held to be true. Some critics, however, have criticized astrology altogether as useless.

The practice of astrology in the Roman era

The Roman Empire made possible not only the unhindered spread of Judaism and Christianity throughout the entire Mediterranean region; many other religions and, naturally, as well as trade routes were now able quickly to reach destinations everywhere.

Astrology offered a multifaceted and confusing picture in the time of the Roman Empire. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, it was reserved exclusively for the priests who stood as advisors on the side of the rulers. Only gradually did an astrology which was accessible to individuals

population develop. Horoscopes were now no longer just produced for kings and in governmental events, but also for individual persons. Concerning the course of one marriage, riches or poverty, type of death—forecasts were now produced for all the stages on life's way. It has been pointed out earlier that the oldest known birth horoscope goes back to the pre-Roman era, from the year 410 BC in Mesopotamia. This individual allowed it possible for many more or less gifted astrologers to turn their trade into a profitable income.

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From around 200 BC, astrology, along with other magical arts, experienced an enormous popularity, especially in the framework of Roman folk religion. Many citizens of Rome carried small, inscribed sheets of papyrus around with them from which they could read what the day were or were not favorable for which activities. Questions about health, but also everyday affairs such as a trip to the hairdresser, were determined astrologically. Even the time turned on whether a day or an hour was "favorable" or "unfavorable" for a particular activity. Behind this was the view that every day and hour was ruled by its own particular gods and celestial bodies. Thus it was believed that an astrologically "correctly" chosen doctor or appointment would be supported by the gods currently in power. An astrologically "unfavorable" chosen appointment, on the other hand, had the effect that the corresponding god would work against one's intentions.

In the learned classes—which included the Roman emperor—astrology was heatedly debated. Above all, an opportunity was provided by the Athenian philosopher Carneades, who came to Rome in 161 BC as an ambassador to Rome and argued vehemently against the practical astrology. His most important arguments were:

1. The heavenly bodies are too far from the earth to exercise an influence.
2. Children who are born at the same moment lead, regardless, totally different lives (for example: when Homer was born, other people were certainly also born, but who were neither poets nor famous).
3. Conversely, many people simultaneously die en masse in catastrophes and wars (for example: in various horoscopes).
4. The fine fluid which comes from the heavenly bodies and which is breathed in at a person's birth and determines his character is changed by the different weather conditions in various birthplaces such that the influence of the heavenly bodies is also totally different in various cases.

Many among the learned were convinced by these arguments and likewise did not believe in the possibility of producing an exact forecast on the basis of the stars. Nevertheless, the majority of aristocrats remained faithful to the world view of astrology and particular astrology. – How is this to be explained?

The belief in the gods who populated the entire heavens and the earth was not shaken even though even Carneades doubted their existence. The fundamental influence of the heavenly bodies on the earth was also undisputed, as Carneades' fourth thesis shows. It was likewise un-

each person had a particular destiny which he could not escape. Many philosophers saw this as well. Specially responsible for the progress of each destiny were—independence—three goddesses, called "Moirae" in Greek and "Parcae" in Latin. Thus, it was not an astrological world view which was disputed, but rather the arrogance in thinking that predictions were possible for every event.

Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) provided an example of this "learned" astrology which was different from the "vulgar" forecasts. He was also skeptical of predictions. He thus paid no attention to the warnings from fortune-tellers, including the one which – according to legend – prompted his attempt on his life in the Ides of March, to which he after all fell victim. On the other hand, Caesar revered the goddess and the planet Venus personified together as the progenitor of his family. It was said that he would ascend to the planet Venus after his death. Also because the planet Venus is the zodiac sign "Taurus," under which Caesar was born and which had become a heraldic figure to a symbol of the state. The emperor Augustus did similarly with his sign "Capricorn." The comet which appeared in 44 BC, the year of Caesar's death, was likewise interpreted in politics as a sign from the gods.

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The subsequent emperors were all more or less followers of astrology. Many had a whole court of astrologers at their side who produced and evaluated especially the birth horoscopes of the emperors from influential families. Paradoxically, some of these emperors banned the practice of astrology several times within the city-limits of Rome. As a result, many astrologers were forced to leave Rome. There were various reasons for this. Above all, the fear of losing power was great. Astrologers could predict the death of an emperor by simple means or declare some other man emperor as successor and justify this with the destiny of the stars.

We know of a similar case from the New Testament: the evangelist Matthew tells of the "Magi from the east," who come before King Herod and seek the new-born King of the Jews because they had seen "his star." Herod is afraid and has all new-born sons killed [3]. Kings and emperors had this fear. They knew of the power of astrologers, and they were convinced of the power of these omens.

In addition to obviously failed forecasts, spectacular successes were also reported to the emperors. The emperor Domitian was initially opposed to astrology; however, this is because a violent death had been predicted for him while he was still young. This prompted him to ask an astrologer how he himself would die. He told him he would be torn to pieces by dogs. To disprove the astrologer, he quickly had him beheaded and immediately burned. But at the stake at which he was being burned collapsed and the body of the astrologer fell to the ground upon which dogs immediately pounced on him and tore him to pieces. From that time on, Domitian was a follower of astrology.

In daily life as in politics, astrology played an almost undisputed role. But how did the science and philosophy of late antiquity stand with regard to astrology?

The inferior interpretation of the stars which was widespread among the population

the mockery of some poets with its forecasts. The poet Ennius made fun of the astrologer who professed the ability of showing others the way to riches but who never themselves riches. Other poets, such as Petronius or Lucilius, mocked the predictions of the astrologer's death which did not after all come true.

Things looked quite different regarding the world view of astrology and forecasts which were more general. Here, the state of the natural sciences as well as philosophy and religion was not enough material not to fundamentally doubt astrology. Not only the religions, but also the natural scientists and philosophers saw the cosmos and the earth below as "spirited" and in all things made the mysterious connection to the heavenly bodies appear plausible. If a philosopher or scientist doubted, therefore, the influence of these bodies. But they distinguished themselves from simple fortune-telling in that they saw the "influence" of the stars as generally, so that the heavenly bodies caused tendencies or merely "indicated" them. It was important for them to show that every individual could resist the influence of the stars by the virtue of their reason.

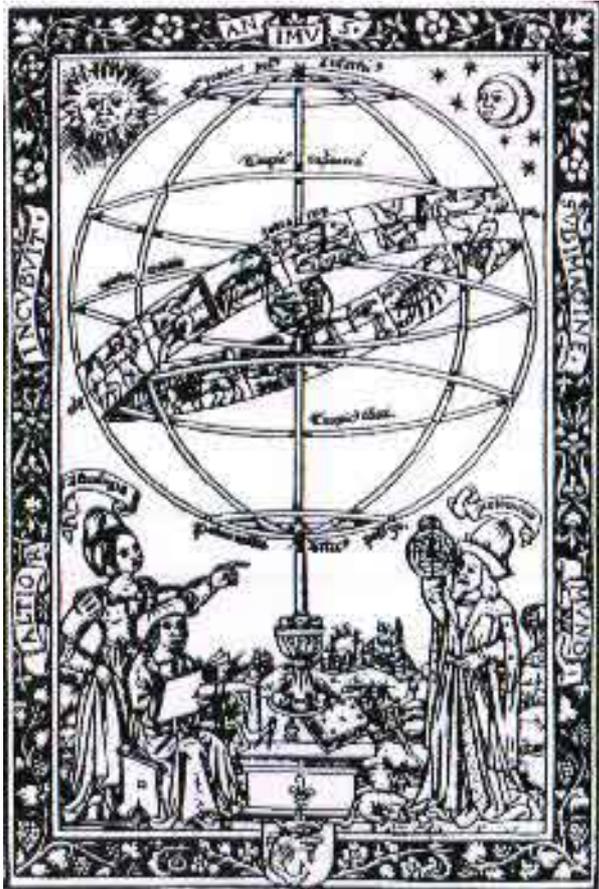
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Among these "learned" astrologers were not just many Roman emperors, but also the philosophers and poets until the end of late antiquity; thus, for example, the politician and the neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, the poets Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. Marcus Manilius (around the beginning of the common era) and Claudius Ptolemy (100-178 AD) were representatives of the learned astrology. Claudius Ptolemy's astrological writings, the "Tetrabiblos," shaped the astrology of the subsequent centuries up to the modern era. Ptolemy is considered a standard work of modern astrology [39]. From Marcus Manilius, we have a surviving complete astrological textbook. This "Astronomica" was written around the middle of the Christian calendar. In poetic form but nevertheless systematically, it explains the world in a Stoic sense as a divine order with its astrological laws [40]. Other important astrologers of the time of the Roman Empire include Teucros, Antiochos, Nigidius Figulus, Dorotheos, Manetho, Vettius Valens, Firmicus Maternus, Paulos Alexandrinus, Hediodoros, Heliodoros, Thebes, and others.

The astrology of late antiquity, with its two lines of "vulgar" and "learned" forms, is the model for all subsequent astrology throughout the entire Middle Ages and into the seventeenth century, but also for contemporary astrology. The basis for both traditions is laid by the writings of the Hellenistic Vulgata, thus the writings which are traced back to the Egyptian Trismegistos and to Nechepso-Petosiris. Additionally, there was the influence of many Babylonian astrologers. Of special importance was the Marduk priest Berossus, [41] whose uncertain tradition has it – is supposed to have founded an astrology school on the

It should be mentioned briefly here that astrology lived on in a hardly modified form throughout the Middle Ages. In the sixth century AD, Rhetorios appears in the Byzantine Empire as a representative of the astrological tradition, following especially the Egyptian-Hellenistic line. – An important impulse for the astrology of the Middle Ages is given by various Arabian astrologers. Under Muslim rule, further developed the "mundane" astrology (concerning meteorological events). In the year 762, the Jewish astrologer Messahalla, who converted to Islam, d

the date of Baghdad's founding. In the eighth century AD, Al Kindi and his disciple appear. They are concerned with mundane problems as well, with the so-called "Great Conjunctions," which were supposed to give information about important political developments concerning the entire human race. [42] – The astrology of the Middle Ages, the heart of Europe, in addition to the Byzantine line especially by way of the Arab world, which is taught in Toledo and Salamanca, and experiences a renewed flourishing with the Renaissance. Astrology's confrontation with science, philosophy, theology, and sociology in the Middle Ages and early modernity has been treated in detail in two collected volumes by Curry and Paola Zambelli [43].



Claudius Ptolemy as a father of the astrology.
Woodcut of E. Schön (1515). From: *Ptolemy* 6.

The astrology of the present

Now we skip over many important stages along the way to see what unites contemporary astrology with its ancient predecessors. And we can do this with a clear conscience: astrology lives on through the centuries almost unchanged in its popular as well as its academic versions. Into the seventeenth century, the ancient planet gods remain in the belief of the people. They are responsible for good and bad harvests, for war and peace, for sickness and recovery—and that holds also within the Christian churches. Here the heavenly bodies are understood as the instruments of god. The Parisian cardinal and rector of the Sorbonne, Pierre de La Moignon d'Ailly (Petrus Alliacus, b. 1350), writes a "concordantia astronomiae cum theologia" which extends its predictions to the year 1789. Without controversy, popes, kings, and rulers have used astrology in religio-political questions. Jewish and Christian theologians, as well, consulted themselves with it in theory and practice; in Germany Phillip Melanchthon, who tra

edits Claudius Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, [44] stands out among them. One of the most astrologers in England is William Lilly (1602-1682) [45]. We will now take a look at how stand with the astrology of the present.

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Right at the beginning, the question presents itself to the religious scholar: why, at a time when astrology survive the great progress made in the natural sciences, which, since Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), abolished the old geocentric world view? How, despite the findings concerning orbital mechanics, despite the immeasurable expanse and diversity of the cosmos, do people still come to believe in astrology today?

First of all it must be said that in the eighteenth century—as a matter of fact not at the beginning of the nineteenth—astrology disappeared from recognized science and Christian theology. Nicolas Copernicus, Galileo Galilee, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Gottfried W. Leibniz, but also many theologians, humanists, scientists, and artists, above-mentioned Phillip Melanchthon, Marsilio Ficino, Willibald Pirckheimer, and Johann Stöfler, but also Albrecht Dürer [46] —they were all still convinced of astrology and its arts. Into the eighteenth century, it was held for self-evident among scientists that comets were at work in nature and in the cosmos. Moreover, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), one of the most important representatives of the Copernican world view, explained why, in his view astrology was still valid, independent of a geocentric or heliocentric perspective [47]. On this question, he expresses himself—anticipating all subsequent criticism—thus: "The question whether the heavens or the earth go round, does not cast doubt upon astrology, for it has nothing to do with the latter; for it is enough for the astrologer to see how the rays of light come from the east, then from the position of midday, and finally from the west and then from the east is enough to know when two planets are seen next to each other and when they stand in opposition and which angle they form in regard to one another. Why does the astrologer need much less all of nature on earth, need to ask how this happens? In truth as little as the astronomer needs to ask how it becomes summer and winter, though he orients himself in these matters, is nonetheless." Thus, for him the light of the planets and the angular relationships from the perspective of the earth are crucial for astrology. He describes the light, apart from its physical properties (color, warmth), as a vehicle which transports the nonmaterial properties of the heavenly bodies to the earth. In addition, the angular relationships of the heavenly bodies whose light rays intersect on earth, form certain mixtures of special characteristics which impregnate all organic life at the time of birth.

The opinion among scientists, that nature functioned according to *mechanical* and *magical* laws, was accepted only gradually. This applied to chemistry as well as to physics and astronomy, which until that time were almost unimaginable without reference to divine powers. The first scientist who quite consciously wanted to ban all magic, all superstition hereafter or in gods once and for all from scientific research was Robert Boyle (1627-1690). The form of theology and even ethics were also to be divorced from science, for—Boyle believed that nature and the cosmos were nothing more than a gigantic mechanical clockwork, the operation of which required no magical or divine powers. – Astrology was thereby, along with belief in gods or demons, done for with regard to science.

Esoteric astrology

The increased precision of scientific methods and a theology dedicated to rationalism, credited with the fact that astrology is excluded from recognized culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, astrology experiences a revival—not, of course, by the progressing natural sciences, but first within esoteric circles. In 1875, the so-called "Theosophical Society" was founded. Its founders declared that they had been instructed by beings from a realm beyond, by masters. From them, they had received the assignment of making known the doctrines contained in all religions. They relied particularly on Buddhist and Hindu doctrines but also on mystical Christian and Jewish traditions which they interpreted in their own way.

It was above all their concern to speak, against modern natural science, again of the true nature of the world, filled with magical and divine powers. All of nature, stones, plants, animals were once again, as in ancient times, filled with mysterious divine powers. According to theosophical teachings, the accepted natural sciences are incomplete, because they only investigate the outer hull of nature. That which is at work *in* nature—animate, spiritual—is thereby disregarded. Therefore—according to the theosophists—the planets cannot be only dead, physical bodies either. It is true that they are this as well, but in them lie essences which work through them.

On this basis, astrology was able to develop anew at the end of the nineteenth century. The planets and the signs of the zodiac were now seen again, in addition to their natural character as gods from which mysterious rays radiate. These mysterious rays influence or cause events on earth. The Englishwoman Alice Ann Bailey (1880-1949) wrote one of the books most fundamental to the world view of modern astrology under the title *Esoteric Astrology*. In it she explained the various planets and signs of the zodiac, with their corresponding powers and functions. The visible cosmos with all its heavenly bodies reflects, according to Alice Bailey, a certain heavenly hierarchy. She is also concerned with an astrological-cosmic interpretation of the Christ in this heavenly hierarchy. In addition, she advocated the view that a "New Age" would begin with the imminent "Second Coming of Christ."

Alice Bailey revived the astrological world view by explaining the cosmos—like the ancient astrologers—*spiritually*. The planets corresponded to certain spiritual beings. And she explained the imminent "Second Coming" astrologically in terms of the imminent "Age of Aquarius." [49] "This "Age of Aquarius" is based upon an actual astronomical calculation according to which the beginning of spring wanders slowly through the zodiac due to the movement of the earth's axis and, at the end of the twentieth century, exits the sign of Capricorn and enters that of "Aquarius." Now this change is also supposed to be connected with a great spiritual development among humans.

Astrology once again raised the claim of providing a spiritual interpretation of the world, at the same time using scientific knowledge for this purpose. The ancient concern of how to reconcile religion and science at the same time, was thereby also taken up once again. However, the practical guidance in the production of horoscopes was not provided by Alice Bailey.

was much more concerned to present the entire cosmos as a divinely guided order.

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William F. Allan

William F. Allan (1860-1917), known as "Alan Leo"—Alan the Lion—because he was born under the sign Leo, had already provided for the practical side of astrology, the interpretation of horoscopes. As an Englishman, he was also a member of the Theosophical Society, an editor of an astrological periodical in London and an astrological publishing house with branches in London and New York. Anyone who wanted could receive a "shilling-horoscope" through his publishing house. For a small fee, each interested party would receive their own sign of the zodiac, their ascendant, and the position of the planets at the time of birth on copied sheets. Each person could thus read what "his" sign and "his" ascendant meant in a short overview [50]. In these interpretations were the ancient descriptions of the heavenly bodies. For example, a person with the planet and war-god Mars in the ascendant—i.e. rising on the eastern horizon—would have their appearance brisk and aggressively like the Roman god of war. Those with Venus in the ascendant position will attract attention with their physical beauty like the Roman goddess of love and beauty. In this sense, each person is to be given a short orientation regarding what his or her—in a technical sense—personal predisposition and purpose in life is.

In this esoteric astrology, teachings known from Buddhism and Hinduism, in particular, were integrated. Along with Christ, Buddha also plays a central role in theosophy. This refers not only to the person Buddha, but also to his doctrines of karma and rebirth, which flowed into the general theosophical teaching but also into esoteric astrology. The doctrine of karma and rebirth means that a person's character and his experiences are determined by the deeds in past lives. The horoscope thus informs the astrologer about this karma, i.e. about the person's character and the resulting tasks in life. "Karmic horoscope analysis," which operates with these methods and which is offered today by some astrology schools—for example, ASTROLOGIE ZÜRICH—was then developed from this approach [51].

The transition from esoteric astrology to practical horoscope interpretation is thus gradual, and it is difficult to determine exactly where esoterically motivated horoscope interpretation ends and practical horoscope interpretation begins.

crosses over into a popular astrology with its everyday forecasts. So much can be said with Alan Leo's commercially-pursued astrology, disseminated on printed pages, that paved for modern horoscope interpretation in the mass media. Newspapers and magazines made the swift spread of very brief daily, weekly, and yearly horoscopes possible. The theosophical background often played hardly any role at all anymore, even if references to "rebirth" and "karma" appeared in newspaper horoscopes from time to time. Popular astrology was often only concerned anymore to satisfy a certain curiosity and a need for certain character and imminent events.

Especially in the 1920s, this newspaper-astrology experienced an enormous increase which could be built upon in the second half of the twentieth century [52]. Today, everyone can look up their horoscope for the day or week in a newspaper and check how accurate the descriptions and forecasts are. It is quite easy to get the impression that these statements are often kept very general, allow almost no serious test of their accuracy, or that they have no concrete relation to one's personal affairs at all.

Now this generalizing popular astrology is extremely questionable in terms of the foundations and calculation methods of astrology itself. The horoscope alone, which is gained through astronomical calculation and which provides the basis for every interpretation, suggests a differentiated predisposition for each person. This is to be traced back to the fact that the positions of the planets and their angular relations to one another, as well as the positions of the zodiac signs and the houses, each have their own special meaning. Depending on the positions of the various planets and the rotation of the earth, these positions change quite rapidly. A horoscope is dependent upon the exact time and place of birth and changes with time and place. If the constantly changing starry skies are to be the basis and mirror image of the predispositions of each human being, then only very few people have the same horoscope, namely, only those who are born at the same time and place. The popular astrology, which makes concrete statements and forecasts are possible for everyone who has the same sign.

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Of course, esoteric astrology can hardly be blamed for the fact that the popular astrology spread so well; just as little as the ancient learned astrology was to be blamed that astrological telling existed in the time of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, Alan Leo's shilling-horoscope seems to have been a triggering event, which, with its simplified and mass-produced interpretation, also addressed needs, which did not only refer to individual insights in an esoteric sense, but which also provoked a simple and everyday type of curiosity.

Today, esoteric astrology is especially widespread in some of the new religious movements, such as theosophy, anthroposophy, and above all in the organizations of the "Rosicrucian Order" and the "Rosicrucian Community," founded by Max Heindel in 1909, publishes across Europe and America Ephemerides with the exact positions of the planets, which are indispensable for every practitioner of astrology. These Ephemerides contain all the important data for a time span of fifty or a hundred years [53]. But this esoteric astrology is also incorporated into the organized and individualized environment of the esoteric scene. In many astrology courses as well, astrology is taught by way of esoteric doctrines, whereby it is often just a matter

general references or fragmentary allusions to "karma" and "rebirth." A binding form of astrology in the form of a clearly defined doctrine is hardly discernable here.

Psychological astrology

In addition to theosophy, the developing psychology at the end of the nineteenth century prepared the way for astrology. This psychological astrology picked up the thread of psychoanalysis, which concerned itself with the "unconscious" regions of the human mind. The psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) attempted to decode the rich symbolic world of his patients' nightly dreams. In the process, he came across images and symbols that time and again appeared in the myths and fairy tales handed down to us. This led him to the idea that the heavenly bodies in astrology are actually pictures of our mind. The various gods and goddesses of the heavenly bodies are accordingly not independent beings, but rather images which lie unconsciously dormant in our mind and now populate the vault of the heavens as archetypes. Thus, for example, the various tales about the love goddess Venus or the god Mars are actually stories which humans repeatedly experienced and then at some time ascribed to gods. They were then projected onto the heavens as stories of gods. In this way—according to Jung—astrology came about. It reads now in the course of the stars that which actually lies in the human mind.

Carl Gustav Jung did not believe in newspaper horoscopes, but he did believe in the idea that astrology could inform us about the human mind and—on a very general level—the future of important historical developments. Some astrologers and also psychologists took this up, for example, the well-known psychoanalyst Fritz Riemann [54]. These people see in the horoscope, thus in the position of the heavenly bodies at the time of birth, a way of discovering the basic structure of a person's character. Thus, they assume that a person's particular dispositions and difficulties, but also disturbing influences from the surrounding environment can be recognized with the horoscope. In this way, astrology has found some forms of practical psychological consultation [55].

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This psychological astrology does not view human life as subject to the dictates of fate, as some astrologers of other schools of thought see it. It assumes that the horoscope can identify merely a person's predispositions such as, for example, whether an individual is more artistic or more technical abilities. Whether and how these abilities are later realized is ascribed by psychological astrology to other factors such as upbringing and other environmental factors. The horoscope is therefore used as a basis for a rather consultation-oriented astrology.

Here, however, the following should be remarked from the scientific point of view. In psychological astrology identifies in the horoscope only predispositions which can be realized in quite diverse ways, the difficulty results that a person's horoscope and the actual conditions of his life no longer necessarily correspond to one another. How then can the agreement between a person's horoscope and character be tested? How exactly can a horoscope interpretation that takes the time of birth as its foundation realistically assess a grown person?

Empirical proof is obviously difficult. Most astrologers working in a psycho-diagnosis assess the situation likewise so. As justification why astrology is nevertheless able to provide meaningful information concerning a person's character, Franz Riemann, for example, holds the view that personal experience in consultation verifies the correctness of the horoscope dispositions visible in the horoscope are then—according to Riemann—covered up. The unfolding is blocked by external influences. The horoscope then helps in once again to uncover the buried dispositions.

This psychological astrology thus relies upon the personal experience in direct dialogue between client and astrologer. It thus follows that scientific evidence, in a strict sense, for the correspondence of horoscope and psycho-diagnosis is probably not possible. For moral reasons, astrology is therefore also not a recognized science.

In contrast to psychology. It is a scientifically recognized discipline because it works with empirical and theoretical methods. It is true that astrology is supported by experience, but it has difficulties identifying empirically testable results and consequently enjoys no scientific recognition.

But even if it were recognized through empirical results, theoretical conclusions which would follow with currently accepted scientific methods would be different. This means: if astrology were supported by empirical results, there would consequently have to be a connection between the positions of the heavenly bodies and very specialized predispositions in a person which could only be derived from the position of the heavenly bodies at the time of birth. But such an explanation would be a completely different explanation from the currently accepted scientific explanation of the connection of cosmos and human life. In a broader sense—fall back on religious explanations.

Concerning its empirical side, psychological astrology is thus limited to personal experience. In terms of its theoretical conclusions, namely that there is a connection between cosmos and human life, it can hardly do without religious explanations.

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These religious explanations arise in the following manner: first, psychological astrology discovers an analogous relationship between the heavenly bodies and a person's dispositions. The records that the position of the planets in the sky above at the time of a person's birth corresponds to the same character-images (corresponding to the ancient mythical descriptions) which are then ascribed to the planets as properties. This discovery of analogies depends, as described above, on personal experience.

Now the explanation cannot, however, be left at this: that an analogous relationship has been discovered. There must be some kind of connection between the heavenly bodies and the human which establishes these analogies. But how should this connection between planets and human be explained—extremely far away—the planet Pluto is not even visible from the earth with telescopes?

Many psychological astrologers attempt to clear up this problem by setting up hyp-

interesting to see how, in doing so, they fall back once again on the ancient religious astrologer Thomas Ring (1892-1983) sees in the ancient planet gods and their descriptions "principles" which describe natural and mental processes. These principles are "powers of living," or "powers of totality," which are at work in the entire cosmos and "encompass everything which lives. [56]" With this it is meant that not only are we and nature alive with life, but that the whole cosmos with all the heavenly bodies is a living organism. Planets are accordingly not just a collection of inanimate material, but are rather equal living powers which are also found in the human psyche and in nature.

The connection between the heavenly bodies and humans is thus not one which is according to current standards, scientifically explainable. The analogous—and this means: simultaneous—connection between the heavenly bodies and humans is not explained through physics such as light or gravitation, but rather through "living powers" which are at work in the cosmos, but with which we only come into contact by way of our psyche.

But here we have arrived at the ancient astrology once again. In ancient times the belief in a "world soul" went without saying. This world soul, which filled the entire cosmos and every particular thing, was able to explain the connection of the human being with distant cosmic occurrences. Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton still believed in an "anima mundi," a world soul, which could explain astrological and magical events.

We thus see that psychological astrology in fact begins with experiences from the psychology but, from these, draws religious conclusions. In this respect, it is very close to astrology. It is therefore also no wonder that the two are often not distinguished at all. In the framework of the esoteric and many new religious movements, the two can often hardly be separated. To many followers, it also seems to be quite unimportant what explanations are behind astrology. For the most part, an interest in psychological insights and self-knowledge stand in the foreground. The question of the explanation for astrology is taken up by many interested parties by, usually only very indefinitely and generally, ascribing it to spirituality or to the natural sciences [57].

In the German-speaking world, but also in other countries, there is, in the meantime, a multitude of astrology schools which view their task mainly in the psycho-diagnostic. Nevertheless, no unambiguous classification can be made here. Some schools, like the one in Zurich, quite consciously impart esoteric subject matter as well, such as, for example, "karmic horoscope analysis." Others specialize in astrological healing or economic counseling. It can, however, be said that the psycho-diagnostic interests in astrology account for a large portion of modern astrology.

Empirical investigations

In addition to psychological and esoteric tendencies in modern astrology, there are also attempts to scientifically, i.e. *empirically*, justify astrology. Here it is not enough to refer to personal experience; rather, representatives of this line of thought want to find empirically confirmed

data. We recall that the classical philologist Franz Boll was cited at the beginning of saying that astrology wants to be religion and science at the same time. Now, the end research is the attempt to provide astrology with a basis measuring up to current scientific requirements. Empirical astrology is thus the third path which astrology takes in the 20th century.

In the 1920s, some astrologers began to collect statistical data, and thereby to convince themselves as well. At this time the astrologer Herbert v. Klöckler, for example, investigated 5000 cases for special astrological correspondences of accidents, crimes, and also particular talents of painters, poets, and lawyers. He and other astrologers saw therein a tendency towards a confirmation of astrology. Yet he did not consider his results as definitely confirmed because they are, scientifically viewed, of hardly any value [58].

The most comprehensive and well-known attempt to date to find some—and even a small clue which would verify astrology through statistical investigations was carried out in 1983 by the French psychologist Michel Gauquelin. On the basis of a total of 35,907 birth charts he tested whether people's career choice could be verified astrologically. He wanted to know whether individuals with the same job would prove to have similar horoscopes. His findings in his book *Cosmic Influences on Human Behavior*, which also appeared in 1983 [59].

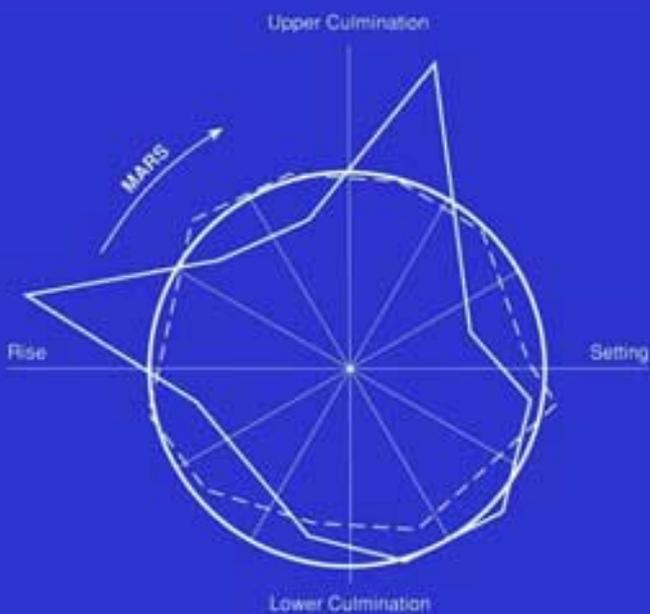
First of all he discovered—although fundamentally a follower of astrology—that the horoscopes are entirely incorrect. Thus it turned out that, statistically, there were not more professional soldiers or athletes, for example, even slightly more people born under "Scorpio" as in other professions. Popular astrology suggests such results, because the signs "Aries" and "Scorpio" especially battle-ready and aggressive individuals who have a high level of physical strength.

However, Gauquelin also came to the conclusion that a careful investigation of individual planetary positions indeed shows a tendency towards certain professions. Thus, in the average number of cases, soldiers and athletes were said to have the planet Mars in a particular position. Similarly, this was true of the planet Jupiter for politicians, the moon for artists, and the planet Saturn for scientists. This would also correspond to the classical gods of the planets, according to which Mars is the god of war, Jupiter the god of religious and political power, the moon the god or goddess of wisdom, and Saturn the god of solid matter.

What Gauquelin determined, however, is—assuming his information is correct—a statistically average value from many thousands of people, which cannot make any statement about the development of a particular individual. In other words, from a particular planetary position according to Gauquelin—at best a certain general tendency towards particular professions determined with a certain level of probability, which says nothing about the realization of this disposition in the particular case.

COSMIC INFLUENCES — ON — HUMAN BEHAVIOR

The Planetary Factors in Personality



DR. MICHEL GAUQUELIN

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In this study, many astrological assumptions of newspaper astrology and also some horoscope interpretations fall flat. For Gauquelin, however, something still remains. Many scientists have consequently concerned themselves with this investigation. Some have rejected it as insufficient. Others, for example the psychologist Hans Jürgen Eysenck, recognized it as reliable [60]. The discussion concerning this study is still being carried out by scientists today and remains open. The typical opinion among scientists regarding this study is summed up in the statement of the English astronomer G.O. Abell: "I have strong suspicions that Gauquelin's results will turn out to be misleading. But if they should turn out to be correct, this would be a huge milestone in the determination of cosmic influences on human behavior [61]"

A further investigation was published in 1997 by the biologists Klaus-Peter Endres and Hans-Joachim Schädler [62]. Here as well the concern was to find even the smallest clues which could indicate an astrological connection. They did not investigate horoscopes, but rather began their investigation generally. They wanted to determine if and how various organisms, especially plants and animals, react to the various phases of the moon.

That the moon exercises some kind of influence on the earth—for example, that it causes the tides and tide—is undisputed. But here the concern was to check whether the moon-phases

moon, full moon, waxing and waning quarter moon—are "recognized" by plants and animals and if they act accordingly. Above all, they wanted to find out if they also behave so in response to external factors, like moonlight, ebb, and tide, are ruled out. It was thus a question of determining whether the "mysterious powers" between the heavenly bodies and life assumed by astrology actually exist.

The results from many, partly very complicated experiments showed two groups of organisms. No rhythms at all which could be connected to the phases of the moon could be recorded in the growth and behavior of some of the investigated plants and animals. But in the other species, a rhythm which accorded with the moon-phases could indeed be detected. Thus, some plants and animals reacted with their growth or reproductive behavior only at full moon, others only at new moon, and still others only at waxing or waning quarter moon.

The individual and quite complicated experiments shall not be described here in detail. But two biologists are convinced that they have brought together enough material for a reliable judgment. According to these results, it seems certain that many plants and animals possess an "inner clock" which dictates certain patterns of behavior independent of external influences. This "inner clock" runs conspicuously parallel to certain phases of the moon, even in cases where plants and animals "cannot see" the moon, i.e. if they are covered up over long periods of time in a laboratory.

Now, what does this tell us about astrology? Is astrology—assuming the results are correct—thereby proven? The initial question was whether there are any demonstrable indications of influences of the heavenly bodies at all, beyond the known physical ones. And here the biologists claim: in many cases there are indeed such indications, in other cases there are not.

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If we now consider just the positive results, the following must be said: in those plants and animals where there is an indication of an influence by the moon, we cannot really speak of an "effect" of the moon. The examples show, rather, that plants and animals behave temporally parallel to the moon. We can thus only state that two events happen analogously. We cannot scientifically determine whether this is coincidence or whether mysterious powers are at work which have remained concealed to science till now.

Let us recall the Mesopotamian omen interpretation of King Assurbanipal's library. The Mesopotamian astrologers—not, by far, as scientifically, but basically very similarly—likewise discovered an *analogous* relationship between the wandering "star gods" and many events on the earth. This was done with the help of observations spanning centuries. Whether that was really always the case can no longer be confirmed. But the astrologers assumed that they could make these observations scientifically. Likewise assumed thereby—as described above—an analogy between the appearances of the "star gods" in the sky and on the earth. Perhaps they knew or suspected something of this analogous relationship. In certain cases, it can be revealed today by exact scientific means.

However, this study does not provide much help for horoscope interpretation. For the existence of analogies between phases of the moon and the behavior of organisms can only be

some cases, and various exceptional cases at that. It remains the case that evidence events between the course of the celestial bodies and events on earth could very well be the future. This means: the foundations of astrology cannot be called "nonsense" right from the start. Nevertheless, horoscope interpretation, as it is pursued in practical astrology, is not able to be experimentally proven. Here the question of astrology's truth will, in the future, remain a matter of personal experience and decision—as is the case in that of every religion.

Astrology in other cultures

Up to now, we have only considered astrology in the framework of European history. However, astrology also exists in most other cultures and in all the great religions. In Germany, astrology, above all, has become well-known. But also Native American, Indian, and Chinese astrology have found a certain audience here.

All of these forms of astrology have much in common: the heavenly bodies and natural forces are filled with gods, demons, and spirits. There is no object which could not house a power from which magical powers could not be emitted. And thus, the heavenly bodies, all stars, the sun and moon, are also the residences of powerful gods. At the same time, every people is familiar with astronomical observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies, the characteristic behavior of the sun and moon. And from these observations, these people have derived their calendar and divisions of time. The orbit of the sun, the time-span between full moons, the regular movements of the other planets or, for example, the rotation of the "Big Dipper" constellation around the North Star—none of this has escaped the people of all cultures. They have thus organized their lifetimes, celebrated, and directed their daily routines according to these rhythms. All peoples felt themselves in constant contact and exchange with the gods, whereby the gods of the heavens counted as particularly powerful.

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We do not want to analyze the individual astrological systems here. One thing, however, can be said: all the various forms of astrology presuppose a similar spiritual world view. And at the same time, simultaneously people observe the heavens scientifically and classify them as well as use them for the organization of the year with its celebrations and events. All forms of astrology thus want "to be both science and religion at the same time," as was said at the beginning about European astrology.

And something else is conspicuous. *Chinese* astrology came about at around the same time as the Mesopotamian and Egyptian, namely around 2700 BC. It also has a twelve-part division of the zodiac, with other "animals," however. Is there perhaps a historical connection between Chinese and Mesopotamian astrology? We do not know for sure. A Mesopotamian influence cannot be ruled out.

But we know: *Indian* astrology was demonstrably influenced by Mesopotamian astrology, not only the twelve-part division of the zodiac, but also took over their designations. This is explained in terms of the lively trade between Mesopotamia and India.

Most astonishing, however, is the fact that the American Incas had the twelve-part

before Columbus reached the continent. The Aztecs and Mayas in Central America developed an astrology which shows striking similarities to Egyptian astrology [63]. Could the Egyptian astrology have made it across the Atlantic ocean? Or did Native American astrology come to this amazing similarity quite independently? Perhaps the research of Heyerdahl—who sailed in a papyrus boat from Egypt across the Atlantic to prove that the Egyptian pyramid builders came to America long before Columbus and there found a "Native American" culture or at least influenced it—was right. One thing can be said for sure: all major cultures and religions were and are closely bound to astrology.

Astrology and Christianity

Let us return now to European astrology. For here astrology has stood in close interrelation with Christianity for two thousand years. How do they act in regards to one another, if Christianity proclaims the *one* God who created the world including the heavenly bodies, while astrology views the heavenly bodies and nature as full of magical gods and powers?

History

The Bible addresses astrology indirectly in some places without, however, clearly explaining in detail. Many are surely familiar with the "star of Bethlehem" which is reported in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 2). There the story is told of three "Magi from the east" who have seen a new star in the sky. The Magi understood this star as a sign which announced the birth of a new "king of the Jews." Now they sought him in Jerusalem and finally found him in the baby Jesus. If this story is historically true, then the Magi were very probably priests who were followers of astrology in the Persian region. For these were well-known throughout Roman Empire at the time of Jesus. But even if it is not true, the authors of the Gospel according to Matthew knew of the "Magi from the east" and built them into the birth story of Jesus.

The Christian theologian Tertullian (ca. 160-220 AD) advocated because of this tradition the view that astrology and magic were valid until the time of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. However, now that God had shown himself in the person of Jesus, astrology became invalid. Since the three Magi's homage to the baby Jesus—according to Tertullian—it is no longer necessary to revere or consult the gods of the heavenly bodies [64].

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But all in all, astrology was very controversial in the beginnings of Christianity. A large part of the early Christians rejected astrology. Many, like Justinus (ca. 100-165 AD), for example, viewed the gods of the heavenly bodies as foreign gods or angels that had fallen from God [65]. He criticized the far too unreliable horoscope interpretation. For the most part, however, astrology was rejected because it was classified among the non-Christian, "heathen" religious practices, and the "new" religion, Christianity, no longer needed it.

However, there was also a thoroughly positive attitude towards astrology. This had to do with the horoscope interpretation as rather with the symbolism and image-world of astrology. Astrological symbols were already common in some currents of Judaism and flowed

naturally into Christianity. The largest number of astrological symbols are found in the Revelation of John. Thus, the astrologically important numbers four, seven, and twelve occur in the Revelation. Right in the first chapter, seven stars are mentioned which are represented by seven angels (Rev. 1:20). The septet of stars referred in the ancient world to the seven known planets: sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. In chapter 12, a woman is mentioned who appears in the sky, clad in the sun, beneath her feet the moon and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She is quite reminiscent, down to the details, of the Mesopotamian Ishtar. Ishtar corresponds to the planet Venus and the Egyptian Isis, and who is also connected with the moon. Hermann Gunkel and Hugo Gressmann, two representatives of the "religious history school" (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) in Göttingen, have dealt with the influence of Mesopotamian astrology on the New Testament and especially on the Revelation of John.

It has also been handed down to us that in the early period of the church, but also in the Middle Ages and early modern period, the twelve disciples of Christ are identified with the twelve signs of the zodiac [67]. We still find traces of this in Leonardo da Vinci's painting of "The Last Supper" which was produced between 1495 and 1498. Here the twelve disciples are represented by characteristic markings and gestures of the twelve zodiac signs [68].

In the Middle Ages, astrology was considered – under Aristotelian influence in theology – as a science. Great Christian theologians, like Hildegard von Bingen (d. 1179), Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), or the Franciscan Roger Bacon (1214-1294), included astrology in their thought. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) explained the relationship of Christianity and astrology. According to him, the heavenly bodies affect the physical condition of humans and their inclinations. Whether physical passions or inclinations regarding profession—everything is determined by the heavenly bodies. However, every human has also the possibility to overcome the influences of the celestial bodies. The more he overcomes sensual inclinations, makes use of reason, and devotes himself to God, the better is he able to master the passions and the influence of the stars. Thomas did not think that the vast majority of mankind was able to do this. Events such as war were proof enough of that for Thomas [69].

A basic stance of the church regarding astrology resulted. As long as astrologers practiced "judicial" (judgment-passing) astrology for individuals, it was not allowed and was considered a heathen faith. Here the powers of the heavenly bodies stood clearly opposed to the power of the Creator-God and the individual's free decision in favor of this God. But as long as astrology – the *astrologia naturalis* – gave information about weather or found applications in medicine, it was allowed.

The Renaissance brought once again an enormous boom in popularity for astrology in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was because interest in science and art, and the knowledge of the ancient world increased. Pope Leo X valued astrology so highly that he established a professorship of astrology at the papal university in 1520. Protestant theologians as well as Philipp Melanchthon (1496-1565), ardently practiced astrology. But despite this great interest on both the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant sides, there were also critics. A criticism was hardly different from that of the early Christian period. Above all Mart

(1483-1546) saw a danger in the belief in the powers of the heavenly bodies. Luther could not accept any other powers next to the *one* God who took human form in Jesus Christ. In addition, there were some astrological forecasts which were not fulfilled, and thus Luther made some mocking remarks about astrology.

But sometimes Luther was not so sure after all. For he wrote a very detailed foreword to a very detailed and religio-politically important forecast by the astrologer Johann Lick [71]. In it he said that, though the heavenly bodies cannot effect anything, they can influence events.

It speaks for the vast influence of astrology in both great confessions that Luther's foreword led to a heated debate between Protestant and Roman Catholic astrologers. The reason for this was his indefinite time of birth [72].

Present

We recall that astrology re-emerged in the twentieth century in connection with the rise of psychology. And like other esoteric ideas as well, astrology soon found new followers in the Christian church. Thus, the question concerning what kind of relationship they have to one another today arises.

Now we know that astrology believes in many gods of the heavenly bodies or hidden powers. These are all at work in the cosmos. In terms of its foundations, astrology thus has no problem recognizing one Creator God who created this cosmos, as is the case in Christianity.

It is not so simple the other way around. The history of Christianity has shown how impossible it was to recognize nature religions, magic, and "foreign" gods. The so-called "Catechism of the Catholic Church" of 1993 has the following to say on the matter: "Divination should be rejected ... Behind horoscopes, astrology, palm-reading, fortune-telling, the consultation of a medium lies the will to power over time, history, and finally over nature as well as the desire to put the secret powers at one's disposal. This contradicts the love and respect which we owe God alone. [73]" Astrology thus appears here in connection with magic and fortune-telling of all types. It is not designated as nonsense or superstition here, but rather the contrary—the various forms of fortune-telling turn to "secret powers" which count as magical powers. The catechism describes the conscious use of these powers as harmful and in contradiction to Christian faith. The main message here is that fortune-telling is the attempt to win oneself against the God of the Christian faith.

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There are, nevertheless, an astonishing number of Christian theologians who officially accept astrology. One of the most well-known is the Benedictine Father Gerhard Voss, who regrets that this article on astrology appears in the catechism. He explains his position in his book *Astrologie christlich*.

Gerhard Voss is of the opinion that astrology does not belong to the magical practice

can be used with critical reason. He also believes that the modern church is no longer for many people because it lacks a closer relation to the cosmos and nature. He says exclusion of astrological wisdom from the church is indicative of the loss of the cosmic dimension of church life in theology, liturgy, and preaching.[74]" Father Voss believes things esoteric, like astrology, also belong in Christian theology. He is not alone in this, all, because of the publication of his book, he was able to compose the article "Astrology" in the most important German-language theological lexicon of the Roman Catholic church, *für Theologie und Kirche*, and likewise the article "Astrology" in the *Lexikon der Religionen*.

Despite his support of astrology, Gerhard Voss also sets conditions for astrology. First, Christian faith has absolute priority over any form of astrology. Second, the horoscope can be used to obtain forecasts, for astrology cannot and should not make precise predictions. Third, Voss primarily understands the horoscope, as does psychological astrology, as a mirror in the human spirit. Practically, he sees the possibility of employing the horoscope as an aid to meditation, as a key to meditative experience.

Thus we see that opinions concerning astrology within the Roman Catholic church radically diverge. Many theologians, for example the well-known church-critic Eugen Drewermann, hold astrology for simple superstition and thus reject having anything to do with it. Thus, the views on astrology vary from mocking rejection, serious warning of its dangers, to serious occupation with it. Opinions on this subject could hardly be more diverse.

A similar picture is also offered in the Evangelical church. Here there is no explicit ban on astrology. But skepticism predominates among the majority of theologians nevertheless. Some hold astrology—like Eugen Drewermann—for superstition. Some see in it a means of putting oneself above God, and of using other "gods" for this purpose. But certain Evangelicals defend astrology, for example, Christoph Schubert-Weller in his book *Does God Speak through the Stars? (Spricht Gott durch die Sterne?)* [76] He, too, would like to see astrology understood as a medium for psychological insight. The opinions concerning astrology display a similar diversity as that within the Roman Catholic church, or also in Luther's age: the discussion excites strong emotions and moves between mockery, serious rejection or warning, as well as serious acceptance.

Where does astrology stand today?

In the second half of the twentieth century, astrology experienced a great boom in popularity in Germany and Switzerland, but also in other European countries and in North America. In Germany, the German Federation of Astrologers (DAV) was founded as a trade union on October 16, 1947 at the astrologically calculated time of 10:06 am. In 1950 there were around 100 members and this number has grown to over six hundred professional astrologers since then. In addition to this union, many independent astrology schools arose which offer seminars for training as a professional astrologer, organize conventions, publish periodicals, and conduct research.

Regardless of what we think of astrology, it is there and it enjoys growing popularity popular as well as its more serious varieties. When we seek its place in the contemporary and religious currents, we find it in the traditional religions, in Hinduism and in Buddhism as well as Christianity. But above all we encounter it today in the realm of the

But it is not quite so simple regarding the esoteric as it is with the traditional religions which can describe clearly. The term "esoteric" outlines today a realm, or better: a way of life in which quite diverse doctrines from various religions are loosely assembled. Hardly an insider knows exactly what belongs to the esoteric and what does not. We can only roughly say that meditation and psychology, the belief in karma and reincarnation, magic, astrology, and in the hereafter, as well as health and ecology can belong to it.

The word "esoteric" actually comes from ancient Greece and means teachings which are only in an inner circle of the few initiated, and which had to be kept secret from the masses. The importance of secrecy lay in the fact that these teachings were supposed to be protected from falsification and preserved in their original form. Contemporary esoterica is a very broad and diverse movement which actually practices the opposite. It is quite present in the public eye, with course offers, periodicals, and a hardly manageable number of books.

Insofar as it has no binding beliefs, esoterica is distinguished from the traditional religions where authority decides over "true" or "false." On the one hand, this gives followers a high degree of freedom in the choice of doctrines and practices. On the other hand, it gives no protection against all too simple interpretations. Some popular forms of astrology are an example where simplified conclusions can be drawn from a very sophisticated doctrine.

If we classify astrology in the vaguely defined and hardly organized realm of the esoteric, we see that modern astrology is astonishingly well organized by way of the trade union system with its independent schools. In contrast to the many fragmented esoteric teachings, the astrology schools and most of the astrology schools attach great importance to picking up the threads of the "classical astrology" of European religious history. Contemporary astrology thus presents itself quite consciously as a continuation of its millennia-old history.

Modern astrology has to date received only little attention in religious studies scholarship. Existing works on the subject place modern astrology in the context of western esoterica. Christoph Bochinger sees its importance especially in the doctrines of the world-epoch. The occult has again gained currency in the expectation of a "New Age." [77] Similarly for Antoinette [78] and Wouter Hanegraaff, [79] modern astrology is a part of western esoterica.

Is astrology true?

It has already been said: religious scholarship does not ask whether a religion or a religious belief is true or not. We can only determine that there are people who report certain religious experiences and ideas. Insofar as astrology claims a scientific side in addition to its religious implications, it is true that it is also subject to scientific judgments. In conclusion, the following aspects shall now be briefly discussed.

In the current age, astrology's right to existence is often called into question because as wrongly understood science, as superstitiously interpreted astronomy. If this application to astrology, a basic rejection would be legitimate from the perspective of scholarship, namely, as long as astrology cannot provide any reliable empirical and scientific evidence.

But we have seen how closely astrology is tied to religious notions, and we should therefore view it in a religious context. The matter of the nature-religious image of the cosmos that astrology teaches, the mysterious connection between the heavenly bodies and human life can no more be settled with present-day scientific methods than the question whether there is life after death, purgatory, or karma and reincarnation. When astrology views the cosmos as a living organism, this is thus a religious idea such as we know from, and respect as such, other religions.

But astrology also claims to be provable by means of experience. On this subject, we observe that the scientific-empirical evidence which speaks in favor of astrology, as well as personal experiences which are expressed, are contested in science. A sure judgment from empirical studies cannot be expected from this angle in the near future.

It would thus be better if we proceeded without asking about the "truth" of astrology and could look at the practical applications of astrology and, from there, seek a practical evaluation.

Modern astrology can be divided, quite roughly, into a popular and a more serious form. But it must be said that the division between the two is hardly to be determined. What is offered in the field of astrology moves between these two in a gray-zone which, in spite of its sincere justifications, is difficult to pin down. The two extreme positions, however, are well determined.

Currently, the most widespread form of astrology is the popular one which presents itself in daily newspapers and in special esoteric periodicals. It often contradicts concrete empirical evidence, and it is clearly that every serious foundation must be denied. Here each person can individually judge how often character-descriptions and forecasts are really correct or not, or how general statements are that they are almost always correct. It is a conspicuous fact that this astrology is hardly interested in a serious explanation or investigation—be it religious or empirical.

On the other hand, there is a seriously practiced astrology, which understands itself as a practical-diagnostic. In this way, it is used today in some forms of psychological counseling and alternative medicine. In terms of its effects, it can only be judged by those involved. Proponents of this type of astrology emphasize time and again that a horoscope can never really predict what will happen to a person, but that it merely gives information in the form of a mirror for one's own dispositions. On the one hand, this serious astrology builds, in part, upon very sophisticated empirical studies whose results, yet, remain scientifically disputed. Advocates of this astrology also admit this and thus support their position with the purported fact that

One can thus say that this serious astrology strives toward a synthesis between "science," "personal experience," and "religion," which makes it difficult, indeed, for scientists' standards to recognize astrology as science as well. But it remains to be said that astrology is there and is being practiced. At some universities in South America, Asia, and Africa (for example, in Cairo) and also at the University of Riga in Latvia, astrology is taught. This is also because of its importance in the history of religions, including the history of Christianity, which is just now being discovered anew. Apart from its often criticized practical application, its historical meaning is certainly great enough to be dealt with also in the context of religious studies. On this, the classical philologist Franz Boll once again, who expresses himself on the historical importance of astrology thus: "The most important thing about the history of astrology is that it shows the connections of peoples with a clarity and irrefutability that can be exposed anywhere else. Perhaps in it alone have East and West, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists understood one another without difficulty." [80]

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38] Matthew 2. Literature on the Star of Bethlehem: Molnar, Michael R. 1999.

39] The reformist theologian and humanist Philipp Melanchthon undertook a German translation with a foreword full of praise. This translation was reprinted twice in the 16th century. Ptolemy, Claudius. 1553, 1923, and 1995.

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- 47] Kepler, Johannes. 1971. Point 40.
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- 51] See, for example: Weiss, Jean Claude. 1994.
- 52] Boll, Franz. 1931. pg. 213.
- 53] The current edition for the timeframe 2000 AD-2050 AD is in five languages and includes a comparison with the previous edition for 1900-2000, more precise astronomical data. See: Santoni, 1995.
- 54] Riemann, Fritz. 1986.
- 55] Hans Bender speaks in a foreword of "a great number of rational people – among them a whole row of psychotherapists – who use the birth constellation as a practical diagnostic tool." In: Ring, Thomas. 1990. pg. x.
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- 57] A written survey of followers of astrology which is currently in the evaluation phase shows that a vast majority favors a mixture of natural-scientific and spiritual explanations.
- 58] Klöckler, Herbert v. 1927.
- 59] Gauquelin, Michel. 1976.
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On p. 123 of our March issue it was stated that Nick Kollerstrom is a 'former president of the Astrological Lodge of London'. Mr Kollerstrom has drawn our attention to, the gravitating sphere, by definition, compensates for the cedar elfin, as expected.

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