

Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Part 2

Chapter 7

Sun Sign Astrology

Chapter Description

The main vehicle for the transmission of popular astrology is the horoscope column consisting of twelve paragraphs, one for each of the approximate thirty-day periods when the sun occupies each of the signs of the zodiac. The zodiac sign occupied by the sun at birth is known as the sun-sign by astrologers, or frequently as the 'birth-sign' or 'star-sign' in public discourse. The existence of sun-sign columns is a matter of some argument amongst astrologers, a controversy summarised by Dean (1996a: 145-6, 150-2; see also Heath 1996: 129-132). Many astrologers regard such columns as responsible for astrology's poor public reputation (Hone 1973: 14; see also Oken 1974: 5). According to Campbell and Brennan (1990: 33), sun-sign columns are 'a corrupt form [of astrology] disowned by most serious astrologers'. Some 'serious astrologers', though, both write and publicly defend such columns (Elliot 1990; Eccles 1996: 306-10). However, it is necessary to distinguish two types of sun-sign astrology (Harvey 1973-74b: 38-40). First there are the sun-signs as character descriptions, or sun-sign delineations. Second are the sun-sign forecasts, the columns carried in most popular newspapers and women's magazines. These 'horoscopes' are based on brief readings for individuals born with the sun in the respective signs of the zodiac and consisting of a combination of generalised advice and prediction. Both sun-sign delineations and sun-sign forecasts are simplifications of astrology which allow it to relate to large groups of people, each individual being able to easily identify their astrological type from their date of birth. The wide dissemination of these columns has led to a popular identification of astrology as a whole with the birth, sun or star-sign, the zodiac sign

containing the sun at birth (Harvey 1973-74b: 39). The question 'what's your sign?' was to become a classic 'chat-up' line in the 1960s (Rudhyar 1970: viii).

However, the concept of the sun-sign would have been meaningless to any astrologer prior to the early twentieth-century. The standard technical procedure for interpreting birth charts would, before then, have assigned the planets significance largely on the basis of the house cusps which fell in the zodiac signs which those planets ruled,¹ and would have assessed their importance largely according to factors known as the essential and accidental dignities, of which at least five, and perhaps thirty, might be taken into consideration (Lilly 1647: 101-4). In this system the sun might actually turn out to be the most insignificant planet. It was Alan Leo, influenced by Blavatsky's writings, who radically reformed the interpretative procedures for the judgement of birth charts, making a series of revisions which were designed to simplify the techniques of interpretation, such as the planetary aspects (McCann 2002: 66-70) and moving the sun to the centre of astrological interpretation.

The Signs of the Zodiac

The qualities of the zodiac signs in western astrology were established, or at least systematically recorded, by Claudius Ptolemy in the second-century. He was primarily concerned with the systematic attribution of particular qualities to the signs in order to allow their use either in the analysis of individual horoscopes, or in the prediction of specific outcomes. Aries was, for example, hot, dry, diurnal and masculine (Ptolemy 1940: I.11-16), attributes which might be applied to description of character, the diagnosis and treatment of disease or the prediction of general events for the year. Ptolemy's list of qualities was adapted and added to over the next fourteen-hundred years and appeared in English for the first time in William Lilly's *Christian Astrology* (1647). The space given by Lilly to the signs of the zodiac was minimal compared to the attention given in many modern astrology books. For example, in just half a page of

an 832-page book Lilly outlined all that it was necessary for the astrologer to know about Aries in order to apply its qualities to matters as diverse as the diagnosis and judgement of the sick, the finding of lost objects, the outcome of battles and success in marriage. Of this section only three adjectives, 'luxurious, intemperate and violent' (Lilly 1647: 93) might apply to individual personality, although they could as easily refer to the weather, the entire nature of the times or any other matter of interest to the astrologer. More important to Lilly than the nature of Arien people was the sign's rulership of 'sand and hilly grounds, a place of refuge for Theeves' (1647: 93), associations of vital importance if one was tracing stolen property. The same accounts were repeated time and again in subsequent literature. One typical nineteenth-century description of Aries was provided by Zadkiel in his 1849 *Grammar of Astrology*. His account of the sign was brief, but what he did include was almost entirely physical (the use of which would have been to recognise characters described in horary charts), and contained only seven words of psychological delineation:

This sign produces a dry, lean body, middle stature, strong limbs, large bones, long and meagre face, sharp sight, neck rather long and scraggy, dark eyebrows, swarthy complexion, hair reddish and wiry, thick shoulders; disposition, angry and violent as the ram (Zadkiel 1849: 359).

Of the various aspects of Leo's reformed astrology, the most dramatic, in terms of the interpretation of the zodiac signs, was his discarding of almost the entire list of zodiacal attributes which had been accumulated from the first to seventeenth-centuries. In his opinion, these were of no use at all if people were to prepare for the New Age. He therefore set out to create a zodiacal astrology which would fulfil this purpose by encouraging people to reflect on their inner character, rather than measure the extent to which they conformed to a set of externally imposed criteria. Leo's description of Aries (1922: 17), was typical. At almost four times the length of Zadkiel's version, Leo's completely ignored physical characteristics and set the tone for all future descriptions of the sign. Aries, he wrote,

Represents undifferentiated consciousness. It is a chaotic and unorganised sign, in which impulse, spontaneity, and instinctiveness are marked features. Its vibrations are the keenest and most rapid, but without what may be called definite purpose, except towards impulsiveness and disruption. It signifies explosiveness, extravagance and all kinds of excess. Its influence is more directly connected with the animal kingdom, in which life is full and without the directive power of fully awakened self-consciousness (Leo 1922: 17).

Leo's description does contain the recognisable legacy of the Ptolemaic canon, but was psychologised to the extent that Aries' traditional rulership of the head becomes 'a desire to be at the head and command'. Mars' rulership of Aries is responsible for the strong dose of martial qualities, 'force, combat, energy, strength and vigour...enthusiastic, pioneering, ambitious, militant, enterprising, independent, assertive, and self-willed'. However, Blavatsky's physics are evident in the notion that the sign has 'vibrations', and her theory of evolution represented by the concept that Arien consciousness is 'undifferentiated' and that its lack of 'fully-awakened self-consciousness' signifies its closeness to the animal kingdom. Leo had adapted Blavatskyan evolution to the notion of the tropical zodiac as a developmental cycle, commencing with Aries, the point of creation and hence the lowest point of evolution, and then rising to Pisces, the highest point. Thus the concept of psychological growth was written into the zodiac.

Leo's theosophical millenarianism was, perhaps, more evident in his delineation of Aquarius. Whereas to Lilly this sign's significance had been found in its rulership of the ankles, high places, strong bodies, and southern Bavaria (1647: 98-9), Leo was clearly influenced by Aquarius' role as the sign of the New Age. It was, he wrote, distinguished by 'its love of human nature' (Leo 1922: 23) and represented that point where the circle [the zodiac] is left for the spiral and man begins his mental ascent', even though he doubted whether many people were ready for this step.

Leo's formulation of the signs' characters were to become the basis of most subsequent 'sun-sign' descriptions and, arguably, every description within the English speaking

world after 1945, with the exception of those associated with the 'traditional revival' of the 1980s-90s. His description of the Arien character, for example, was repeated in most of the standard texts (see for example Parker and Parker 1971: 106; Hone 1973: 48-30; Mayo 1981: 41-2). The Arien passage in Linda Goodman's best seller *Linda Goodman's Sun Signs*, illustrates the point (Goodman 1970: 3). Leo's forceful impulsiveness and spontaneity became Goodmans 'forceful manner [and] firm handclasp' together with an imaginative warning to prepare for 'a dizzy dash around the mulberry tree'. Leo's adaptation of Blavatskyan spiritual evolution to the zodiac cycle was evident in Goodman's statement that Aries 'represents birth, as Pisces represents death and consciousness of the soul. The ram is only conscious of himself.' (1970: 3). Thus Leo's astrology as new age *sensu-stricto* was embedded into the text of what claims to be the biggest-selling sun-sign book of the twentieth century and hence the principle work of late-twentieth century popular astrology. It does not follow from this that Goodman had any interest in the coming of the Age of Aquarius or, if she did, whether she considered it to be important. She did establish, though, the potential profitability of the sun-sign books which dominated popular astrology publishing from the 1970s to 1990s. Whereas it had been sufficient for Leo to devote a half page to Aries, the sign warranted approximately twenty-four pages in Bernard Fitzwalter's *Sun Sign Secrets* (1989), including information which would have been regarded as irrelevant or superfluous by William Lilly, or better located through more precise astrological measures.

The Sun as Religious Symbol

The sun has been an object of religious veneration since earliest recorded history. The dominant role of solar deities in Egyptian religion is well-documented (see for example Assman 1995) while in second millennium BCE Babylon the sun god Shamash occupied a vital role in the state as the lawgiver (Frankfort 1978: 157), and the existence of a solar component in early Hebrew religion has been plausibly proposed by

Hollis (1937) and Taylor (1993). In the second and third centuries CE, Hermetic philosophers in Hellenistic Egypt devised a complex cosmology in which the sun played a central role in the relationship between the creator and humanity. As summarised by Fowden (1986: 77) there are three worlds: the first is the realm of God the creator, the second is the intelligible world, the home of reason, and the third is the sensible, material world. God's creative and benevolent powers then flow through the intelligible and sensible worlds to the sun, around which orbit the seven spheres of the stars and planets. The divine powers which bind this structure together may be spoken of in terms of light and derive from the sun, together with the less celestial bodies, the planets and stars. Thus everything is in God, he is in everything and the sun is the primary vehicle for the transmission of his divine intent to the earth.

The religion of the unconquered sun, Sol Invictus, provided the nearest approximation to a state church in the late Roman Empire (Halsberghe 1972) prior to Constantine's reconciliation with Christianity in the early fourth century. The subsequent adoption of pagan solar iconography by Christianity is evident in the orientation of churches on an east-west axis and the choice of December 25th, the winter solstice and feast of Sol Invictus, as Christmas Day. Indeed, respect for the sun as a metaphor for God became an accepted part of the Christian narrative. For the church father Irenaeus (1916: I.10.2) in the second century, the sun was a universal metaphor for God's teaching. In the thirteenth-century Thomas Aquinas (1975: I.93) used the sun as a metaphor for God's justice, comparing it to the light of a candle as God's justice compares to man's. From the twelfth-century on, though, the sun acquired real physical powers. Thus, following Aristotle,² Aquinas (1956: III. 104.10) remarked on the sun's generative power: 'for man, together with the sun, generates a man'.

The translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by Marsilio Ficino (see Ficino 1989: 17-90; Thorndike 1923-58: IV.562-73) in the late fifteenth-century, and the revival of pagan

cosmology which it engendered, played a part in Copernicus' revolutionary proposal in the early sixteenth-century that the sun was at the centre of the cosmos. In the introduction to his *De Revolutionibus*, published in 1543, Copernicus (Shrimplin 2000: 1; see also Copernicus 1975: I.10, pp. 24-5, Shumaker 1978: 44) wrote,

In the midst of all assuredly dwells the Sun. For, in this most beautiful temple, who would place this luminary in any other or better position³ from which he can illuminate the whole at once? Indeed, some rightly call Him the Light of the World, others, the Mind or the Ruler of the Universe: Hermes Trismegistus names him the visible God. Sophocles Electra calls him the all-seeing. So indeed the Sun remains, as if in his kingly dominion, governing the family of Heavenly bodies which circles around him. Trismegistus calls it a visible god and Sophocles' *Electra*, that which gazes upon all things.

The centrality of the sun in the cosmos had a strong appeal for alchemists, for whom the transmutation of lead into gold, the sun's metal, acquired new significance, as well as some astrologers. John Dee, Elizabeth I of England's astrologer, was an enthusiastic Copernican (Shumaker 1978: 56-7). Athanasius Kircher, the early seventeenth-century Christian Kabbalist, initiated 'sun-as-god' theory (discussed in chapter 3) and anticipated Max Müller's theories by arguing that pagan polytheism was a misunderstanding of the original solar nature of all gods (Godwin 1979b: 43-60).

Blavatsky and the Sun

As was discussed in chapter 3, H.P. Blavatsky was well aware of Max Müller's work on the solar origins of religion with which, however, she profoundly disagreed on the grounds that, for Müller, this was evidence of primitive error (1888: I. xxviii-xxx). Blavatsky was, however, profoundly influenced by the Hermetic heliocentric cosmology of the first and second-centuries BCE, the structure of three heavens and the centrality of the sun. The doctrine of the three worlds was known to Blavatsky through such seventeenth-century Hermetic and Rosicrucian thinkers as Robert Fludd (Huffmann 1992: 99), whom she described as the 'chief' of the 'philosophers by fire' (Blavatsky 1877: I.309).

Thus, when Blavatsky referred to the 'Central Spiritual Sun' (1888: I.100), like Copernicus, she was, as she states, harking back to the Hermetic teachings. 'In the shoreless ocean of space', she wrote, 'radiates, the central, spiritual and *Invisible* sun' (1877: I. 302), while the 'Hermetic axiom' maintains that our 'spirits...incorruptible and eternal', both emanate from the 'eternal central sun' and 'will be reabsorbed by it at the end of time (1877: I.502). Adapting the threefold Hermetic cosmos to the emanation theory of Kabbalism, she described the first emanation, the first light, as the soul of the spiritual sun, the second as its spirit, in which the life-principle is infused into form, and the third as its body, the material world. The further the universe moves away from the spiritual sun, the darker and worse it becomes. She added that the material sun then 'shines for bodies' as 'the spiritual sun shines for souls' (1877: I. 324). The sun, she added, drawing on Jowett's recent translation of Plato's *Timaeus*, neither emits heat nor exerts gravitational influence, but instead operates according to magnetism and becomes the lens through which the spiritual light of the invisible sun, or God (1877: I.270) becomes visible (1877: I. 271; see also I.258). The planets are also, being fragments of light, equivalent to the sun. Thus, when Blavatsky deliberately evoked Christian imagery, punning on the words 'sun' and 'son', she stated that the 'Sun-Sons', the stars and planets are, like the sun, children of the 'Spiritual Sun' (1877: I.50, II. 463; 1888: I.100, 400). In other words, she wrote a Kabbalistic Christian theology of Father and Son (1877: I.271) into the Hermetic, theosophical cosmos of invisible, spiritual sun and material, visible sun.

Alan Leo and the Sun in Astrology

Alan Leo's solar astrology was derived directly from Blavatsky's reformulation of Hermetic cosmology. In *Esoteric Astrology* he stated that 'There is but One Life within the Universe - The Supreme Life of God, streaming through the Sun' (1936 xix; see also 126-7). Again following Blavatsky, he wrote that the planets are fragments of the sun

and hence, like it, parts of the body of the 'Great Logos' (1925: 126-7). The sun, as the 'life-giver' is the most important single factor in the birth chart and the zodiac, Leo argued, should be seen less as the sun's path through the sky than a circle surrounding it; the sun's rays permeate the entire circle at once as its rays but pass through one particular sign at birth (1936: 30-1). Then relying on Blavatsky's sun-son analogy, Leo laid the spiritual foundation for a new psychological astrology. He wrote that,

It is these rays of light and consciousness sent forth from the Sun that form the individualities of men and that make of them in very truth the Sons of God. For the Sun represents the great Sacrifice and sends forth individualities that will afterwards be drawn back in full self-consciousness to share that Bliss which is the essence of the Divine Nature (1936: 30).

It was in another passage in *The Art of Synthesis*, (1936: 30-1), published in 1904, though, that Leo set out the foundations for a technical revolution in twentieth-century astrology. He began by paraphrasing Blavatsky and then moved straight to the direct statement that the sun is the most important single feature in astrological interpretation:

The Sun, then is a representative of our Solar Logos, whose sacrifice on a lower plane is a reflection of that on higher planes above.

There is a Trinity of manifestation from the Solar Logos, just as there is in the greater universe; and this we are taught takes the form of three emanations, or great outpourings of Consciousness (Life), Light, and Heat or Magnetism...

Therefore, as taught in the Secret Doctrine: 'The Sun we see is a reflection of the true Sun: this reflection, as an outward concrete thing, is a Kâma-Rûpa, all the suns forming the Kâma-Rûpa of Kosmos...

Astrologically the Sun is the life factor which animates everything its rays fall upon, giving that magnetic affinity which binds one thing to another...

The Sun is the giver of the life-principle, or the breath of life, and when manifesting in the physical world the Sun represents the specialised life or 'Prana' in each separate individual. In all degrees of manifestation the Sun is the giver of life, spiritually, mentally, and physically, and it is therefore of vital and primary importance in all study of Astrology. It is the representative of the One Life that permeates all things; and therefore careful study of the Sun and all that it denotes in a nativity is necessary before a sound judgment can be given.

This single passage marked a profound shift in the technical procedures of astrological interpretation, perhaps as great a change as any since the development of the horoscope in the Hellenistic world. Blavatsky's cosmology may have entered the astrological

literature through routes other than Leo. For example, Heindel (1929b: 5) summarised her teachings on the invisible sun. Leo's ideas, though, were profoundly influential. Bailey (1973: 16-17) summarised his distinctions between planets, sun-sign and rising sign, while Rudhyar (1978: vii) repeated his view that all twelve signs of the zodiac 'are operative within human nature'. An emphasis on the centrality of solar spirituality also occurs in the writings of followers of Gurdjieff (Collin 1984) and Steiner (Vreede 2001: 283), the latter including the common identity of the sun and the son. But when Margaret Hone in 1951 (1973: 24-5) described the Sun she was deeply indebted to Leo. In the standard British astrological textbook of the 1950s-80s, she wrote,

This is the most powerful of all the horoscopic factors. When considering a personal chart, the judgment of the type of person will depend largely on his solar characteristics....The real underlying *self* will be largely shown by the placing of the Sun...it is understood as the creative principle, the power giving body, the personal self-expression. Its symbol is that of Eternity, and of the power of primal motion, from whence all else issued and was created.

Jeff Mayo's description in 1964 (1981: 17-18) followed directly on Leo's and Hone's. Derek and Julia Parker, in their best selling popular text-book, *The Compleat Astrologer*, omitted Leo's appeal to the soul and Hone's to Eternity, yet their brief psychological description of the sun's attributes made just a slight attempt to recall the traditional associations of pre-Leonian astrology, remarking that the sun rules the heart, heads of state and royalty. Their explicit gesture to New Age astrology *sensu lato* came in their statement that, in the charts of children, the sun relates to 'potentialities to be developed in adulthood' (1971: 86).

Sun-Sign Forecasts in the UK (1)

Although it has been argued that there is a continuous practice of using the position of the sun 'as propitious or appropriate for various activities' dating back to Hellenistic astrology, around the fourth-century BCE up to the nineteenth-century (Koch-Westenoltz 1995: 170), this practice is better understood in terms of the so-called

'Egyptian days', a tradition imported into the Hellenistic world from Egypt in which days were considered variously lucky or unlucky. The entire practice of the form of astrology which is now practised in the western world has always been based primarily on the planets as a group, from Babylonian times (Brown 2000) through to Hellenistic and medieval astrology (Crane 1997). From Lilly's *Christian Astrology* (1647), the first astrological text book to be published in English, to the standard astrological texts of the nineteenth-century, such as Zadkiel (1849), it is clear that each planet might assume the most prominent role in horoscope interpretation, and that the sun might be least important. In general the planet ruling the sign of the zodiac rising on the eastern horizon might be the most significant and the concept of the sun-sign as a primary factor was completely unknown.

However, from around 1850, Raphael's *Prophetic Almanak* included forecasts for the year ahead for individuals born on each day of the year, but not grouped together by zodiac sign (Dean 1996a: 144). By the early twentieth-century Cheiro (1913) was producing character descriptions and forecasts but with the different types grouped by month of birth, with absolutely no mention of zodiac sign. By the 1940s Edward Lyndoe (1949) was producing equivalent books in which knowledge of the zodiac signs was taken for granted. In between these two dates, the language of the signs had entered popular culture.

The first newspaper astrology column is generally understood to have been published in *The Sunday Express* on 24 August 1930 (Naylor 24 August 1930). The Express had asked Cheiro to provide an analysis of the horoscope of the infant Princess Margaret, daughter of the future George VI. The feature was actually written by Cheiro's assistant R.H. Naylor and he included, along with an analysis of the Princess's birth chart, general political predictions and about fifty words per day of birthday predictions for each day of the coming week.

The result was a repeat of the column on the following Sunday (Naylor 31 August 1930), this time without the Princess's birth chart and the political forecasts, but with around seven or eight words per day of birthday forecasts for every day in September. The exercise was repeated a month later (Naylor 5 October 1930), after which the column was published weekly, as it has been to the present day, though with a break beginning in 1943 (Howe 1967: 69). This was most likely because of the reduced size of the newspaper due to war time newsprint shortages.

The newspaper was clearly delighted with the response to Naylor's column. An editorial note introducing his second feature (31 August 1930: 7) reported that 'enormous interest was aroused' in Naylor's predictions and treatment of the Princess's birth chart. The potential increase in circulation clearly guaranteed support from the paper's editor and owner (Howe 1967: 66) and there seems no support for West and Toonder's comment (1973: 113), that the first column was published 'in the spirit of a joke'. Arthur Christiansen, the entertainment editor of the *Express* who hired Naylor late wrote that,

Naylor and his horoscopes became a power in the land. If he said that Monday was a bad day for buying, then the buyers of more than one West End store waited for the stars to become more propitious (Christiansen 1961: 65).

Naylor himself was in no doubt that he had initiated a popular revolution in astrology, claiming that his first column in August 1930 had been both 'the only worthwhile forward step in Astrology this century', and had 'entirely altered the orientation of the public mind towards astrology' (Naylor 1936b: 151). The result, he added (1936b: 151), was 'a widespread willingness to admit that there is or might be something in Astrology. An enormous potential market for horoscopes and Astrological literature was created'. He was not the only astrologer to identify a change. In 1938 Charles Carter (1938: 1) reminisced on developments in the astrological world since 1926, writing that,

The science itself has since then undergone a great change. A new race of astro-journalists has sprung up, popular astrological periodicals have come into existence, and the very small, but enthusiastic astrological world of my young days is no more.

Naylor himself referred to the number of imitators in other newspapers (1936b: 151), adding later that a 'flood of astrological literature...swept throughout the bookshops' (1943: 24). It was clear though, that the language of the zodiac birth-signs was unfamiliar. Naylor did not use them and in one of his first features (Naylor 26 October 1930) gave a brief but painstaking introduction to the zodiac and its division into twelve sections. By 1934 Naylor was introducing his readers to the sun-sign as a character type, including profiles for the sign of the month, featuring 'Mr' and 'Mrs Taurus' on 29 April 1934 but it is clear that the process of education was slow.

Naylor's major competitor was Edward Lyndoe, who was hired by *The Sunday Express's* rival, *The People*, in late 1933. Lyndoe copied Naylor's format, adding monthly forecasts to the daily birthday and general political predictions, but without using the names of the zodiac signs, suggesting that the public was unaware of them (Dean 1996a: 144-5). He did use them in May 1935 but dropped them later. The *Daily Express* launched a daily column in 1934 but with a much lower profile than the Sunday version. It was anonymous and consisted of about 100 words for the birthday of the day and twenty words to sum up the day as a whole for all other readers. The feature was regarded in some quarters as a major success. James Leigh (1936: 98), the editor of *Prediction*, reported that,

The Daily Express will never again doubt the interest which its readers take in Astrology. Some days ago it published on its main page an article which told what happened behind the scenes when through pressure of other matter (sic), the Editor decided to leave out the daily horoscope. No sooner had the paper been dispatched for distribution than the editorial powers regretted their rashness. From 1 a.m. the newspaper was besieged by 'phone and personal enquiries indignantly demanding to know what had happened to the horoscope! A special staff team was delegated to deal with these queries. It spent several working days reading the horoscope over the telephone and sending proofs to readers who lived in the provinces. If the city page, or the shopping notes or the features are curtailed (says the *Express*) no one raises any objection. But the day when the horoscope was omitted will always be remembered,

for it caused endless inconvenience in the office, and disturbed the peace of thousands of readers.

Naylor himself wrote his first twelve paragraph sun-sign columns in 1936 when he became astrologer to *Prediction*. It was clear, however, that even amongst the readers of such a specialised magazine, there was little awareness of the zodiac signs. In the very first issue, in February (1936a) he headed each paragraph as 'Sun in Aquarius', 'Sun in Pisces' and so on, adding the dates when the sun was in that sign. Yet in March the twelve paragraph column was dropped. When it was revived in August the paragraphs were headed with the dates of birth, such as 'Born anywhere between January 21st and February 19th inclusive', followed by the zodiacal subheading in parentheses, such as '(THE AQUARIUS TYPE)' (Naylor 1936c: 16). Once again Naylor appeared to doubt whether the zodiac sign names alone would mean anything to his readers. It was not until the December issue that Naylor used bold headings for the zodiac signs adding only an explanatory note to the effect that each paragraph summarised 'the influences which will be experienced' in the coming month by individuals born between the relevant dates (Naylor 1936d).

Yet, in spite of the anecdotal evidence indicating their popularity wartime newsprint shortages caused a curtailment of astrological publishing in the UK (Howe 1967: 69), while Hone (1973: 296) noted that wartime pressures in general limited wider astrological activity. As West and Toonder (1973: 115) remarked, 'the Second World War put a temporary halt to astrological activity, such as it was'.

Sun-sign Forecasts in the USA

While Naylor appears to have been the first of the high profile media astrologers, it was six years after his first *Sunday Express* feature that he composed his first twelve-paragraph horoscope column using the names of the zodiac signs with no further explanation. The first such columns appear to have been published in the USA,

although the date is uncertain. A weekly feature of the type written by Naylor may have appeared in the *Boston Record* in 1931 (McMillan 1985: 3). However, what is known is that the first regular twelve-paragraph horoscopes columns appeared in *American Astrology* magazine, written by the editor Paul Clancy (though published anonymously), from the first issue onwards (Vol. 1 no 1, March 1933, pp. 11-15).

Ken Irving (2003), the current editor of *American Astrology*, has suggested that it was Dane Rudhyar, on the basis of his own philosophical inclinations, who actually suggested the twelve paragraph format to Clancy. Rudhyar had certainly inherited Blavatsky's respect for the spiritual sun. In 1938 he opened his second book, a detailed account of the planets and horoscope houses in terms of their potential for spiritual development, with a proclamation of the change of the ages:

Today is a new birthday for the ancient gods. New men call for new symbols. Their cry rises, beyond their logical intellects ashamed of mystical longings, for new gods to worship and to use in order to integrate their harrowing mental confusion and to stabilize their uprooted souls. Young gods, fresh and radiant with the sunshine of a new dawn, glorified with the "golden light" of a new Sun of Power, ecstatic with virgin potentialities after the banishment of ancient nightmares (1938: xiii).

To rely on a mass market magazine as his first major vehicle was also consistent with Ruperti's (1986: 55) claim that Rudhyar used astrology much as Blavatsky used spiritualism; to reach the greatest number of people. Clancy, according to Irving, had been producing such columns in his previous magazine, the Detroit-based *Modern Astrology* (Irving 2001).⁴ The format clearly had an immediate appeal. According to Carl Weschke (2002b), the president of Llewellyn, one of the largest publishers of popular astrology titles in the USA, "'American Astrology" magazine's start was entirely based on Clancy's conviction that sun sign astrology would prove popular'. Horoscope columns then spread from the astrological media to the national press, including *the New York Post* in 1936 (McMillan 1985: 3) and the *Los Angeles Times*, whose columns for 1952-3 were critiqued by Theodor Adorno (1994: 34-127). Whereas

in the UK the publication of horoscope columns was hit by wartime newsprint shortages, the same problems were absent in the USA. Thus, as Hone (1973: 296) wrote, in the USA 'great strides took place, because of the comparative ease with which astrological knowledge could be spread to the vast magazine reading public'.

Sun-Sign Forecasts in the UK (2)

In the UK the sun-sign format was not fully adopted in the press until 1955. Although by 31 January 1938 the *Daily Express* horoscope was divided into twelve paragraphs, these were set for the months when the sun was in particular signs, zodiac sign names were not used and each section consisted only of about twenty words with about sixty words for the birthday of the day. However, by 1 January the column was dropped, almost certainly because of newsprint shortages; the size of the newspaper was reduced from up to thirty pages to only ten, and as little as six. Even in January 1951 the newspaper was only six pages long. The column was relaunched by 1 January 1954, but the pre-war format was revised to include one paragraph for the day in general, one for the birthday of the day and two for the signs of the zodiac, which were now named. By 2 January 1956 the full twelve paragraph sun sign horoscope was published daily. Thus, the sun-sign phenomenon in Britain only became an established part of the popular daily press in the mid-1950s.

The Current Status of Sun-Sign Horoscopes in the UK.

My personal experience of dealing with editors of women's magazines in the UK since 1986 is that the horoscope column is considered an essential feature and that the first freelance contributor to be hired for the launch of a new women's magazine is the astrologer. Even if this latter claim is an exaggeration, every single magazine aimed at women and teenage girls in the UK carries a horoscope column. The 'tabloid' newspapers, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Star* and *The Sun* all carry daily horoscopes. The greatest space devoted to any astrologer is

given to Jonathan Cainer who is allocated a whole page in *The Daily Mirror* to publish his column and its associated features. On Sunday the publication of horoscopes extends from the tabloids to the upmarket 'broadsheets' including *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Observer*. The latter three papers, though, have an uneasy relationship with astrology, either giving it minimal space and promotion (*Independent on Sunday*), running a spoof column to compete with the genuine one (*Telegraph*) or periodically cancelling their column (*Observer*). At the level of mass popular culture represented by the tabloid newspapers and women's magazines, though, sun-sign astrology is considered an essential ingredient.

The Appeal of Sun-Sign Columns

Sun-sign columns have been so widely dismissed by other astrologers that little attention has been paid to their appeal. Weschke (2002b) considered that sun-sign astrology's mass appeal,

was all part of the adventure of self-knowledge. That is what was really new in the 20th century. Never before had there been any system that could be applied on a mass market basis that "revealed" one's self to oneself.

In Rudhyar's view (1974: 20),

The "solar astrology" of popular astrology magazines and newspaper columns is oracular in that it is meant to convey to human beings, categorized according to the twelve Sun signs, general value judgments concerning the character of those responses to everyday circumstances which would be most suited to their basic temperament.

Oken (1990: 11), meanwhile, echoed Rudhyar and pointed to the Sun-sign column's appeal as being to 'focus on the need to clarify one's individual identity'. Sutcliffe (2003: 6) considered astrology's ability to address personal concerns while providing a metaphysical framework, converting the 'vast occult cosmologies' of Blavatsky, Jung and Gurdjieff into a form which 'could travel socially and speak both to everyday concerns of love and happiness and grand theories of meaningful coincidence'.

Different horoscope columns, though, have different styles. I asked Jonathan Cainer, current astrologer for *The Daily Mirror* and past columnist for *Today*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express*, to what he attributed his popularity. He replied,

It's a cocktail. There's not one ingredient. It's a cocktail. That's how I think of it... I meditate every day and that takes a bit of a discipline. Enough to leave me with this feeling of 'what do I do?' In that hour I spend my time trying not to be on the planet. Trying to be...at one with the one single thing that goes on forever and ever and then I come out of it, generally speaking, with a sense of optimism and I think that's where my optimism comes from...I am, one way and another, relentlessly optimistic...So I can't bring myself to write a forecast that has got an edge of gloom to it and I think that's the one thing that people like. So somewhere between my spiritual view of life which is 'stand back from everything, let it go and it will be alright', and my Sagittarian ebullience is that. And that I think is the factor that people like (Cainer interview).

As David Spangler wrote, 'The idea of the new age, as I see it is - and must be - an optimistic vision. It cannot be anything other' (1984: 76). Shelley von Strunckel, who writes for *The Sunday Times* and the London *Evening Standard*, argues that astrology fulfils an unsatisfied public need for a contemplative, philosophical perspective:

In our culture today, what we are pleased to call education doesn't go anywhere near anything about philosophy...simple education doesn't teach people to observe how they think or to pause and be still. Therefore, part of the process in their...reading a column, even something as short as an entry in the *Standard*... is that an individual is introduced to this new way of being with their mind in which they step outside of themselves...because most people don't know how to pause, so their appointment with their astrology column... may be their only time in their life when they have stillness (von Strunckel interview).

Ken Irving, *American Astrology's* current editor, who is in a position to evaluate the appeal of sun-signs as opposed to a more detailed interest in astrology, estimated that around 75% of the 110,000 who buy the magazine every month buy it for the sun-sign columns. He added,

the other 25% is perhaps three-fourths people who are mostly interested in sun signs but who know something about other aspects of astrology and are interested in reading about those and then there is a very small portion, maybe from 5-10%, who are people who would read the magazine just for astrology. Learning about astrology. Finding out things they didn't know about it. And those people ...sort of tolerate the fact that the sun signs are there (Irving interview).

Chapter Summary

A strong statement of what was, from the 1960s to 1990s, a dominant attitude to sun-sign astrology amongst British astrologers, was written in the early 1970s by Charles Harvey, then the Astrological Association's President. Distinguishing sun-sign delineation, the simple description of character according to sun's location at birth, from sun-sign forecasts, in newspaper and magazine columns, he excused the former on the grounds that 'such literature has a useful role to play in spreading astrological ideas to a wider public' (1973-74b 39; see also Oken 1974: 5). The latter, which he claimed 'are indelibly associated with astrology in the public's mind', he condemned as 'an offence to the intelligence of even the most modestly endowed', adding that they 'are known to be a journalistic fiction of the 1930s' which have 'no relation to any kind of astrological fact or tradition' (Harvey 1973-4b: 39; see also Harding: 1990: 89-91). In this chapter it has been shown that sun-sign delineations also have little basis in astrological tradition, being based largely on Alan Leo's extrapolation from Ptolemaic principles inspired by Blavatsky's adaptation of Hermetic cosmology. It has also been shown that sun-sign columns were developed by astrologers out of the new astrology of Hermetically inspired sun-sign delineation. Both sun-sign delineations and sun-sign forecasts thus conform to Heelas' (1996: 23) definition of New Age disciplines as 'detraditionalised'. Indeed, it was this very break with the tradition that Harvey used in his attack on sun-sign forecasts. Further, in that Leo's reform of astrology was devoted to the need, as he saw it, to prepare for the Age of Aquarius, sun-sign astrology as a whole may be seen as a feature of New Age culture. Leo's entire body of work may be identified as belonging to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu stricto*. However, in that neither sun-sign delineations post-Leo, nor horoscope columns, require any adherence to, or even knowledge of, the millenarian aspects of New Age culture, they may be better identified as belonging to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu lato*.

Notes

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1. For example, if the second house, ruling money, is found in Virgo, the financial fortunes may then be indicated by Mercury, the ruler of Virgo. The full medieval system for assigning planetary rulers might be very much more complex than this simple example suggests. The house cusp is its beginning point.
 2. *Physics* I, 2 (194b 14).
 3. Wallis' translation (Copernicus 1975: I.10, pp. 24-5) reads 'in the centre of all rests the sun'.
 4. Clancy himself referred to a previous magazine as *Popular Astrology*. See 'The Message of the Stars', *American Astrology*, vol. 1 no 1, March 1933, p. 6.