



Astrology, Modernity, and the Disputed Nature of Self

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Astrology should, by many accounts, be extinct in the modern west. Indeed its death has been characterised as a defining quality of modernity—as when, for example, Keith Thomas argued that astrology was the type of study which made sense in a world in which “it seemed natural to postulate a sympathetic relationship between man and his environment”; yet now, the basic premise of astrology “seems so fantastic that it is difficult to understand how men of intelligence and perspicacity could ever have accepted it.”¹

In this paper I develop the case that astrology’s surprising survival can be understood by reference to different models of what the individual human self is; and of what astrology is. In excavating the latter, I will draw upon a motley collection of definitions and distinctions. My contention is

¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 1973) p. 396; p. 394.

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that comparison between ideas of selfhood and ideas of astrology has the potential to shed light on both.

MODERNITY AND DISENCHANTMENT

The definitions of “modern”, and “pre-modern” deployed in this paper align with views of the cosmos as mechanical, and animate, respectively. In this, I follow Alexander Koyre (amongst others) in his discussion of modernity’s “mechanisation of the world-view”.² Similarly, in defining the “conventional wisdom” on modernity, Michael A. Gillespie stated that, “modernity is a secular realm in which man replaces God as the center of existence and seeks to become the master and possessor of nature by the application of a new science and its attendant technology.”³ A looming presence for such discussions is Max Weber (1864–1920) and the concept of disenchantment that he adopted and propounded. For Weber, the “growing process of intellectualization and rationalization” that he saw in the world,

does *not* imply a growing understanding of the conditions under which we live. It means something quite different. It is the knowledge or the conviction that if *only we wished* to understand them we *could* do so at any time. It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world.⁴

In Weber’s account, the pre-modern world assumed the possibility of magical connections between the cosmos and the individual beings who lived in it. The word generally rendered as “disenchantment”, *entzauberung*, literally translates as “de-magic-ing”.⁵ He characterised “magic” by remarking that, in modernity, “we need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control the spirits or pray to them. Instead,

² Koyre, Alexandre: *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957) p. viii.

³ Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL: 2008) pp. x–xi.

⁴ Max Weber in: David Owen & Tracy B. Strong (eds.), Rodney Livingstone (tr.), “Science as a Vocation” in: *Max Weber, The Vocation Lectures* (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis IN, 2004) pp. 12–13

⁵ Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (University of Chicago Press: 2017), p. 4.

technology and calculation achieve our ends.”⁶ The modern world is therefore one in which magic has been replaced by calculation of predictable, physical, forces.

Peter Burke remarked, “it has not been difficult for historians to explain why astrology went into decline, invoking Max Weber’s... ‘disenchantment of the world’.”⁷ That said, he continued, “it is not so easy to explain the survival or ‘rebirth’ of astrology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...”⁸ There have been a few discussions in the last thirty years of astrology as a possible counter-agent to disenchantment.⁹ In what follows I will consider this possibility, drawing on astrologers own ideas about their craft, with a particular focus not just on the nature of the world but also on the nature of the selves believed to inhabit such a world.

TAYLOR’S “POROUS” AND “BUFFERED” SELVES

In *The Secular Age*, the philosopher Charles Taylor argued that a major part of the disenchantment identified by Weber was “a new sense of the self and its place in the cosmos: not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers, but what I want to call ‘buffered’.”¹⁰ A crucial feature of the advent of modernity was, he wrote, that “there was a shift from the enchanted world to a cosmos conceived in conformity with post-Newtonian science, in which there is absolutely no question of higher meanings being *expressed* in the universe around us.”¹¹

In Taylor’s terms, the “porous self” believes that it inhabits an interconnected, participatory (therefore “magical”) world: “By definition for

⁶ Josephson-Storm, p. 13.

⁷ Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p. 152.

⁸ Burke, p. 152.

⁹ Chronologically: Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1993) p. 412 & passim; Patrick Curry in: Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon* (Oxford: Berg, 2004) pp. 77–92; Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 2006) pp. 20–22 & passim; Nicholas Campion, “Enchantment and the Awe of the Heavens” in: Enrico Maria Corsini (ed.), *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena VI* (San Francisco, CA: Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 2011) pp. 415–422. (Campion’s paper focuses on astronomical experience more than astrology per se.)

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Belknap Press/Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA: 2007) p. 27.

¹¹ Taylor, *Secular Age*, p. 446. Original emphasis.

the porous self, the source of its most powerful and important emotions are outside the mind”; or, better put, the very notion that there is a clear boundary... has no sense.”¹² The “buffered self” meanwhile assumes that all spirits, all forms of magic have been revealed to be either proto-science, pseudo-science, or simple nonsense. “This self can see itself as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it.”¹³ This distinction between two kinds of “self” has been referred to by many contemporary scholars.¹⁴

It would be possible to compare Taylor’s distinction to other, similar, ones. For instance Tambiah proposed “causality” and “participation” as possible orientations to the world, with the former including an attitude of “ego against the world” and the latter, a “sense of encompassing cosmic oneness”.¹⁵ That would however be a different paper. My aim here is to take Taylor’s porous/buffered distinction and show that it sheds light on trends within the world of horoscopic astrology in the twentieth century. At the same time, as I hope to show, this analysis can also illuminate and even enhance Taylor’s terms. Taylor acknowledged that “the distinction I try to make between “porous” and “buffered” selves requires a great deal more work”, and I would like to think that what follows may make a small contribution in that direction.¹⁶

In what follows I take a “history of ideas” approach to the world of astrologers, where the focus is on the emergence and consequences of ideas. I am not concerned, here, with the truth-status of these ideas (though this is a subject I have discussed elsewhere¹⁷). By the same token, I have not taken it on myself to attempt to resolve apparent contradictions between different statements, even when they are from the same astrologer. The maintenance of beliefs which appear contradictory is often part of

¹² Taylor, *Secular Age*, p. 38.

¹³ Taylor, *Secular Age*, p. 38.

¹⁴ Notable examples include: Oliver Davies, *Theology of Transformation: Faith, Freedom & the Christian Act* (Oxford University Press: 2013); Samuel Kimbriel, *Friendship as Sacred Knowing: Overcoming Isolation* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Justin Pack, *Amor Mundi and Overcoming Modern World Alienation* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2020), pp. 17–20; 48–50; 143–148.

¹⁵ Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 108–9.

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, “Charles Taylor’s Response to a Roundtable Discussion of His Book *A Secular Age*”, *Political Theology* Vol. 11 No. 2 (2010) p. 299.

¹⁷ Garry Phillipson, *Astrology and Truth: A Context in Contemporary Epistemology* (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2019: http://cosmocritic.com/pdfs/Phillipson_Garry_Astrology_and_Truth.pdf) (Checked 28th February 2023).

the astrologer's worldview, for one reason or another (for instance the inadequacy of established concepts to map reality in an exhaustive manner, or simple confusion). I have drawn much of my material from magazines written by and for astrologers—on the basis that they have more latitude to explore and argue about the nature of astrology than is the case in public-facing media.

BIFURCATIONS OF ASTROLOGY

Commentators on astrology frequently divide the subject into two forms in order to demarcate the extent of its intrusion into their own area of interest and authority. Thus for example in their 1988 book *Astrology: True or False? A Scientific Evaluation*, Roger B. Culver and Philip A. Ianna (both professors of astronomy) distinguished between non-scientific and would-be scientific variants.¹⁸ They referred to the two forms as the “correlational” and “cosmic forces” approaches respectively.¹⁹ In this schema, the first type took “no interest in the physical causes and effects in celestial phenomena”. Under the second type, astrology was “the science which treats of the influence upon human character of cosmic forces emanating from celestial bodies” (they here quoted the astrologer Nicholas deVore, [1886–1960]).²⁰ In similar vein, Geoffrey Dean and his colleagues proposed a distinction between subjective and objective astrology, wherein only objective astrology “needs to be true”.²¹

The urge to bifurcate astrology has a long history, as seen in this excerpt from the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–1563):

let the bishops see carefully, that books, treatises, indices on judicial astrology be not read or kept, which dare to affirm as certain that something is to happen regarding future contingent, or chance events, or those actions which depend on the human will. However, judgments and natural observa-

¹⁸ Robert B. Culver and Philip A. Ianna, *Astrology: True or False? A Scientific Evaluation* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988).

¹⁹ Culver & Ianna, p. 2.

²⁰ Nicholas deVore, *Encyclopedia of Astrology* (Totowa, NJ: 1976) p. 28; cited in Culver & Ianna, p. 2.

²¹ Geoffrey Dean with Suitbert Ertel, Ivan W. Kelly, Arthur Mather and Rudolf Smit in: Garry Phillipson, *Astrology in the Year Zero* (London: Flare, 2000) p. 129.

tions which are written for the purpose of aiding navigation, agriculture, or the medical art, are allowed.²²

This introduces the terms “judicial” and “natural” as distinct varieties of astrology. This pair of terms is frequently encountered in historical accounts of astrology, and the original motive behind their creation and deployment seems to have been to segregate what was suspected to be a supernatural element in astrological practice.²³ Thus the historian T. J. Tomlin asserted, “the end result of early modern disputes over astrology was the creation of a clear dividing line, not between reason and astrology but rather through astrology, dividing it into acceptable (natural) and unacceptable (judicial) forms.”²⁴ The reason for the unacceptability of judicial astrology was clarified in Sixtus V’s papal bull of 1586 *Coeli et terrae creator Deus*.²⁵ Sixtus asserted that since prediction of the future for individuals was not possible as such, practices such as judicial astrology which pretended to provide such information amounted to nothing more than the deception of demons (*daemonum fraudibus*), with an occasional accurate prediction being supplied by the devil himself in order to make the process convincing.²⁶ Hence, through the eyes of the Church, astrology acquired the “double intellectual front” to which Ernst Cassirer referred in 1927: “As a theory, it seeks to place before us the eternal laws

²² This translation from: Luís Campos Ribeiro, “The bounded heavens: Defining the Limits of Astrological Practice in the Iberian Indices”, *Annals of Science* Vol. 77 No. 1 (April 2020), p. 52. Text in: Theodore Alois Buckley (tr.), *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London: George Routledge, 1851) “Second Part” “Concerning Prohibited Books”, Rule IX p. 287.

²³ The terms are considered for instance in: Nicholas Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology: A Cultural History of Western Astrology, Volume 1: The Ancient and Classical Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2008) p. 284, pp. 212–3 respectively.

²⁴ T. J. Tomlin, *A Divinity for all Persuasions: Almanacs and Early American Religious Life* (Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 30.

²⁵ *Bullarum, Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis Editio*, VIII (Turin: 1863) pp. 646–50.

²⁶ *Bullarum* p. 646–7. I acknowledge my debt to three texts for their insights into this text: Ugo Baldini, “The Roman Inquisition’s condemnation of astrology: antecedents, reasons and consequences” in: Gigliola Fragnito (ed.), Adrian Belton (tr.), *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 79–110; and Ribeiro (2020).

of the universe in a clear outline; whereas its practice stands under the sign of the fear of demons”.²⁷

The terms “natural” and “judicial” when applied to astrology are somewhat problematic. One reason is that they may be taken to imply a stable and exact significance which would be at variance with the interpretive drift of lived culture. H. Darrel Rutkin has argued that, given this issue, it is best to treat the terms with more caution than is often the case.²⁸ A second reason is that the terms’ roots are theological when for a modern, disenchanted, individual the very existence of gods, God, spirits or demons might be in question. In what follows I will therefore not put weight on the terms “natural” and “judicial” astrology. Instead I will refer to “astrology as science” and “astrology as divination”. There is precedent for these terms in recent literature and while perhaps not perfect, they capture the sense in which astrology would appear to a buffered self and porous self, respectively.²⁹ This should emerge in what follows.

THE BUFFERED SELF AND ASTROLOGY

This section aims to introduce the historical lineaments of astrology as science—astrology, that is, that can dovetail with a buffered self. The essential issue here is that the self is not greatly involved, because what is involved is simply calculation—the calculation of horoscopes in this case—followed by the application of rules in a standard, mechanical way.

The clearest, because most extreme, articulation of what this approach entails may be from Geoffrey Dean, a technical writer and editor with a PhD in analytical chemistry. Dean is one of astrology’s best-informed critics, having learned and practised horoscopic astrology before devoting many years to the subject’s analysis from a scientific perspective 1977 saw the release of *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology*, compiled by Dean, with the assistance of Arthur Mather and the involvement of fifty-two

²⁷ Ernst Cassirer, Mario Domandi (tr.), *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1963 [*Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1927]) p. 105.

²⁸ H. Darrel Rutkin, *Sapientia Astrologica: Astrology, Magic and Natural Knowledge*, ca. 1250–1800 (Springer: Cham, 2019) p. xviii, pp. 360–1.

²⁹ A significant influence on usage here is: Geoffrey Cornelius, *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination* (London: Arkana/Penguin, 1994) p. 72 and *passim*. In the second edition (Bournemouth, Wessex Astrologer 2001), pp. 74–5.

collaborators.³⁰ The text set out to address “The ultimate problem in astrology”, namely, “are astrological interpretations true or not?”³¹ A starting point for the project was the premise that astrology worked—or at least, seemed to work—in the experience of its practitioners. Thus for example Dean stated that, “[astrological] charts are often so exactly right in such unlikely ways that coincidence or gullibility would seem to be ruled out.”³² That said, he believed that coincidence and gullibility *did* need to be definitively ruled out before astrology could be considered true. At the time of the composition of *Recent Advances*, there was considerable optimism amongst many astrologers that scientific research would demonstrate the truth of astrology beyond all doubt. This may be inferred from the involvement of three astrological organisations and many astrologers in the preparation and publication of the text. Dean’s perspective on science led him to dismiss some promising results from trials involving individual astrologers, arguing:

it is clear that the significant blind trials have not demonstrated that astrology works but only that astrologers work. Hence to adequately test astrology the participation of the astrologer must be eliminated.³³

This statement epitomises the approach of astrology-as-science. If all things can be known by calculation, a purely mechanical process, the astrologer’s subjective input and involvement would only be an obstacle to the evaluation of astrology. Any subjective input could introduce bias and as such should be eliminated from the evaluation of astrology’s truth. In theory at least, a computer program could replace the astrologer. Dean’s contention is controversial and has been specifically criticised by several commentators including Bernadette Brady and Geoffrey Cornelius.³⁴

³⁰ Geoffrey Dean, assisted by Arthur Mather and 52 collaborators, *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology: A Critical Review, 1900–1976* (Subiaco, Western Australia: Analogic, 1977).

³¹ Dean et al., *Recent Advances* p. 23.

³² Dean et al., *Recent Advances*, p. 25

³³ Dean et al., *Recent Advances*, p. 554.

³⁴ Bernadette Brady, “Astrology and Research” (2003), https://www.academia.edu/8823970/Astrology_and_Research_Astrologers_attitudes_to_research_methodologies_and_the_implications_of_these_attitudes_for_the_contemporary_communities_of_astrologers (checked 27th February 2023); Cornelius, *Moment of Astrology*, p. 66 (p. 62 in 2nd edn.).

The self in this account is a buffered self. This may be assumed on the basis that it could not be privy to messages from spirits since they do not exist—a view posited by Dean and his collaborators in a later text which quotes the physicist Victor J. Stenger:

I have looked at pictures taken with the most powerful telescopes showing distant galaxies, so I believe in galaxies... But nowhere in those pictures do I see the slightest direct or indirect hint of gods, spirits, or ghosts. These only seem to exist in the dreams and fantasies that rattle around in our heads.³⁵

What needs to be excluded from tests of astrology, therefore, is not interaction with (non-existent) spirits but phenomena such as “cold reading”, whereby an astrologer might elicit clues from their client’s demeanour. Although this might take place without the astrologer being aware of it, it is explicable in terms of observation and deduction and is therefore within the disenchanted realm of the buffered self. In fact the possibility of enchantment is dismissed by Dean et al. (except as an illusion) in their most recent work, where they assert, with specific reference to Max Weber’s thought, that “disenchantment is what occurs when mystery is replaced by understanding.”³⁶ This is therefore a straightforward positivist account of astrology. The following accounts are generally more complicated.

A number of twentieth century astrologers defined their subject as a science. In 1901 the scholar and biographer Dr Richard Garnett considered the description of astrology as “an occult science” and thundered, “It is nothing of the kind. An occult science is one that can be pursued only by adepts. Astrology is just as much a physical science as astronomy or geology.”³⁷

³⁵ Victor J. Stenger, *Physics and Psychics: The Search for a World Beyond the Senses* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990) p. 22—quoted in: Geoffrey Dean, Arthur Mather, David Nias, Rudolf Smit, *Tests of Astrology* (Amsterdam: AinO Publications, 2016) p. 312 and: Geoffrey Dean, Arthur Mather, David Nias, Rudolf Smith, *Understanding Astrology* (Amsterdam: AniO Publications, 2022) p. 654.

³⁶ Dean et al., *Understanding Astrology*, p. 83.

³⁷ Richard Garnett writing as “A. G. Trent”, “Preface” to: George Wilde, *Chaldean Astrology Up To Date* (London: E. Marsh-Stiles, 1901) p. 6. Same page of the second edition, 1919.

The influential Theosophist and astrologer Alan Leo (1860–1917) contended that, “astrology is the most impersonal of all philosophies or sciences”.³⁸ In 1914 he went into more detail:

Now while I am in sympathy with the practice of the “occult arts,” by those who are genuine practitioners, I must separate Astrology from Palmistry, and psychic methods of divination. Astrology does not depend upon any psychic powers of divination, but upon pure intellect and the JUDGMENT of nativities, and therefore stands alone at present as a practical study based upon mathematics, dealing with the influences outside the human being as well as his response within. Astrologers are not working on psychic lines, and they therefore stand apart from divination and all those methods which at present are not considered scientific.³⁹

These quotations reflect the view, felt from the seventeenth century through to the present day, and articulated by Dean et al., that a true astrology would by definition be either science or at the least proto-science.⁴⁰ That said, a caveat is required here to register the fact that astrologers were not operating in a philosophical or legislative vacuum, and had an ulterior motive to argue for astrology’s scientific credentials. The 1914 quotation from Alan Leo, directly above, appeared after he was charged with telling fortunes under the Vagrancy Act. This was dismissed on a technicality though he was charged again in 1917 when he was found guilty (albeit sentenced only to pay expenses and a nominal fee).⁴¹ A number of other astrologers faced charges in the early years of the twentieth century; Evangeline Adams was tried and found not guilty three times under New York law—1911, 1914, and 1923.⁴² Several other astrologers

³⁸ Bessie Leo “and others”, *The Life and Work of Alan Leo: Theosophist-Astrologer-Mason* (London: Modern Astrology, 1919).

³⁹ Alan Leo, “The Editor’s Observatory: Important to Astrologers”, *Modern Astrology* Vol. XI No. 9, September 1914, pp. 387–88. Original capitalisation.

⁴⁰ A trend in the seventeenth century towards characterising and evaluating astrology in scientific terms was identified, for instance, by Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science, Volume VII: The Seventeenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1958) pp. 559–563; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline*, p. 769; and P. M. Harman, *The Scientific Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1983) p. 32.

⁴¹ Kim Farnell, *Modern Astrologers: The lives of Alan & Bessie Leo* (Kent: Self-published, 2018) pp. 227–231; pp. 237–239 respectively.

⁴² Karen Christino, *Foreseeing the Future: Evangeline Adams and Astrology in America* (Amherst, MA: One Reed, 2002) pp. 81–2; 90–100; p. 119, respectively.

in the UK and USA were not so lucky.⁴³ In Germany, Otto Pöllner was prosecuted for fortune-telling in 1914 and A. M. Grimm in 1921.⁴⁴ There was thus a significant incentive for astrologers to emphasise the scientific-looking elements of their practice as a way of pre-empting legal challenge.⁴⁵

A major part of Leo's defence was that he was not predicting fated events, but rather tendencies. As a historical side-note it seems likely that this tactic had by that point been a favoured go-to for astrologers for centuries. This can be inferred from the fact that, in 1586, in the papal bull introduced above, Sixtus V took the opportunity to close a loophole that had been overlooked by the Council of Trent. He specified that it was not permissible for astrologers to "state anything regarding future occurrences, or acts dependent upon human will, even if they say and protest that such thing was not stated as a certainty..."⁴⁶ It seems safe to assume that since this rule was amended, astrologers had been acting in a way that required that emendation.

It was by no means unheard of for an astrologer to allow—as did Leo—the existence of magic, but to distance it from astrology. For instance, a century before Leo's time, the astrologer and physician Ebenezer Sibly (1751–1799) had told his readers that "Astrology, and Magic, how much soever they have been confounded with each other, and considered by the vulgar as one and the same doctrine, are nevertheless two very opposite and distinct pursuits." Astrology, he argued, is based on "a natural cause implanted in the motion and influence of the spheres, which it is at once honourable and praiseworthy to study", whereas magic involves "occult spells, diabolical incantations, the agency of spirits, or confederacy with the devil."⁴⁷

In terms of Taylor's categories, both Leo and Sibly fall into a mixed position here. The self is, intrinsically, porous—since divination and interaction with spirits is possible—but that porosity does not intrude into astrology. Astrology somehow proceeds *as if* the self were buffered, even though ultimately it is not. It is not clear why, in the views of Sibly and Leo, an astrologer might not slip unawares into divination when pondering a horoscope.

⁴³ Kim Farnell, *Modern Astrologers*, p. 11, pp. 104–6, pp. 230–1.

⁴⁴ Ellic Howe, *Uranias Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers* (London: William Kimber, 1967) pp. 95–6.

⁴⁵ This point is made by Farnell, *Modern Astrologers*, p. 105.

⁴⁶ *Bullarum Diplomatum* p. 656, translation from Ribeiro, p. 53.

⁴⁷ Ebenezer Sibly, *A Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology* (London: Green and Co., 1788), p. 1059 (Part 4).

DREAMS OF FUTURE/PAST

Any account of astrology's nature is likely to involve a narrative (often implicit) about the subject's origins and direction of travel. The dilemma here was summed up by the astrologer and editor of *The Astrological Journal* Zach Matthews (1914–2002) in the question, “whether mundane knowledge of astrology began by divine inspiration or by observation and correlation over a long period of time.”⁴⁸

As a Theosophist, Alan Leo leaned towards the “divine inspiration” position, as seen for example when he stated that “in Chaldean Astrology the functions of the Gods or Devas were well-known, and the priests of Chaldea were chiefly concerned with invoking these great Beings, and the whole study of Astrology appears to have been turned in this direction.”⁴⁹ Given the involvement of gods or devas at the outset, Leo does not make it clear why this would not remain the case on an ongoing basis and why divine guidance was a limited-time offer.

Taking the opposite position, Dennis Elwell (1930–2014) argued that “the history of astrology has long been a groping in the dark; there never were any clear-eyed prophets for whom all its mysteries stood revealed.”⁵⁰ One person's “groping in the dark” is another's “empirical observation”—a more positive spin perhaps on the same process. An example can be found when George Wilde (1860–1916), writing in 1909, traced the origin of astrology back to “simple shepherds; afterwards called Wise Men” in Chaldea, gathering data about astrologically based correspondences: “they observed the gloominess of the child born when Saturn was in the ascendant ... the vivacity and gaiety of temperament when Venus succeeded that planet...”⁵¹ Almost a century later, in 2002, Julia Parker told

⁴⁸ Zach Matthews, “The Beginnings of Astrology”, *Astrology: The Astrologers' Quarterly* Vol 50 No 2, Summer 1976, p. 49.

⁴⁹ Alan Leo, *Esoteric Astrology: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Modern Astrology/N. Fowler, 1913) p. 124.

⁵⁰ Dennis Elwell, “Astrological Superstitions”, *Astrology: The Astrologers' Quarterly* Vol. 41 No. 2, June–August 1967, p. 53.

⁵¹ George Wilde, *Chaldean Astrology: How to Cast and Read the Horoscope and Calculate Star Courses* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1909), p. 7. The passage quoted does not appear in the first edition of the book (1901).

a conference of astrologers: “Because astrology has such a long recorded history, it is very reassuring that we can confidently tell any sceptic or client that every statement we make has the backing of empirical research, whether its findings were published BC or in 2002.”⁵² In concluding she remarked, “we don’t have to believe anything, do we? We know! And that’s what infuriates [astrology’s critics], isn’t it?”⁵³

Not all assertions of astrology’s scientific credentials are so strident, nor so confident of astrology’s roots. Thus in 1976 Zach Matthews inveighed against “scientific materialism” and remarked, “Modern astrological research ... will slowly demolish the walls of ignorance, but it will take time.”⁵⁴ The work that particularly brought hope to astrologers of future vindication was that of Michel Gauquelin (1928–1991) and Françoise Gauquelin (1929–2007). Michel Gauquelin characterised his approach as seeking an answer to one question: “Is it possible to observe common positions in heavenly bodies for the births of individuals who have manifested common tendencies throughout their lives?”⁵⁵ Individuals’ occupations seemed promising as “a precise activity in human life which can be observed from the outside, that is to say, objectively.”⁵⁶ He tried to exclude work that might be merely expedient for the employee, to which end “I chose the occupations which are above all an objective manifestation of a personal interest, a powerful vocation ... science, art, politics, war, and so on.”⁵⁷ This approach is consonant with the desire of Dean et al. to eliminate the astrologer. The upshot of the Gauquelins’ research was that only a very small sub-set of astrological techniques yielded positive results in tests, on which basis he asserted that there was a “gold nugget” in

⁵² Julia Parker, “The Planets—Myth and Reality (The Carter Memorial Lecture)”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. 44 No. 5, Sept/Oct 2002, p. 8.

⁵³ Parker, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Zach Matthews, “Editorial”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. XVIII No. 2 (Spring 1976), p. 2.

⁵⁵ Michel and Françoise Gauquelin pursued much research jointly and a number of texts were published under both their names. In referring to the author(s), as with for example, “his approach” here, I have followed the form of identification used in the text concerned. Michel Gauquelin, Gillian Hargreaves (tr.), *Written in the Stars: The Proven Link Between Astrology and Destiny* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1988) p. 42. This book comprises Gauquelin’s first two books: *L’Influence des Astres—Etude Critique et Expérimentale* (Paris: Editions du Dauphin, 1955); and *Les Hommes et Les Astres* (Paris: Denöel, 1960), in English translation.

⁵⁶ Michel Gauquelin, *Written in the Stars*, p. 42.

⁵⁷ Michel Gauquelin, *Written in the Stars*, p. 43.

astrology—a small subset of the entire corpus of astrological techniques which deliver positive results in tests.⁵⁸ This led to him being labelled a “neo-astrologer” by his critics—a label which, by his own account, he initially resented but eventually came to accept, using “*Neo-Astrology*” as the title of his final book.⁵⁹ This is a recent example of a manifesto to purify astrology, an aspiration already several centuries old.

A NEED FOR PURIFICATION

The need to purify astrology was given voice by Francis Bacon in 1623, when he wrote: “As for astrology, it is so full of superstition, that scarce anything sound can be discovered in it. Notwithstanding, I would rather have it purified than altogether rejected.”⁶⁰ This is often cited as an early representation of the attitude the modern scientific era brought towards astrology.⁶¹

As the twentieth century approached, many astrologers espoused the need to purify their subject. Thus for instance the influential A. J. Pearce in 1879 quoted the passage from Bacon already cited before reassuring his readers that the necessary purification had already been undertaken by John Partridge (1644–1715), who “reduced the science to demonstrable rules”; and that Zadkiel’s work in the nineteenth century “consisted of pure science freed from all superstitions”.⁶² This notwithstanding, when,

⁵⁸ First asserted in: Michel Gauquelin, *Cosmic Influences on Human Behavior* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973) p. 20; reiterated (as “a grain of gold”) in: Michel Gauquelin, Stela Tomašević, *Neo-Astrology: A Copernican Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1991) p. 3.

⁵⁹ Michel Gauquelin, *The Truth About Astrology*, p. viii; Michel Gauquelin, *Neo-Astrology*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Francis Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (*Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning*) Book III in: Francis Bacon, James Spedding (tr.), Robert Leslie Ellis (ed.) and Douglas Denon Heath (ed.), *The Works of Francis Bacon, Vol. IV: Translations of the Philosophical Works, Vol. I* (London: Longmans, 1870) p. 349. Cited in, Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989) p. 61 and Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), p. 220.

⁶¹ Examples: Ann Geneva p. 77; Keith Thomas, p. 416; Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology, Vol. II: The Medieval and Modern Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 163; Jim Tester, p. 220.

⁶² A. J. Pearce, *The Text-Book of Astrology, Vol. I: Genethliology* (London: Cousins & Co., 1879), p. 22. Pearce is here praising his teacher—Zadkiel I, aka Richard James Morrison (1795–1874). I characterise Pearce as “influential” on the basis that his *Text-Book of Astrology* is still in print, the most recent edition being from the American Federation of Astrologers in 2006.

on 24th January 1896, the Astrological Society was formed with Alan Leo as its president, one of the society's three main objectives was "to purify and re-establish Astrology".⁶³ This followed on the heels of a plea from the astrologer known to posterity only as "G. E. W." from Chicago who, after quoting Bacon, wrote: "This is the Keynote. Let us take what we find to be certain in this science and eject what is unworthy or unreasonable."⁶⁴

There was however no unity amongst astrologers on how to purify astrology. Hence in August 1907 Pearce, his derision clearly directed at the writings of Alan Leo, announced: "The superstitious nonsense taught in "Modern Astrology" and certain "Guides" is nauseating; and it is lamentable that it should lead some students away from the true science..."⁶⁵ Published in the same month Leo, in the kind of statement Pearce may have had in mind, advocated for belief in reincarnation, arguing that "no one can believe in Astrology without accepting this truth, for upon this and its accompanying idea of action and re-action are the laws of Astrology based."⁶⁶ As a devoted member of the Theosophical Society, Leo's conception of science included the idea of its being subservient to, and eventually to be subsumed by, the full Theosophical teaching. This approach can be seen, for instance, in H. P. Blavatsky's assertion that "The recognized laws of physical science account for but a few of the more objective of the so-called spiritual phenomena."⁶⁷

In such cases—where there is an agreement that astrology should function as a science, but a failure on astrology's part to do so—some practitioners have been tempted to find fault with other astrologers rather than astrology per se. The model of a buffered self simply following logical procedures of calculation and deploying standard interpretive rules makes it seem as though the outcome of chart readings should be well-nigh unanimous. Given the disagreements that periodically arose between

⁶³ Alan Leo: "Editorial", *Modern Astrology* No. 8, March 1896, p. 206.

⁶⁴ G. E. W., "True and False Astrology", *The Astrologers' Magazine*, Vol. 3 No. 9, April 1893, p. 196.

⁶⁵ A. J. Pearce, "Two Remarkable Horoscopes" in *Star Lore and Future Events* No. 8, August 1897, p. 120.

⁶⁶ Alan Leo, "A Simple Method of Instruction in the Science of Practical Astrology (Part 1)", *Modern Astrology* Vol. 3 No. 1, August 1897, p. 5.

⁶⁷ H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (London: W. J. Bouton, 1877) p. 65. For a discussion of H. P. Blavatsky's complicated relationship to science: Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) pp. 218–222.

astrologers, an explanation was needed for the occasions on which astrology did not supply accurate (or consistent) information. One approach was to lay the blame at the feet of other astrologers for not understanding how to do astrology. Hence, for instance G. E. W. could assert that, “the science of nativities has been corroborated over and over again, in fact, by everyone without exception who has made a careful and unprejudiced examination of the same.”⁶⁸ Yet in the same article, after listing predictions for January and February 1889 in the almanac of Zadkiel II (a pseudonym for A. J. Pearce) and observing that none were fulfilled, he felt entitled to conclude, “I think that the above extracts are enough to show that the present Zadkiel is a pretender.”⁶⁹

It is possible that many astrologers were too polite to voice their reservations about their colleagues, but a number felt less compunction about attacking a particular form of astrology.

THE DIVISIVE CASE OF HORARY ASTROLOGY

Horary astrology is the practice of calculating a chart for the moment a question is presented to an astrologer, and answering the question by reference to the chart. Whereas it may have seemed plausible that planets could exert a causal influence over entities on Earth, it was more difficult to see how this could work when the “entity” was the posing of a question to an astrologer.

The involvement of the planetary and stellar systems in the minutiae of individual human lives was beyond the pale for the ever-contentious G. E. W. who, in 1893, opined that “Horary Astrology... is a parasite that has become attached to the science [astrology] by long association, but is in no way a part of it”, presenting this as on all fours with Bacon’s argument in favour of ridding astrology of superstition.⁷⁰ G. E. W. continued that, so far as the idea of there being a relationship between the momentary dramas of our daily lives and the solar system, “Common sense should crush this miserable and impertinent horary falsehood under its heel.”⁷¹ It can be taken that this position was not shared by all the readers of *The*

⁶⁸ G.E.W., “True and False Astrology”, p. 195.

⁶⁹ G.E.W., “True and False Astrology”, p. 195.

⁷⁰ G. E. W., “True and False Astrology”, p. 196.

⁷¹ G. E. W., “True and False Astrology”, p. 197.

Astrologer's Magazine, since it featured a regular feature on horary charts written by E. Casael.

There was historical precedent for the diminution (if not outright dismissal) of horary work. John Gadbury (1627–1704) was an early advocate of setting astrology on a scientific basis, and he made it clear that horary was a league below natal astrology: “Horary Questions are only substituted in the room or place of a Nativity: But, if the Nativity be once discovered, the Question must give place unto it.”⁷²

Similarly, in 1889 Pearce argued: “these vagaries of horary astrologers brought contempt upon the science; but, of course, it is very unjust to condemn astrology because one branch of it (which is not believed in by many clever astrologers) has been so abused.”⁷³ He went on to discuss horary technique, albeit in a condensed and cautious manner, and seemed to emerge as an agnostic about its potential, remarking that, “there are many perplexities in horary astrology; and ... those mystics and occultists who so greatly affect it have much work before them if those perplexities are capable of solution.”⁷⁴

Alan Leo was one of the editors of *The Astrologers' Magazine*, and it might be anticipated—given his insistence, cited above, that astrology was purely scientific in provenance—that he too would be keen to extirpate horary. He however took a position which allowed him to pile blame onto horary, whilst not dismissing it altogether. In 1895 he asked, “But why has Astrology fallen into such disrepute, if it be a *true* science?... The true cause for the fall of this science into degradation is through the *abuse* of that branch called Horary Astrology.”⁷⁵ The emphasis here falls on “abuse”, as emerges when he goes on to warn against astrology being used “for the sole object of selfish benefit”.⁷⁶ He offered a similar warning in his book

⁷² John Gadbury, *The Doctrine of Nativities* (London: JA Cottrell, 1658) p. 284. Gadbury's proto-scientific orientation can be seen, for instance, in his appeal to readers of his almanac to collect birth data and “compare notes” with a view to bringing astrology “to perfection” (John Gadbury, *Ephemeris: or, a Diary [Astronomical and Astrological] For the Year of Grace 1664* (London: James Cottrell, 1664) p. 1. Discussed in Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 74–6.

⁷³ Alfred J. Pearce, *The Text-Book of Astrology Vol. II*, (London: Cousins & Co., 1889) p. 272.

⁷⁴ Pearce, *Text-Book Vol. II*, p. 357.

⁷⁵ Alan Leo, “The Stars and Ourselves”, *Modern Astrology* Vol. 1, No. 1, August 1895, p. 23. Original emphases. This is an unsigned article, I have assumed Leo, in his capacity as editor, to have been the author.

⁷⁶ Alan Leo, “The Stars and Ourselves”, pp. 23–4.

Horary Astrology, published in 1909, warning his readers, “never to set a figure for frivolous questions, or to use Horary Astrology for any but legitimate subjects”.⁷⁷

Leo’s admonition is a muted echo of advice given by astrologers from earlier centuries. For example, Guido Bonatti (c. 1210–c. 1296) wrote that before asking a question of an astrologer, a person “ought to pray to the Lord God ... that it should fall to him to reach to an understanding of the truth of those things about which he intends to ask”; further, the intention to ask should be something which “he retains in his heart for a day and a night (or more), not touched by just any motion of the mind”.⁷⁸ The reciprocal responsibility of the astrologer to cultivate their spiritual nature was asserted by Firmicus Maternus (c. 285–360 CE):

Now... since you have received the whole knowledge of this divine science and are now endowed with the secrets of the stars... shape yourself in the image and likeness of divinity, so that you may always be a model of excellence. He who daily speaks about the gods or with the gods must shape his mind to approach the likeness of divinity.⁷⁹

The gist of both passages was conveyed, with approbation, to later generations by the English astrologer William Lilly (1602–1681).⁸⁰ Closer to the present day, in 1968 the French/American composer and astrologer Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985) wrote that “God (as personification of universal intelligence and spiritual vitality) always seeks to restore harmony and health in every individual... This... is the substance of ‘Grace’... Horary astrology is a dramatic presentation of the operation of this divine Grace.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Alan Leo, *Horary Astrology* (London: L. N. Fowler & Co., 1909) p. vii.

⁷⁸ Guido Bonatti, Benjamin N. Dykes (tr.), *The Book of Astronomy* (Golden Valley, MN: Cazimi Press, 2007 [completed between 1276 and 1296—ref. Dykes’s introduction, pp. xliii–xliv], Treatise 5, 146 Considerations: 2nd Consideration, p. 265.

⁷⁹ Firmicus Maternus, Jean Rhys Bram (tr.), *Matheseos Libri VIII* (Nottingham: Ascella, 1995), Book 2, XXX.1; p. 57.

⁸⁰ The passage from Bonatti is in: William Lilly (ed.), Henry Coley (tr.), *The Astrologer’s Guide (Anima Astrologiae)* (London: George Redway, 1675), p. 1. Rhys Bram remarked that Lilly had adapted the relevant section of Firmicus in an editorial comment at p. 57 of the *Mathesos*. The adapted text is: William Lilly, *Christian Astrology* (London: Regulus, 1985), 9 (“To the Student in Astrology”).

⁸¹ Dane Rudhyar, *The Practice of Astrology—As a Technique in Human Understanding* (Boulder, CO: 1978 [1968]) p. 138.

The requirements that an astrologer's client should be earnest in seeking an answer to their question, and that the astrologer should shape themselves for divine discourse, are not compatible with what has been discussed as a modern, buffered, self. The contention of Bonatti et al. is that the personal qualities of the two people involved, the astrologer and the client, are intrinsic factors in an astrological equation. The model of self implied therefore is closer to Taylor's "porous self". In fact, insofar as it involves *dialogue with* gods rather than being at their mercy it may go further than Taylor. This will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

Horary astrology always, by its nature, threatened to thwart the scientific aspirations many twentieth century astrologers held. Leo dealt with this by trying to keep it at arm's length, arguing that "Horary Astrology as a means of divination is an art quite separate and distinct from Natal Astrology."⁸²

Horary astrology endured a very mixed reception among astrologers for much of the twentieth century. Here are a few illustrations of this. In 1948, Arthur Gauntlett observed that "horary work ... more than any other [branch of astrology] has, in most people's eyes, a faint air of disrepute, classed generally with mere 'fortune telling'."⁸³ At a meeting of the Astrological Lodge in 1951, "Regulus" (Basil Laurence Koop) "professed himself to be very dissatisfied with horary astrology and questioned its value as a serious weapon in the astrological armoury."⁸⁴ In the ensuing discussion, many of those present said that they were unable to use horary, whilst a few reported good results, the conclusion emerging that "a serious question, asked in a spirit of earnest enquiry, always provided a figure which indicates the outcome of the matter."⁸⁵

Hilda Jaffa, whilst advocating in its favour, felt obliged to report on horary being seen as "not quite respectable" in 1953, "the Cinderella of

⁸² Alan Leo, *Horary Astrology*, p. viii.

⁸³ A. Gauntlett, "Letters to the Editor: Horary Astrology" *Astrology: Astrologers' Quarterly* Vol. 22 No. 3, September–November 1948, p. 96.

⁸⁴ R. C. D., "At the Lodge", *Astrology: the Astrologers' Quarterly* (Vol. 25 No. 3), September–November 1951, p. 100. The identification of Regulus as Koop is from: Liz Henty, The Faculty of Astrological Studies: A History <https://www.astrology.org.uk/word-press/wp-content/uploads/Written-History-Part-1-1948-1969.pdf> pp. 6–7 (checked 15th February 2023).

⁸⁵ R. C. D., "At the Lodge", p. 100.

the family” in 1959 and “the black sheep of our family” in 1960.⁸⁶ In her 1962 book, *Astrology and Commonsense*, Ingrid Lind remarked—in a very short section on horary astrology, “At the risk of offending some astrologers, I must say that to me this savours of the bead curtain and fortune-telling booth and I will have nothing to do with it.”⁸⁷

Charles Carter (1887–1968) was President of the Astrological Lodge from 1920–1952 and Editor of the *Astrologers’ Quarterly* from 1926–1959. He was typically measured and thoughtful in his discussion of the horary dilemma. In 1958 he asked, “why has horary astrology fallen to some extent out of use? Perhaps it is because it seems too like mere psychism to suit the self-styled ‘scientific’ astrologers and too ‘earthly’ for the esotericists.”⁸⁸ He expanded on the implications of “psychism” in 1962, remarking that Socrates’s Daemon might appear as a direct voice to the individual, but that also, “there were the ancient oracles and divination by the flight of birds, and so forth. To an astrologer it might well speak by means of horary astrology.”⁸⁹

JUNG, RUDHYAR, SYNCHRONICITY

Dane Rudhyar is particularly known for his integration of C. G. Jung’s thought into astrology.⁹⁰ It is widely acknowledged that he had a major influence on contemporary astrology, with the journalist and lecturer Erik Davis arguing that he “decisively shaped modern astrology” and Campion describing him as “possibly the most influential American astrologer of the 20th century”.⁹¹ One of his first entries into the discussion of astrology’s

⁸⁶ Hilda Jaffa in *Astrology: the Astrologers’ Quarterly*, respectively: lecture given on 16th Feb 1953, reported by R. C. D. in “At the Lodge”, Vol. 27 no. 2 (June–August 1953) p. 56; “Notes for Beginners: Introduction to Horary Astrology”, Vol. 33 No. 4 (December 1959–February 1960) p. 120; “Notes for Beginners: Introduction to Horary Astrology (continued)”, Vol. 34 No. 1 (March–June 1960), p. 9.

⁸⁷ Ingrid Lind, *Astrology and Commonsense* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962) p. 104.

⁸⁸ Charles Carter, “Notes for Beginners”, *Astrology: the Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 32 No. 2, 1958 32 2 p. 63.

⁸⁹ C. E. O. Carter, “Some Thoughts on Horary Astrology”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. IV No. 4, September 1962, p. 7.

⁹⁰ Deniz Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar: His Music, Thought, and Art* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009) pp. 79–80.

⁹¹ Erik Davis, “The Counterculture and the Occult” in Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015) p. 640; Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p. 197.

nature came in 1934 when he argued that, “horary astrology works just as well as divination by the Chinese hexagrams of the Yi-king, and no better.”⁹² He went on to contend that any form of astrology that involved prediction of specific events “belongs to the realm of horary astrology”, whether the chart used was a horary or a natal chart, and that “this principle is incompatible with what we now call “science” for it stresses a purely individual factor and the individual gift of the person who interprets.”⁹³ By including all predictive astrology as “horary”, Rudhyar increased the proportion of astrologers who could be described as horary astrologers. Although he did not refer specifically to Jung at this point, Rudhyar was—by his own account—already assimilating Jung’s thought into his own. He had begun studying astrology in 1920 and encountered the works of C. G. Jung in 1932; he read all the then translated works in 1933, whereupon he conceived the idea of “a reformulated type of astrology” that would draw on Jung’s thought.⁹⁴

He had first mentioned Jung’s thought to the readers of *American Astrology* in the October 1934 issue.⁹⁵ In 1935, bowing (by his own account) to pressure from readers of *American Astrology* for a more systematic account of Jung’s thought, Rudhyar obliged, loosely quoting Jung’s reference to astrology as a “large scale example of synchronism” and including Jung’s initial definition of synchronicity, “whatever is born or done this moment, has the qualities of this moment of time.”⁹⁶

In the previous issue of the magazine, its editor Paul Clancy had written, “you are SYNCHRONIZED with the Universe in which you Live....

⁹² Dane Rudhyar, “Can Astrology ever be “Scientific”?”, *American Astrology Magazine* Vol. 2 No. 10, December 1934, p. 4.

⁹³ Dane Rudhyar, “Can Astrology Ever Be “Scientific”?”, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Dane Rudhyar, *From Humanistic to Transpersonal Astrology* (Palo Alto, CA: The Seed Center, 1975 [1972]) p. 9, p. 10, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Dane Rudhyar, “The Degree of the Zodiac: A Study in Symbolical Significance”, *American Astrology Magazine* Vol. 2 No. 8, October 1934, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Dane Rudhyar, “Psychological Astrology Section”, *American Astrology Magazine* Vol 3 No. 10, December 1935, p. 12. Neither quotation is exact, they are as follows: “Astrology would be an example of synchronicity on a grand scale if only there were enough thoroughly tested findings to support it”, and “whatever is born or done at this particular moment of time has the quality of this moment of time.”—C. G. Jung, R. F. C. Hull (tr.), “Richard Wilhelm: In Memoriam”, in: *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Vol. 13) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press/Bollingen Foundation, 1966) p. 56 [81], pp. 56–57 [82] respectively.

You control your STARS when you control YOURSELF.”⁹⁷ Rudhyar had discussed his ideas with Clancy by this point, so whilst not certain it seems quite likely that Clancy had synchronicity in mind here.⁹⁸ In 1936 Rudhyar’s book *The Astrology of Personality* was published, and included an early discussion—perhaps the earliest amongst astrological books—of synchronicity.⁹⁹

Once the thought of Jung, and specifically his theory of synchronicity, was introduced to the astrological community it spread quickly, so that towards the end of the century Campion could state, “The concept of synchronicity ... is frequently used to explain modern astrology”, and Culver and Ianna, “the most popular of the non-causal explanations for the astrological influences is the concept of ‘synchronicity’.”¹⁰⁰

It seems likely that one reason for the appeal of Jung and the theory of synchronicity was the patina of scientific respectability it bestowed upon astrology. For instance in 1938, Charles Carter in his role as editor of the *Astrologers’ Quarterly* opined:

We may safely say that the main astrological thesis—the relationship between cosmic phenomena and the life of man—has been proved up to the hilt ... Our view is that of all branches of modern thought it is the psychological that has most kinship with the astrological conception, and it is not surprising that one established school of psychology, that associated with Dr. Jung, is in sympathy with astrology to such an extent that some of those who practise it professionally employ astrology and value its help.¹⁰¹

Margaret Hone (1892–1969) would become influential through her text book *The Modern Text Book of Astrology*, which went through four revised editions from 1951 to 1968, and her role as Principal and Director of Studies of the Faculty of Astrological Studies from 1954 to 1969. That

⁹⁷ Paul G. Clancy, “Many Things”, *American Astrology Magazine* Vol. 2 No. 9, November 1934, p. 19. Original capitalisations.

⁹⁸ Sheila Finch Rayner (ed.), *Dane Rudhyar Interviewed by Sheila Finch Rayner, Clare G. Rayner and Rob Newell* (Long Beach, CA: California State University, 1977), p. 62.

⁹⁹ Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality: A Re-formulation of Astrological Concepts and Ideals, in Terms of Contemporary Psychology and Philosophy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936). The discussion of synchronicity is at p. 94 (p. 89 of the second edition from 1970).

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Campion, *The Practical Astrologer* (Twickenham: Hamlyn, 1987) p. 9, Culver and Ianna, *Astrology: True or False?*, p. 120.

¹⁰¹ Charles Carter, “Editorial”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 12 No. 1 (March–May 1938), p. 5.

lay in the future when, on 13th November 1943, she delivered a lecture to the Astrological Lodge of London.¹⁰² In a wide-ranging talk that included Jung, Rudhyar, synchronicity and the *I Ching*, she told her audience:

Thus the horary question is not answered by our calculations because the heavens, in a magic way, are so arranged, but because both ourself, the astrologer, and the other, the enquirer, are so mathematically tuned in with cosmic vibrations that actually it would be more correct to say, not “You ask the question”, but “the question asks you”.¹⁰³

Whilst it might be difficult to parse the combination of mathematics with cosmic vibrations in that passage, it is clear that the nature of the “self” that involves itself in astrology is being questioned, and that Hone was reaching toward a concept of self that was porous to the astrological universe. And indeed, in the same article she argued that, “the fact that ... so much of what we think real is truly in *ourselves* means that an astrological study of *selfhood* should take a much larger place in human thought than it does.”¹⁰⁴

The emergence of Jung’s thought, particularly that of synchronicity, into the world of astrology meant what was—in effect—the supposition of a porous self began to grow. Jung’s formulation of synchronicity had drawn greatly on his work with the *I Ching*, and as his influence spread, comparisons between astrology and the *I Ching* became quite common in astrological journals. Thus for example in 1966 Terry Piercey argued that “a great deal may be learnt about astrology from a study of the *I Ching*.”¹⁰⁵ He went on to advocate synchronicity as a way of understanding both the *I Ching* and astrological work, remarking that “since Jung has elaborated this idea, many modern astrologers have adopted it as a matter of course.”¹⁰⁶ In a talk given in 1973, “Astrology and the *I Ching*”, Chester Kemp remarked on the similarity between the *I Ching* and horary

¹⁰² Margaret E. Hone, “Lecture to Astrological Lodge of London: delivered on November 13th, 1943) *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 18 No. 2, June–August 1944 pp. 40–48.

¹⁰³ Hone, “Lecture”, pp. 46–7.

¹⁰⁴ Hone, “Lecture”, p. 43.

¹⁰⁵ Terry Piercey, “Astrology and the *I Ching*”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. VIII No. 4 (Autumn 1966), p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ Piercey, “Astrology and the *I Ching*”, p. 20.

astrology, going so far as to describe horary as “the pure branch” of astrology.¹⁰⁷ This is a significant reversal of earlier accounts, considered above, which considered horary to be the poor relation in the astrological family. A similar revaluation of astrological values came from Elwell in 1967: “Some authorities have dismissed horary astrology... as the worst kind of superstition, yet I suspect that in a purified form it may eventually prove the strongest pillar of the science.”¹⁰⁸

In 1973 Betty Woodhead used a discussion of Jung’s horoscope to reflect on synchronicity, asserting that, “This is the principle on which the I Ching works and also of course the throwing of Tarot cards and the erection of a horary astrological chart”.¹⁰⁹ In 1976 an issue of *The Astrologers’ Quarterly* carried some preparatory reading for a meeting to discuss synchronicity, the *I Ching* and astrology.¹¹⁰ The meeting was taken by Geoffrey Cornelius, and the piece was comprised almost entirely of a long quotation from Jung and a recommended reading list. One notable feature here is an aside where Cornelius refers to “the idea of synchronicity (especially suitable for Western minds, stiff with causality)”.¹¹¹ This is significant, both for its suggestion that a would-be scientific yearning for causality might be a problem for astrologers; and as a hint of the approach to astrology that was taking shape in Cornelius’s mind—more of which anon.

SYNCHRONICITY AS SCIENCE (OR NOT)

It might perhaps be expected that the theory of synchronicity, being so compatible with astrology, was also subject to questions about its status—scientific, or not? The picture here is far from clear. Even in his later years, Jung would say that “Synchronicity is a scientific concept”¹¹² Though as

¹⁰⁷ Ronald C. Davison, “At the Lodge: Autumn Session 1971” review of Chester Kemp, “Astrology and the I Ching” talk on 11th October 1972, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 47 No. 1, Spring 1973, p. 31. The quotation is from Davison’s synopsis.

¹⁰⁸ Dennis Elwell, “Astrological Superstitions”, *Astrology: Astrologers’ Quarterly* vol 41 no2, June–August 1967, p. 58.

¹⁰⁹ Betty Woodhead, “Carl Gustav Jung: A talk given at the Lodge”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 47 No. 4, Winter 1973, p. 125.

¹¹⁰ Geoffrey Cornelius, “Comments on Synchronicity, I Ching and Astrology”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 50 No. 2, Summer 1976 pp. 58–61.

¹¹¹ Cornelius, “Comments”, p. 60.

¹¹² C. G. Jung, “At the Basel Psychology Club (1958)” in: C. G. Jung, William McGuire (ed.), R. F. C. Hull (ed.), C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977) p. 386.

he went on to say, he meant this in the sense of it being “a description of facts”—not necessarily, therefore, a phenomenon which could be demonstrated under test conditions.

Roderick Main identified Jung’s “foregrounding of the scientific evidence for his theory and downplaying its nevertheless easily detectable religious influences”.¹¹³ Jung desired to create dialogue between science and religion even though—at least some of the time—he regarded the two as “incommensurable”.¹¹⁴ One consequence of this is that there is a tension between the subjective and the objective in his definitions of synchronicity, which is central to the buffered/porous self distinction.

This tension was acknowledged by Jung’s colleague Marie-Louise von Franz in a lecture in 1969:

When Jung first put forward ... the principle of synchronicity, there was much discussion as to whether one could not still discover a law under which synchronistic events would have a certain regularity, or would follow certain laws and therefore become predictable...¹¹⁵ This proved not to be possible and von Franz reported that “Jung, after long reflection and discussion, came to the conclusion that we have to admit, much as it annoys our rational minds, that synchronistic events are just-so stories.

When Jung returned to the definition of synchronicity in 1952, he framed it as, “The simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state—and, in certain cases, vice versa.”¹¹⁶

The fact of this being significantly different to his initial definition was brought to the attention of the astrological community by Maggie Hyde

¹¹³Roderick Main, *The Rupture of Time: Synchronicity and Jung’s Critique of Modern Western Culture* (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2004) p. 106.

¹¹⁴C. G. Jung, letter to Pastor Max Frischknecht, 8th February 1946 in: C. G. Jung; G. Adler & A Jaffé (eds.), R. F. C. Hull (trans.), *Letters of C. G. Jung: Volume 1, 1906–1950* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) p. 411.

¹¹⁵Marie-Louise von Franz, *On Divination and Synchronicity: The Psychology of Meaningful Chance* (Toronto, ON: Inner City Books, 1980) p. 100.

¹¹⁶C. G. Jung, “Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle” [1952] in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche: Collected Works Vol. 8* (2nd. Edition) (London: Routledge, 1969) p. 441/para 850.

in the second part of an article on Jung, and subsequently in her book *Jung and Astrology*.¹¹⁷

The first version (Synchronicity I) suggests that there is a relationship between an objectively observed psyche and objectively observed events. If this was so, these interconnections could be studied objectively...the second version (Synchronicity II), acknowledges the subjective participation of the observing psyche, that is, the psyche of the one who seeks to observe this law at work. This is evident in the lawless, one-off, uncanny, unpredictable, “just-so” nature of synchronistic events of which Jung the diviner was only too aware.¹¹⁸

The nature of “Synchronicity I” may be teased out by considering a little-known text by the French astrologer Henri Candiani published in 1935.¹¹⁹ Candiani remarked on a divide between astrologers and diviners, “many astrologers neglect cartomancy, spells, etc., as anti-scientific, those who have studied intuitive prediction, on the other hand, are usually ignorant of all astrological methods”.¹²⁰ He argued that astrology worked through a “formidable bombardment” of “cosmic rays”, and contended that whilst these are set out in horoscopes, gifted individuals can sense these forces directly: “No divination is possible except by astrology, or by the conscious or unconscious perception of the astral influences.”¹²¹ Intuitive diviners work through “the perception, more or less direct, of astral and human forces, which come into play in astrological determinism.”¹²² Under this analysis, the forces that characterise any given moment could be discerned through consulting a horoscope or by sensing the forces through “spontaneous premonitions (prophetic dreams, pre-sentiments, etc.)”, or by “resort[ing] to practices which are apparently

¹¹⁷ Maggie Hyde, “Jung and Astrology: A Critique—Part II: Synchronicity”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 58 No. 4, Winter 1984/85 pp. 185–200; Maggie Hyde, *Jung and Astrology* (London: Aquarian/Harper Collins, 1992) particularly pp. 128–133 and pp. 164–171.

¹¹⁸ Maggie Hyde, *Jung and Astrology* (London: Aquarian/Harper Collins, 1992), p. 128.

¹¹⁹ Henri Candiani, Anon. (tr.), *Astrological Aphorisms and Divination* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1935) First published as: *Aphorismes sur l’astrologie et la divination* (Paris: Hippocrate, 1935).

¹²⁰ Candiani, p. 17.

¹²¹ Candiani, p. 7, p. 55.

¹²² Candiani p. 17.

the most absurd (coffee-grounds, cards, etc.)”, or by receiving warnings “from super-human entities (angels, demons, spirits, etc.).”¹²³

Candiani drew on the thought of Freud, but did not mention Jung in his book. (It may be interesting to imagine a parallel universe in which Candiani supplanted Rudhyar and bestowed a legacy of astrological thought that drew on Freud rather than Jung.) He proposed that humans generally are in thrall to the “complex of Cassandra”—a psychological phenomenon whereby knowledge of the future is associated with death and therefore repressed.¹²⁴ This was his way of explaining why the insights of astrology were not available to everyone at all times.

Under Candiani’s frame of reference, it would be possible to say, with Jung, that, “whatever is born or done at this particular moment of time has the quality of this moment of time”, because there would be correspondences between events and his cosmic rays.¹²⁵ But this would still be a causal relationship (where synchronicity is acausal), with astrology, premonitions, reading of coffee-grounds and so on giving an individual an objective view, as if observing particles in a laboratory cyclotron. This therefore is, in Hyde’s term, Synchronicity I.

An illustration of Synchronicity II may be found in an experience Michael Fordham had when consulting the *I Ching*. He consulted the oracle twice on the same question, in the expectation of receiving confirmation; instead, on the second occasion he received the hexagram *Mêng* which reads—in part—“If he asks two or three times, it is importunity/If he importunes, I give him no information.”¹²⁶ In a letter to Fordham, Jung remarked that in this episode the *I Ching* was “calling him to order”, adding that he had a similar experience which “gave me a wholesome shock and at the same time ... opened wholly new vistas to me.”¹²⁷

If astrology is understood to interact with those who consult it in this way, rather than simply providing information, the truth-status of each

¹²³ Candiani p. 16.

¹²⁴ Candiani pp. 47–8.

¹²⁵ Jung, “Richard Wilhelm: In Memoriam”, pp. 56–7 [82].

¹²⁶ Michael Fordham, *New Developments in Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957) p. 49. The translation is from: Richard Wilhelm (tr.) and Cary Baynes (tr.), *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (3rd edn.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968 [1951]) pp. 20–21, hexagram 4.

¹²⁷ C. G. Jung, letter to Michael Fordham, 3 January 1957 in: C. G. Jung; Gerhard Adler, Aniela Jaffé (eds.); R. F. C. Hull (tr.), *C. G. Jung: Letters* (Vol. 2) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 343–4 (quotation at p. 344).

horoscopic reading would be inextricably bound up with the subjectivity of the astrologer and/or client, and even an apparently nonsensical reading might be relevant and appropriate to the situation. The evaluation of the relevance and appropriateness of a reading would then belong primarily to the subjectivity of the individual(s) concerned.

In Taylor's terms, Synchronicity I is compatible with the "buffered self", the self which can stand aside from the world and observe objectively. In Synchronicity II, however, the individual is implicated and there is no reliable barrier between the world "out there" and their own interior, subjective world. An illustration of what this can be seen in Jung's suggestion that responses from the *I Ching* "take into account the hidden individual quality in things and men, and in one's own unconscious self as well."¹²⁸ As Main noted, this means that the *I Ching* can sometimes address the "unconscious preoccupations" of the person who consulted it, regardless of the question explicitly posed.¹²⁹ What transpires in a reading—whether using the *I Ching* or astrology—is not, then, necessarily the provision of a literal answer to the question on the querent's mind. The existence of such a phenomenon in astrological work was remarked by Dennis Elwell in 1974: "when a horary chart seems to have nothing to do with the question, it may have a lot to do with the questioner. We do not always know what our real problems are."¹³⁰

Hyde took a similar approach on this point:

You have to practise your [astrological] work as if it were objective, and about other people and other things in the world, but every now and again that objective position is actually cut through by something else ... you suddenly find that the symbols don't just address that objective thing in the world, but ... they are talking ... about you and where you are coming from, and what you are up to, in something else quite different in your life.¹³¹

¹²⁸ C. G. Jung, "Foreword to the I Ching", p. 596 [1983]. in: C. G. Jung, R. F. C. Hull (tr.), C. G. Jung—Collected Works, Volume 11, Psychology and Religion: West and East (New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 596 [1983].

¹²⁹ Main, *Rupture of Time*, p. 42.

¹³⁰ Dennis Elwell, "Astrology and the Awakened Man", *Astrology: The Astrologers' Quarterly* Vol. 48 No. 4, Winter 1974 p. 119.

¹³¹ Hyde quoted in: Phillipson, *Year Zero*, p. 184.

Such interactions between the self and the more-than-human establish that what is in play here is a porous self, with no absolute barrier between it and the greater world.

The type of world-view that is implied here can be further illustrated with two quotations from the 1940s, from the astrologer Marc Edmund Jones (1888–1980). Jones met Rudhyar, and shared his understanding of astrology in the early 1930s, with the two men becoming friends.¹³² Jones stated that, “man is an organic part of the world, not a prisoner within it. Nature and men mutually reveal each other.”¹³³ Further, that “No one can ever subtract himself from the world, even momentarily, to observe its workings from the outside.”¹³⁴

ASTROLOGY AS DIVINATION

The assumption that astrology would eventually turn out to function according to the principles of classical science had never sat equally well with all astrologers. For example in 1959, Hilda Jaffa referred regretfully to “all the modern attempts to prove” astrology, and to bring it, by hook or crook, into the scientific fold”.¹³⁵ In 1982 the French astrologer Denis Labouré lamented “The Annexation of Astrology by Science”, which he took both as the title and the theme of a short talk.¹³⁶

Anyone arguing that astrology was not science (at least not in its entirety) had the problem of formulating what else it might be. In 1972 Michael Heleus proposed that astrology was partly scientific but that also, “we use a complementary process, divination”.¹³⁷ He defined the term: “Divination is the process of applying subjective qualities to sensed or

¹³² Dane Rudhyar in: Rayner et al., *Dane Rudhyar Interviewed*, pp. 59–60. For Rudhyar and Jones being friends: Marc Edmund Jones, *Horary Astrology: The Technique of Immediacy* (Berkeley, CA: Shambhala, 1974 [1st edn. 1943]), p. 8.

¹³³ Marc Edmund Jones, *Astrology: How and Why it Works. An Introduction to Basic Horoscopy*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977 [Philadelphia: David McKay Co, 1945; parts originally published in *American Astrology Magazine*, Feb 1940–Jan 1941]) p. 9.

¹³⁴ Marc Edmund Jones, *The Guide to Horoscope Interpretation* 3rd edn. (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1974 [1st edn. Philadelphia: David McKay Col, 1941]) p. vii.

¹³⁵ Hilda Jaffa, “Notes for Beginners: Introduction to Horary Astrology”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 33 No. 4, Dec 1959–Feb 1960, p. 120.

¹³⁶ Denis Labouré, “The Annexation of Astrology by Science”, *Astrology: the Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 56 No. 4, Winter 1982/3, pp. 108–110.

¹³⁷ Michael C. Heleus, “Astrology Puts the Meaning Back into Measurement”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. XIV No. 4, Autumn 1972, p. 13.

observed phenomena.”¹³⁸ This might also, perhaps better, be called “intuition”. Certainly, it is only a part of what is understood by the term amongst contemporary advocates of astrology as “divination”, and in what follows I will take Patrick Curry’s more wide-ranging definition as the touchstone:

divination is a ritual (synchronically) and a tradition (diachronically) constituted by, and constituting, an ongoing dialogue with more-than-human agents. It is enacted in order to ask them for guidance and/or discern their will in the matter at hand, to enable them to respond, and to permit intelligible interpretation of the response. An indefeasible part of the ritual, following from those requirements, is an act of aleatory randomization.¹³⁹

Patrick Harding was another astrologer who in 1975 advocated “divination” that could, and should, be used in all astrological work. He began by identifying a horoscope as a set of “signs in the Heavens”.¹⁴⁰ It was the business of the astrologer to draw conclusions from these signs, and “There is nothing new in the interpretation of signs, whether they be in the Heavens or in the entrails of animals or in the palm of the hand. The ancient world called this divination.”¹⁴¹ In addressing the question of how divination occurs, Harding said that, “it is all a question of moving the ego on to a higher level of consciousness ... It is the ability of the Diviner to lift his consciousness to a higher level which enables him to know things that are hidden to those unable to do this.”¹⁴²

Perhaps more significant than the appearance of the term “divination” itself, given the vagaries of the term’s definition, is the fact of parallels being drawn between astrology and divinatory systems—as with Hone earlier—when, for instance, in a 1973 discussion of Jung, Betty Woodhead suggested that “Astrologers see this truth [synchronicity] reflected in the movements of the heavenly bodies. I Ching users in the fall of the coins, and Tarot users in the shuffling and cutting of the cards.”¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Heleus, p. 13.

¹³⁹ Patrick Curry, “Embodiment, Alterity and Agency” in Patrick Curry (ed.), *Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 114–5.

¹⁴⁰ Patrick Harding, “Levels and Archetypes (Part I)”, *The Astrological Journal* Vol. XVII No. 1, Winter 1975/75, p. 19.

¹⁴¹ Harding, p. 19.

¹⁴² Harding, p. 20.

¹⁴³ Betty Woodhead, “Carl Gustav Jung: A talk give at the Lodge”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 47 No. 4 (Winter 1973), p. 125.

It was somewhat bold to use the term, or the concept, of divination in astrological circles, since a legacy of scientific opprobrium hung over the very idea, perhaps even more so than was the case with horary astrology. Thus for example Heleus, in the paper cited above, remarked, “I hesitate to use this term [divination] since it conjures visions of witch-craft, black magic and fortune-telling, etc.”¹⁴⁴ In a talk delivered in 1961, Arthur Gauntlett argued that, in ancient Egypt, “Astrology was not only a science, and an exact one, but it was also a religion. But by Ptolemy’s time it had regressed into a system of mere divination.”¹⁴⁵ The conjunction of “mere” and “divination” was quite common, with the subtext being that—since it lacked the scientific status of (proper) astrology—divination was relatively trivial. Thus for instance Dennis Elwell, in talking about astrology, argued: “We are here in the domain of testable science. Astrologers who insist that astrology is merely divination are indistinguishable from the Tarot readers and rune casters—my vision for the future of astrology is something altogether more tangible and objective.”¹⁴⁶

Elwell’s vision notwithstanding, the idea of astrology as divination was brought into focus and advocated with philosophical rigour by Geoffrey Cornelius. We saw earlier that he was advocating and pursuing the study of divination in 1976, and he made his enquiries public in the 1980s. His presentation of the case for astrology to be seen primarily as divination can be traced back to a talk, “Astrology and Divination”, delivered in Oslo on 8th March 1982 and a series of articles, “The Moment of Astrology” Parts 1 to 6, published in *The Astrologers’ Quarterly* from 1983 to 1986.¹⁴⁷ These articles in turn served as the basis of a book by the same name.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Heleus, p. 13.

¹⁴⁵ Arthur Gauntlett, “The Egyptian Formulations: A lecture given to the Lodge on December 4th, 1961”, *Astrology: The Astrologers’ Quarterly* Vol. 40 No. 1, March–May 1966, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Dennis Elwell in: Phillipson, *Astrology in the Year Zero*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁷ All seven papers, with an introduction by Kirk Little, can be found at: http://cosmo-critic.com/pdfs/Cornelius_Geoffrey_Oslo_and_Moment.pdf (checked 5th March 2023). This is the only source for the Oslo paper. The six “Moment” articles were published in *Astrology—the Astrologers’ Quarterly* as follows: Part 1: Vol. 57 No. 3—Autumn 1983, pp. 97–112; Part 2: Vol. 57 No. 4—Winter 1983/4, pp. 140–150; Part 3: Vol. 58 No. 1—Spring 1984, pp. 14–24; Part 4: Vol. 58 No. 2—Summer 1984, pp. 85–95; Part 5: Vol. 59 No. 1—Spring 1985, pp. 42–49; Part 6: Vol. 59 No. 4—Winter 1985/6, pp. 207–221.

¹⁴⁸ Geoffrey Cornelius, *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination* (London: Arkana/Penguin, 1994; 2nd edition Bournemouth, Wessex Astrologer, 2003).

In 1982, Cornelius argued that, “astrology is a phenomenon of experience rather than the experience of an objective phenomenon.”¹⁴⁹ The possibility of there being a “causal mechanism” behind astrology was dismissed as an “illusion”, and it was characterised as basically similar to “the more obviously divinatory practices such as reading Tarot cards and tea leaves”.¹⁵⁰

He subsequently softened his attitude slightly towards the possibility of astrology-as-science:

some part of the phenomenon of astrology belongs to the natural world and is in principle amenable to scientific investigation. Nevertheless, the main part of what we do is the interpretation of symbols to arrive at particular inferences and judgments, whether about character or about events in life. And this practice is divination, not science.¹⁵¹

Cornelius holds Rudhyar in high regard for opening the way for the understanding of astrology as divination, and has suggested that Rudhyar was “truly representative of the most significant shift in astrological attitude in modern times.”¹⁵²

In terms of Charles Taylor’s distinction, astrology as divination is clearly predicated upon something resembling a porous self. One distinction needs to be noted. In Taylor’s account, spiritual forces “impinged on porous agents”.¹⁵³ The porous self was defined as “open and ... vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers.”¹⁵⁴ This account seems to retain elements of an historical western perspective, in the way that the porosity is only described as operating in one direction. This is not different to the view taken by the sixteenth century Church—which, as already seen, saw an important part of its role as being to guard its followers against demons and spirits, none of whom were seen as benevolent actors. If this is contrasted with Curry’s characterisation of divination as “constituted by, and

¹⁴⁹ Cornelius, *Astrology and Divination*, p. 1. Original emphases.

¹⁵⁰ Cornelius, *Astrology and Divination*, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Geoffrey Cornelius, “*Is Astrology Divination and Does it Matter?*” (2000) http://cosmocritic.com/pdfs/Cornelius_Geoffrey_Is_Astrology_Divination.pdf. Delivered as a lecture at the United Astrology Congress, Atlanta, GA, 22nd May 1998; revised version published in *The Mountain Astrologer* (Issue 81: Oct–Nov 1998), pp. 38–45; published with further minor revisions on the CURA website in 2000—this is the version quoted from.

¹⁵² Cornelius, *Moment of Astrology*, p. 103; p. 95 in 2nd edn.

¹⁵³ Taylor, *Secular Age*, p. 61.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, *Secular Age*, p. 27.

constituting, an ongoing dialogue with more-than-human agents”, I think it begins to emerge that the “porous self” as Taylor characterises it in *A Secular Age* is only partially porous; it may be affected by extraneous agents, but the possibility of it participating with those (more-than-human) agents is either neglected or even excluded. By contrast, divination, including astrology-as-divination, is often characterised as participatory or dialogical in nature—a theme explored particularly by Lindsay Radermacher.¹⁵⁵ I contend that a full account of a “porous self” would involve consideration of dialogical, participatory, possibilities. Curry has argued that, “astrology is best considered ... as a *ritual and a tradition*. The tradition guides the ritual and the ritual renews the tradition. Both are divinatory.”¹⁵⁶ Under this interpretation the astrologer would not be reading information in the sky (as if it were a celestial version of Google) but rather engaging with the more-than-human through ritual. Rather than to a scientific procedure, this would more aptly be compared to prayer, meditation or the ritual consumption of psychoactive substances. A porous self is presupposed under this account, with the caveat that it may take effort to lower the adventitious buffers that obscure the self’s innate porosity.

Bruno Latour argued, “No one has ever been modern. Modernity has never begun. There has never been a modern world.”¹⁵⁷ Acknowledging his debt to Latour, Josephson-Storm added “we have never been disenchanted”¹⁵⁸ If these statements are true, we would need to be as wary of the myths of modernity as we would of any premodern myth. The essential idea of modernity is that humanity has emerged into a clearing of realism, where all things are known—or at least, can be known by calculation—and old superstitions such as astrology are no longer needed, for they are myths and we have gone beyond myth. But perhaps, in the words

¹⁵⁵ Lindsay Radermacher, “The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination” (MPhil dissertation, University of Kent, 2011), at http://www.cosmocritic.com/pdfs/Radermacher_Lindsay_Dialogue_in_Astrological_Divination.pdf [accessed 20th March 2023].

¹⁵⁶ Patrick Curry, “Astrology and the Re-enchantment of the World (Carter Memorial Lecture 2004)”, *Astrology Quarterly* Vol. 75 No. 1 (Winter 2004/5), p. 30. Original emphasis.

¹⁵⁷ Bruno Latour, Catherine Porter (tr.), *We Have Never Been Modern* (London: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 47.

¹⁵⁸ Josephson-Storm, p. 3.

of Georges Bataille (1897–1962) “the absence of myth is also a myth: the coldest, the purest, the only *true* myth”.¹⁵⁹

It is certainly the case that astrology as survived thus far, when—as we saw at the beginning of this paper—it should not have done according to many authorities. It is possible that this is a temporary anomaly. Then again, William James contended that there are fundamentally two kinds of philosophies, the materialistic and the spiritualistic. Materialistic philosophies “define the world so as to leave man’s soul upon it as a sort of outside passenger or alien, while [spiritualistic philosophy] insists that the intimate and human must surround and underlie the brutal.”¹⁶⁰ In closing, I would like to raise the possibility that these two gestalts fit quite well to the buffered and the porous self respectively; that each tends to preclude evidence that would undermine it; and that astrology’s survival may be due in large measure to something in humanity, still not disenchanted, that refuses to abandon hope of being connected to the more-than-human.

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¹⁵⁹ Georges Bataille, Michael Richardson (tr.), *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism* (London, Verso, 1994), p. 48. Josephson-Storm uses this quotation as the epigraph to his book; I confess to borrowing it.

¹⁶⁰ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* in: William James, Bruce Kuklick (ed.), *William James: Writings 1902–1910* (New York, NY: The Library of America, 1987 [1909]), p. 640.

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