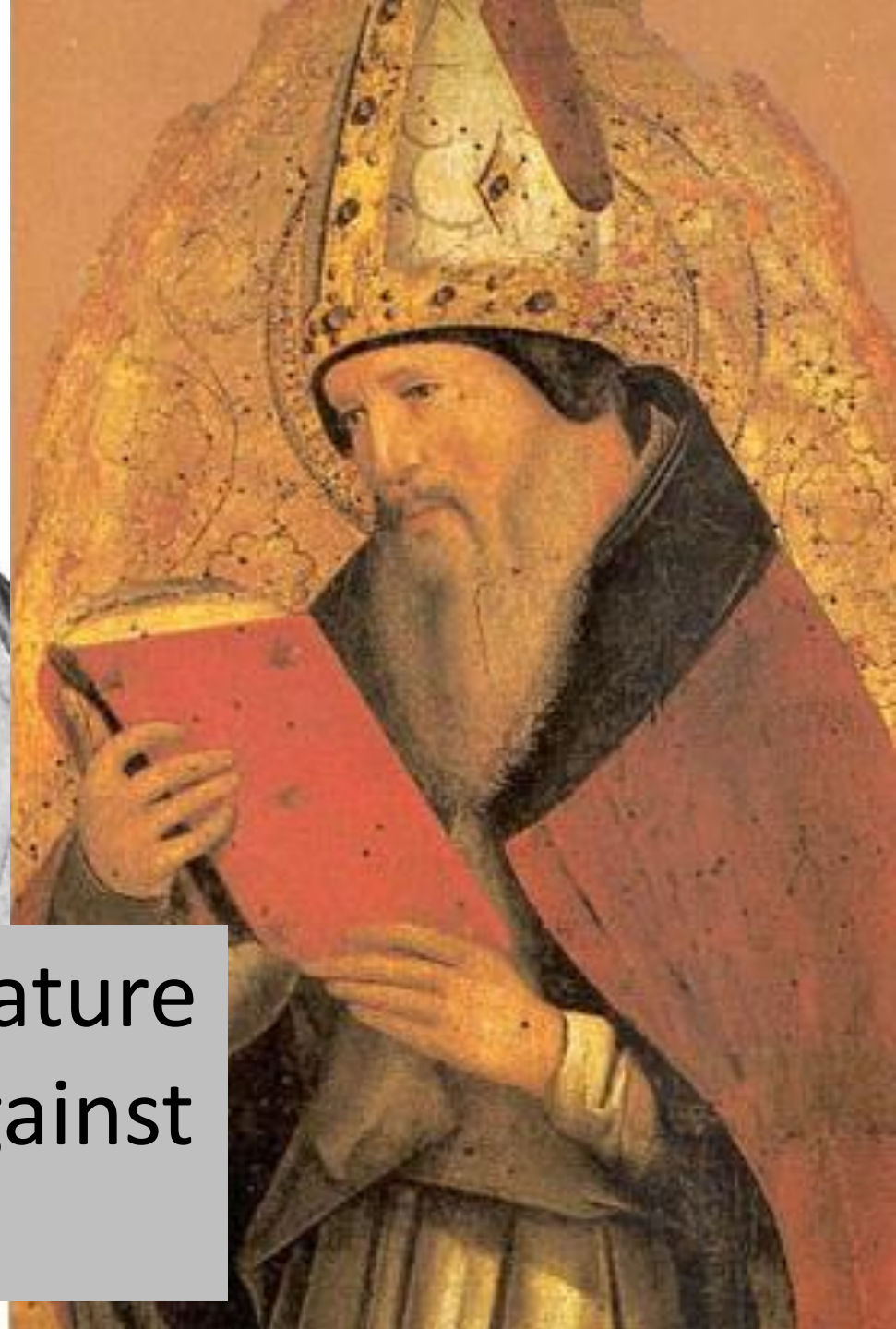
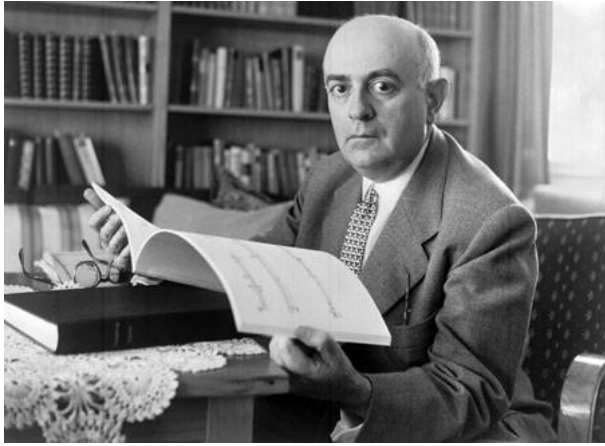




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Overview of the nature of the Polemics against Astrology

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.E.).

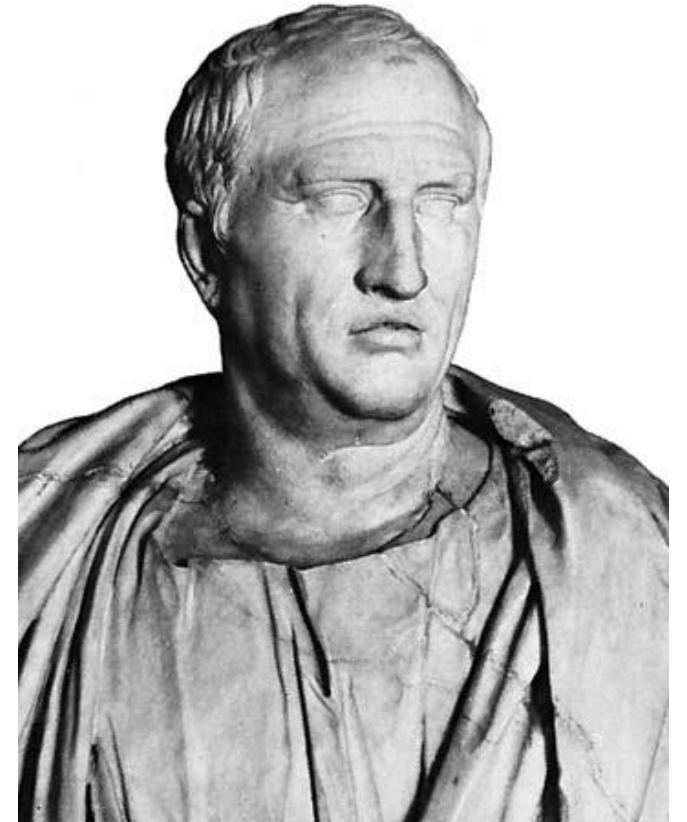
One of the earliest written commentaries and arguments against astrology was produced by the Roman philosopher and statesman, **Marcus Tullius Cicero**.

Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Divinatione*, trans. W.A. Falconer, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: Harvard University Press, 1923 Reprinted 2001)

Link to the text of *De Divinatione*

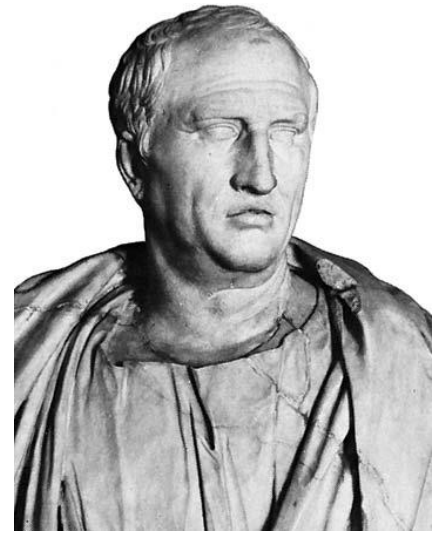
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cicero/de_Divinatione/home.html

PLUS the Loeb Library in TSD online Library



The bases for Cicero's challenge to astrology was his definition of fate.

Now by Fate I mean ... an orderly succession of causes, wherein cause is linked to causes and each cause of itself produces an effect.¹



Cicero then expanded this definition to describe how fate operated in the ordered cosmos (his version of sympathy):

Things which are to be do not suddenly spring into existence, but the evolution of time is like the unwinding of a cable: it creates nothing new and only unfolds each event in its order.²

1. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Divinatione*, trans. W.A. Falconer, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: Harvard University Press, 1923 Reprinted 2001), I lv.125.

2. Cicero, *De Divinatione*: I lvi 127.

Cicero, have defined a version of fate then criticised astrologers for **placing THIS fate in human life** and removing 'chance'.

On what law of nature do such prophecies depend? ... [if prophecies] are controlled by some natural and immutable law such as regulates the movements of the stars, pray, can we conceive of anything happening by accident, or chance? Surely nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as chance. Hence it seems to me that it is not in the power even of God himself to know what event is going to happen accidentally and by chance. (Cicero, *De Divinatione*: II vii 18.)

Fate was viewed as mechanical but NOT universal –
things still happen by 'chance' (luck or fortune)
Astrologers were thus held to be in error as they
considered that 'chance' played no role in human life.

The Different Destinies Argument

Cicero also argued that other people would have been born at the same time and place as Homer, why was there only one Homer?

And, again, the fact that men who were born at the very same instant, are unlike in character, career, and in destiny, makes it very clear that the time of birth has nothing to do in determining man's course in life. Cicero, *De Divinatione*: II xlv 95.

**Cicero assumed that the horoscope implied an inevitable future.
The inevitable horoscope allowed for only one possible life.
Thus only one life per chart was allowed!**

Cicero's Assumption

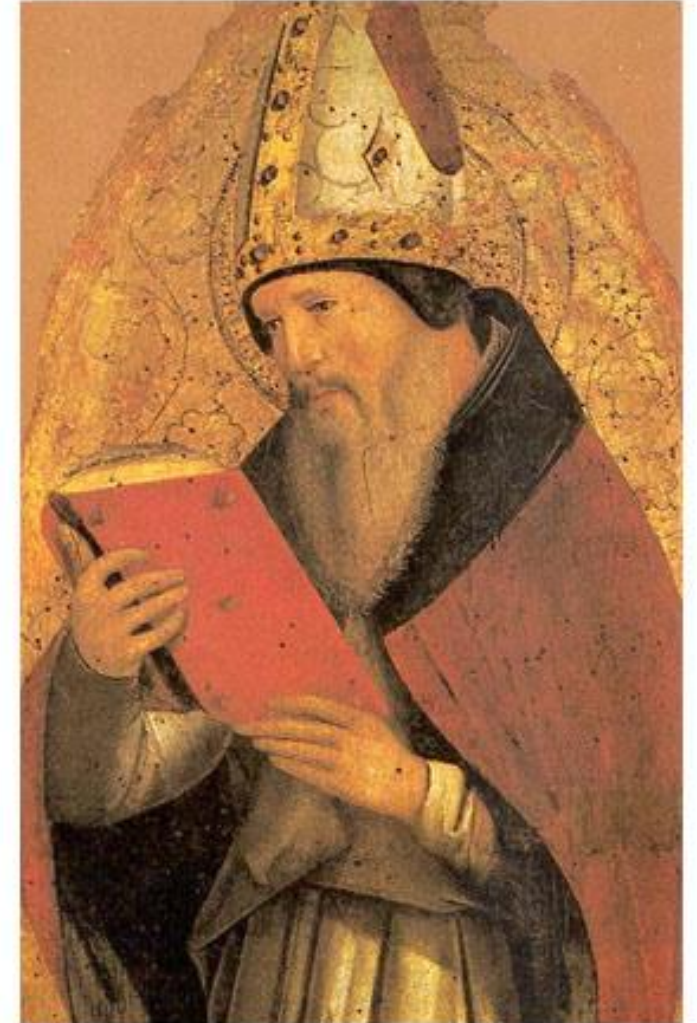
Cicero's assumption – the inevitable horoscope - was carried forward into the early Christian era and repeated by Saint Augustine (354 -430).

Augustine observed that the different lives of exact time-twins were sufficient to show the fallacy of astrology.

St Augustine, *St. Augustine Confessions* trans. Pine-Coffin R.S. (London Penguin, 1961), pp.140.

Augustine also considered that astrology was an affront to God's ability to intervene in human lives, as well as tainting God with the potential evil-doings of the stars.

Astrology may produce results but that was the work of demons.



The Common Destinies Argument

The third century theologian Hippolytus (170 – 235) in *Refutation* and Saint Gregory of Nyssa (c.335 – after 394) in his *Poemata Arcana* put forward the **common destinies** argument against astrology.

This is the argument that two people may have the same events happen in their lives even though they have very different horoscopes. Such examples come from the evidence that many soldiers, all with different horoscopes, can die at the same time in a battle, or sailors drown at the same time with the sinking of their vessel.⁴

⁴ Hegedus, *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*: pp. 85-87.

See: Hippolytus, "The Refutation of All Heresies ", http://www.valentino-salvato.com/Astrology/pdf/The_Refutation_of_All_Heresies.pdf. 9 June 2011; C. Moreschini, ed. *St Gregory of Nazianzus, Poemata Arcana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1997), pp.22-23.

The arguments of the **'different destinies'** and of the **'common destinies'**, are grounded in the assumption that there can be only **one possible life per horoscope** —the inevitable horoscope argument which is based in Cicero's definition of fate.



Claudius Ptolemy
Fresco by Joos van Wassenhove (c. 1475)

Claudius Ptolemy, in the first century CE, appears to reply to Cicero's challenges in the introduction to his *Tetrabiblos*,

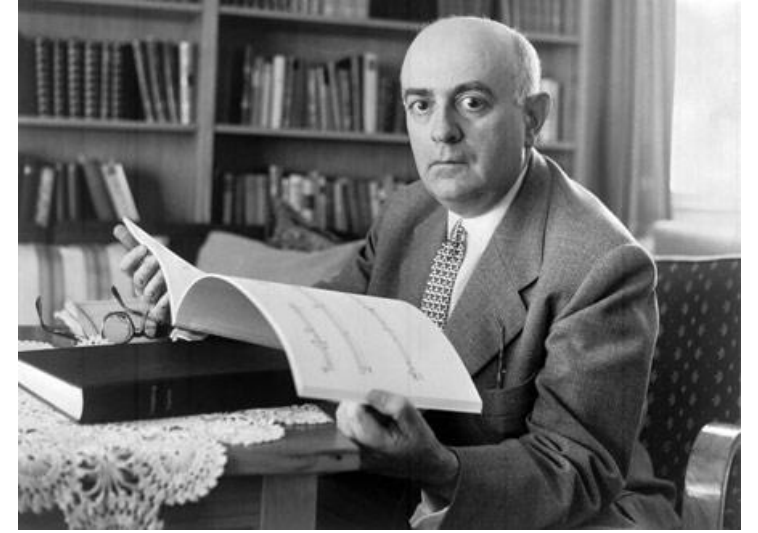
The co-minglings are so complicated that any error in judgement is an error by the astrologer not a failing of astrology.



20th Century Polemics

Theodore Adorno (1903-1969)

Adorno was concerned with the question of how the Germany people could accepted the philosophy of Nazism before and during WWII.



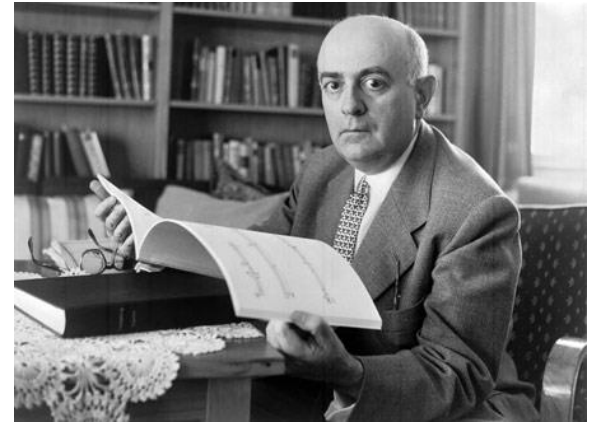
The F-scale

Adorno developed a scale to measure what he defined as an authoritarian personality. Such a personality, he argued, fostered fascism. As he outlined it, this schema, later known as the 'F' scale, revealed low scorers as people who succumbed to authoritarians and high scorers as those who sought authoritarian status: for Adorno, the two components of the authoritarian syndrome.

Through his research Adorno linked **superstition, belief in astrology and marginalization to the potential for the emergence of fascism** within the individual and thus within a culture.

Adorno, Theodor, W. "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column." In *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, edited by Stephen Crook, 34 - 127. London: Routledge, 1994.

Adorno thus linked astrology to: marginalised individuals who are maladjusted and suffered from an authoritarian personality disorder. For example he stated,



Astrology as an “authoritarian whip” which cracks down on the users and that it only appeals and also stimulates the user to be “dependant”. ¹

Although Adorno’s anti-astrology arguments, proposing a link between astrology and fascism, have faded, his claims that astrology is associated with issues of marginalization and maladjusted personality disorders still influence critics and researchers to this current day.

Adorno, Theodor, W. "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column." In *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, edited by Stephen Crook, 34 - 127. London: Routledge, 1994. p.54

Adorno's legacy in astrological polemics

1995 Richard Dawkins also focused on the idea that astrology supports the acceptance of an inevitable horoscope, and concluded that astrology necessarily removes personal responsibility.

He proclaimed that astrologers are maladjusted individuals that prey upon marginalised people.

Richard Dawkins, "The Real Romance in the Stars," *The Independent on Sunday*, 31 December 1995.

Adorno's legacy in astrological polemics

In 2002 Thomas Sutcliffe, a journalist for the UK newspaper, *The Independent*, produced another polemic.

Sutcliffe, accepted Cicero's assumptions and mixed it with Adornoism wrote that people who hold any astrological views suffer from:

a kind of scabies of the intellect'; that astrologers are 'cunning', and 'shamelessly duping the public', while those who use the services of astrologers are, 'gullible, [and] unfortunate.

Thomas Sutcliffe, "Did they see it coming?," *Independent*, 9 January 2002.

The Science Polemics

Due to astrology's continuing failure to produce a **causal mechanism** its existence within culture has been portrayed as a mark of ignorance of people.

In 1975, *The Humanist* magazine presented a rebuttal of astrology in a statement put together by **Bart J. Bok, Lawrence E. Jerome, and Paul Kurtz**. This was entitled '**Objections to Astrology**', and signed by 186 astronomers, physicists and leading scientists of the day. They said that there is no scientific foundation for the tenets of astrology and warned the public against accepting astrological advice without question. Their criticism focused on the fact that there was **no mechanism whereby astrological effects might occur**.

Link to the Humanist article '**Objections to Astrology**'

<http://web.archive.org/web/20090318140638/http://www.americanhumanist.org/about/astrology.html>

"Objections to Astrology: A Statement by 186 Leading Scientists". *The Humanist*, September/October 1975

The Science polemics

These polemics seek to reveal the ignorance of astrologers and focus on issues such as:

- Challenge the use of the tropical zodiac – claiming that astrologers do not know the location of the planets.
- Challenge the number of the constellations in the zodiac – the 13th sign argument.
- Challenge the fact that astrology works with a geocentric model.
- Challenge that astrology has no causal agent.

The generally view of some people involved with science is that the presence of astrology in western cultural is a failure on their (science's) part to educate people sufficiently.

See: Eurobarometer. "Europeans, Science and Technology." European Union, 2005.

A Summary of the Polemics

- Polemics based on Cicero's assumption – the inevitable horoscope. The **Different Destinies and Common Destinies arguments**.
- Polemics based on Augustine's argument that astrology is a challenge to God's power and if it works it is the **work of Satan**.
- Polemics based on Adorno's arguments that is a part of an **authoritarian personality disorder**. People who work with astrology are thus **marginalised individuals** (varying definition of this marginalisation) and maladjusted. Also based on Cicero's assumption about fate.
- Polemics coming from a science orientation consider that astrology is a **indication of a lack of education** and possibly a failure on science's part to 'educate' people into the correct worldview.

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