

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Introduction to Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Astrology
Weekly Introduction
Nick Campion

Week 6: Divination and Magic

Divination

Mesopotamian astrology is usually defined as divination in the strict sense of ‘talking to divinity’, but as astrology became more secular it is unclear to what extent it can be described as divination, even though the term is often used. Since the 1980s divination has become an increasingly popular definition of astrology amongst some astrologers, but it has recently become clear that there is no single definition of what divination is. Along with divination this week also considers the phenomena of oracles and prophecy.

Magic

Astrology and magic were inextricably linked prior to the scientific revolution of the 17th century, and it is still widely argued that astrological thought is itself still ‘magical’, especially by sceptics such as Geoffrey Dean. The nature of magic will be discussed and introduced.

Forum Question for Week

Is there a coherent definition of divination?
OR
In what sense, if any, is astrology magical?

Notes on Reading

The questions before us this week are ‘what is divination?’ and ‘what is magic?’ Both of these issues, as with everything else in this module, underpin the entire MA so, having approached them this week, you will find that you return to them through all the other modules, to a greater or lesser degree. Under the general rubric of divination you may also consider the nature of oracles and prophecy.

As far as this week’s reading is concerned, there is more than you need to do. Remember that your time constraint is the measure: two days a week is the expected period of study for a part-time student. However, these subject areas are, almost by definition, difficult to define, so the potential reading list is huge. I have divided the reading into two, Magic, and Divination. Each of those lists is divided into two; work which you can access through JSTOR or scans posted to Moodle, and other suggestions which I have listed if you should pursue these areas. Magic has attracted more scholarly attention than divination as such although, if we include ‘oracles’ the literature on the latter expands. For ‘oracles’ and magic there are certain classic names to read, especially Frazer, Levy-Bruhl, Evans-Pritchard and Malinowski. The best secondary source on magic is Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

The scholarly reading includes both historical and anthropological pieces, and some theoretical musings by Patrick Curry and Garry Phillipson. I have included the historical pieces because, to discuss magic in relation to history, one must have a theory of what it is.

Reading: Magic

On JSTOR see reviews of Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, and Flint, Valerie, *The Growth of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992

Bascom, William, Malinowski's Contributions to the Study of Folklore, *Folklore*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (1983), pp. 163-172.
JSTOR

Patrick Curry, "Revisions of Science and Magic", *History of Science* 23 (1985): 299-325

Curry, Patrick, 'Divination, Enchantment and Platonism', in Jean H. Lall and Angela Voss (eds.), *The Imaginal Cosmos* (Canterbury: University of Kent, 2006) 35-46.
<http://www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers/Divination.pdf>
NB This is Curry's own copy, without page numbers.

Felson, Richard B., and George Gmelch, 'Uncertainty and the Use of Magic', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Sep., 1979), pp. 587-589
JSTOR

Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged edition, London: MacMillan 1971 [1922], Chap III 'Sympathetic Magic'.
<http://www.bartleby.com/196/5.html>

Hutton, Ronald, 'Astral Magic: The Acceptable Face of Paganism', in Nicholas Campion, Patrick Curry and Michael York (ed.) *Astrology and the Academy*, papers from the inaugural conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13-14 June 2003, Bristol: Cinnabar Books 2004, pp. 10-24.

Kieckhefer, Richard, 'The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No 3 (June 1994), pp. 813-836.
JSTOR

Paracelsus, 'On Magic and Alchemy', in Tiryakian, Edward A. (ed.) *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric and the Occult*, London and New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 257-280.

Sharot, Stephen, 'Magic, Science, Religion and Secularization', in Neusner, Jacob, Ernst S. Frerichs and Paul Flesher, *Religion, Science and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989, pp. 261-283 (Chap 10).

Stark, Rodney, 'Reconceptualizing Religion, Magic, and Science', *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 43, No. 2. (Dec., 2001), pp. 101-120.

JSTOR

Magic: Other suggested reading

Anon. *Ghayat Al-Hakim. Picatrix: the Goal of the Wise*, trans. Hashem Atallah, Seattle: Ouroboros Press 2002, esp. pp. 65-121.

NB This is part one of the classic medieval work on magic but is almost unobtainable. I am attempting to make some passages available.

Cunningham, Graham. *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937.

Fanger, Claire, *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing 1998.

Flint, Valerie, *The Growth of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992, chapter 6.

Hutton, Ronald, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur: Studies in Paganism, Myth and Magic*, London: Hambledon Books 2003, chap 5.

Kieckhefer, Richard, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, Chapter 1 ('Magic as a Crossroads')

Kieckhefer, Richard, *Forbidden Rites: a Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, Stroud Sutton Publishing 1997.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, transl. P. Rivière, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975.

Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, Penguin, 1973 [1971]).

Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Magic, Science and Religion*, New York: Doubleday 1954 [1948], Chapter 5, 'The Art of Magic and the Power of Fate'.

Cicero, *De Divinatione*, trans. W.A.Falconer, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, London, 1929.

pp. 371, 373, 375, 377, 379, 3780, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391 (Book II, 1-20)

Franz, Marie-Louise von, *On Divination and Synchronicity: The Psychology of Meaningful Chance*, Toronto, Inner City Books, 1980.

Wood, Michael, *The Road to Delphi: The Life and Afterlife of Oracles*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2004.

Jung, Carl, 'Foreword' in Wilhelm, Richard, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (1951), 3rd edition 1968.

Lloyd, G.E.R., *Magic, Reason and Experiment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, esp. pp. 1-9.

Schumaker, Wayne, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1972, esp. pp. 108-9.

Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, Chapter 3.

Reading: Divination

Addey, John M., "Astrology as Divination", *Astrology* 56:2 (1982), pp. 39-44.

Athanassiadi, Polymnia. 'Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 83 (1993), pp. 115-130.
JSTOR.

Price, S.R.F., 'The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present*, No. 113. (Nov., 1986), pp. 3-37
JSTOR

Phillipson, Garry, 'Modern Science, Epistemology and Astrology', *Correlation*, Vol.23(2) 2006, pp. 4-20.
Download from www.astrozero.co.uk

Divination: other reading

Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], pp 83-118.

Cornelius, Geoffrey, "Astrology and Divination", *Company of Astrologers Bulletin* 41 (2002).

Elwell, Dennis, *Cosmic Loom: The New Science of Astrology*, London: Urania Trust 2nd edn. 1999, pp. 194-215.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], Book III, chap 1, 'The Negative Cult and its Function'.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1937], chapter 11.

Franz, Marie-Louise von, *On Divination and Synchronicity: The Psychology of Meaningful Chance*, Toronto, Inner City Books, 1980.

Flower, Michael Attyah, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2008, chapter 4.

Loewe, Michael and Carmen Blacker, *Oracles and Divination*, Boulder, Shambala, 1981, ch. 4: "The Classical World".

Schaefer, Bradley E., 'Astronomical Omens', in Fountain, John W., and Rolf M. Sinclair (eds.), *Current Studies in Archaeoastronomy: Conversations Across Time and Space*, Durham NC; Carolina Academic Press, 2005, pp. 37-45.

Voss, Angela and Jean Hinson Lall (eds.), *The Imaginal Cosmos: Astrology, divination and the sacred*, Canterbury: The University of Kent 2007.

Wood, Michael, *The Road to Delphi: The Life and Afterlife of Oracles*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2004.

The Web

<http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/astdiv/1.html>

An excellent resource, but use with caution.