

What is a Horoscope?

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'An Astrologer Casting a
Horoscope' from Robert
Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi
Historia*, 1617

The horoscope

- Francesca Rochberg notes that the first horoscopes came from Mesopotamia and they were list maps, a text based description of the sky, with the earliest known being dated from 410 BCE.
- Johannes Thomann points out that the tradition of the horoscope as a written list perpetuated into the Hellenistic period, arguing that there are only eleven known diagrams existing in more than one hundred Greek astrological documents. He suggests that the horoscope, as a diagram rather than a list map, remained scarce in the West until Arabic influences reached the west in the twelfth century.

Francesca Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998), p. 3.

Johannes Thomann, 'Square Horoscope Diagrams in Middle Eastern Astrology and Chinese Cosmological Diagrams: Were These Designs Transmitted Through the Silk Road?' in *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road*, ed. Andreas Kaplony and Philippe Forêt (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 98.

The glyphs used by astrologers



Sol



Mercury



Venus



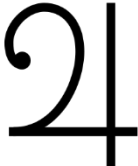
Moon



Part of Fortune



Mars



Jupiter



Saturn



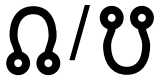
Uranus



Neptunus



Pluto



North and South Node



Aries



Taurus



Gemini



Cancer



Leo



Virgo



Libra



Scorpio



Sagittarius



Capricorn



Aquarius



Pisces

The Ptolemaic Aspects

Name	Symbol	Degrees	signs (usually)
CONJUNCTION	♌	0°	same sign
OPPOSITION	♌♍	180°	6 signs
SQUARE	☐	90°	3 signs
TRINE	△	120°	4 signs
SEXTILE	✱	60°	2 signs



The Modern Western Horoscope

The horoscope of
Queen Elizabeth II

A map is drawn for the place, date and time of the individual's birth. There are many different styles but they hold similar information.

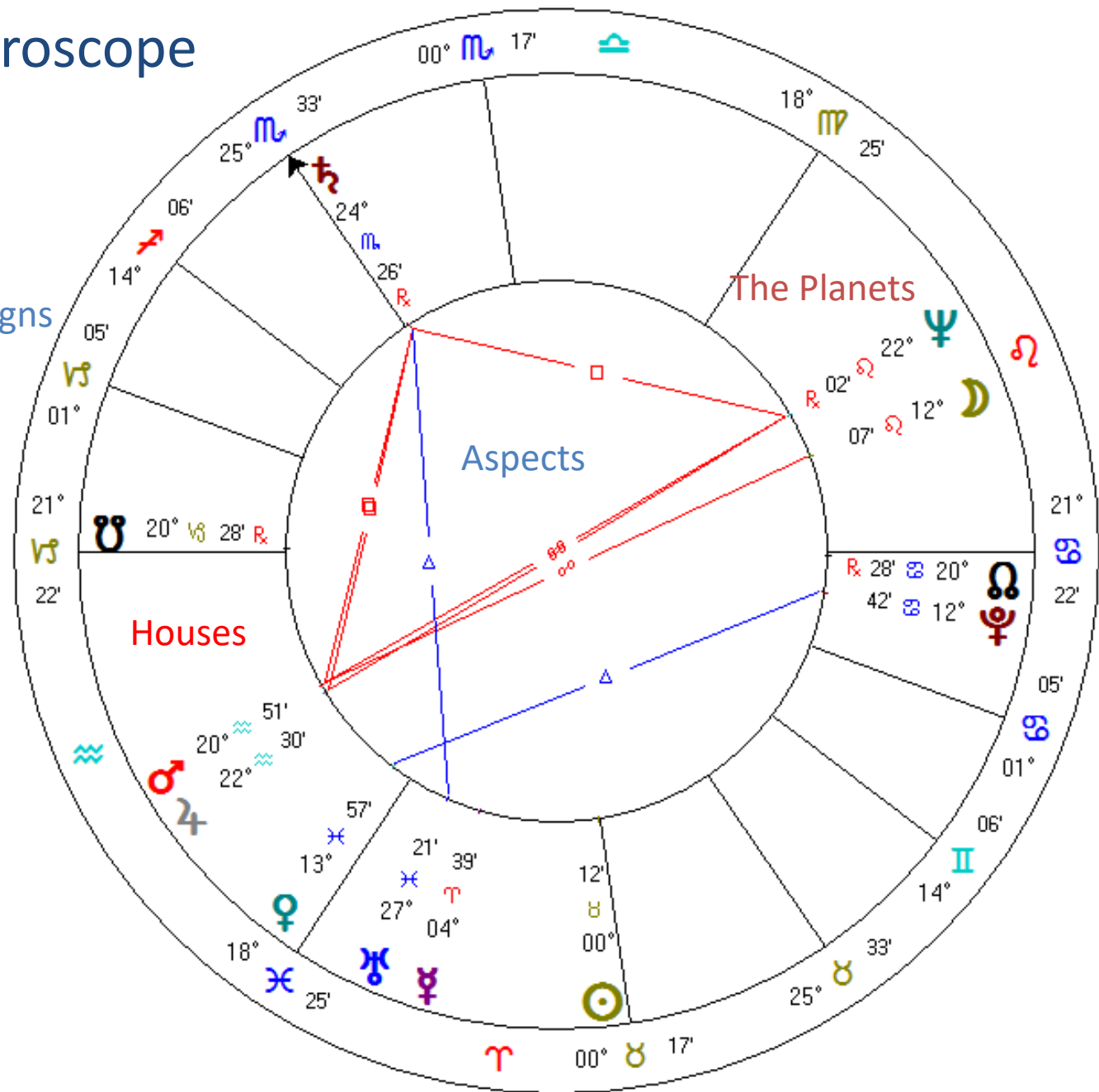
The 12 zodiac signs are placed around the outside. The planets and the Sun and Moon are thus located within these 12 signs. Within the wheel there are a further 12 divisions known as the houses. The lines between the planets are representative of their geometrical relationships called aspects.

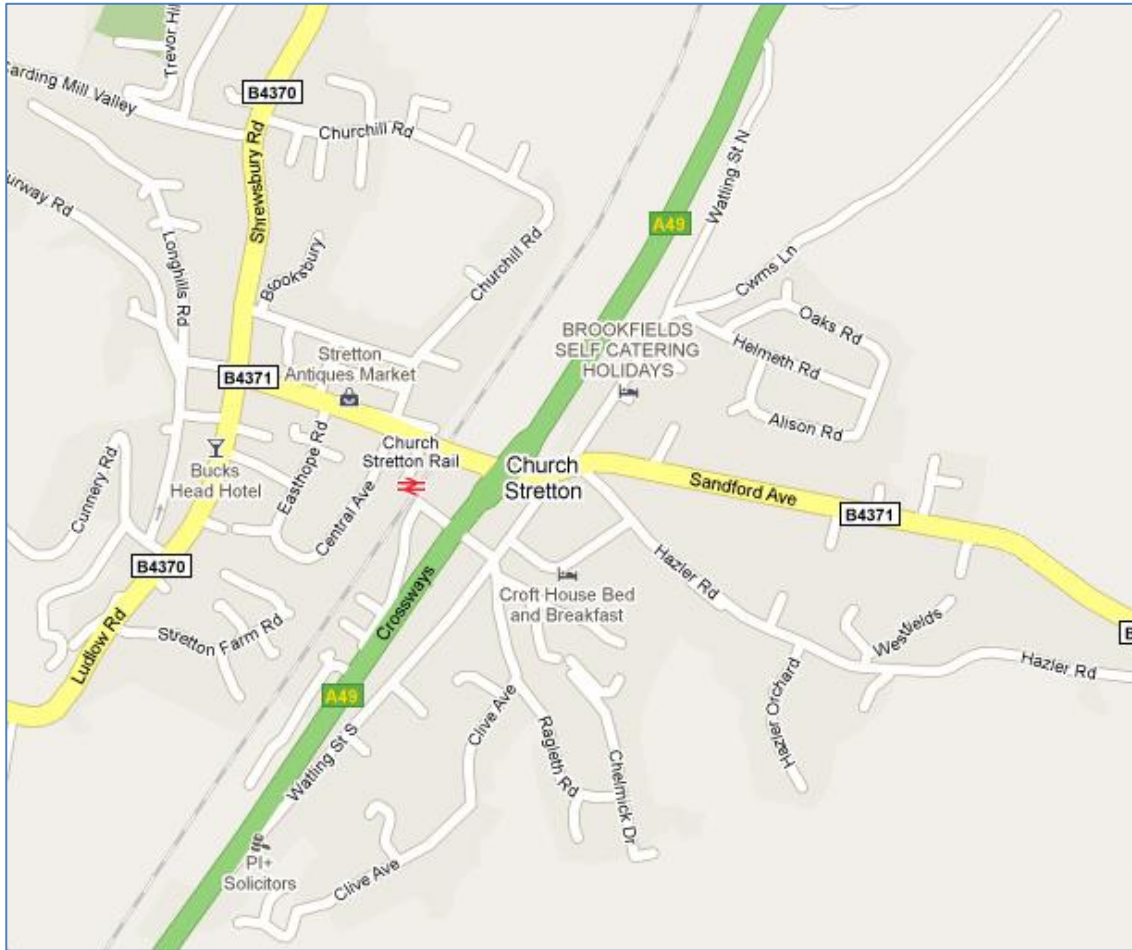
Zodiac signs

The Planets

Aspects

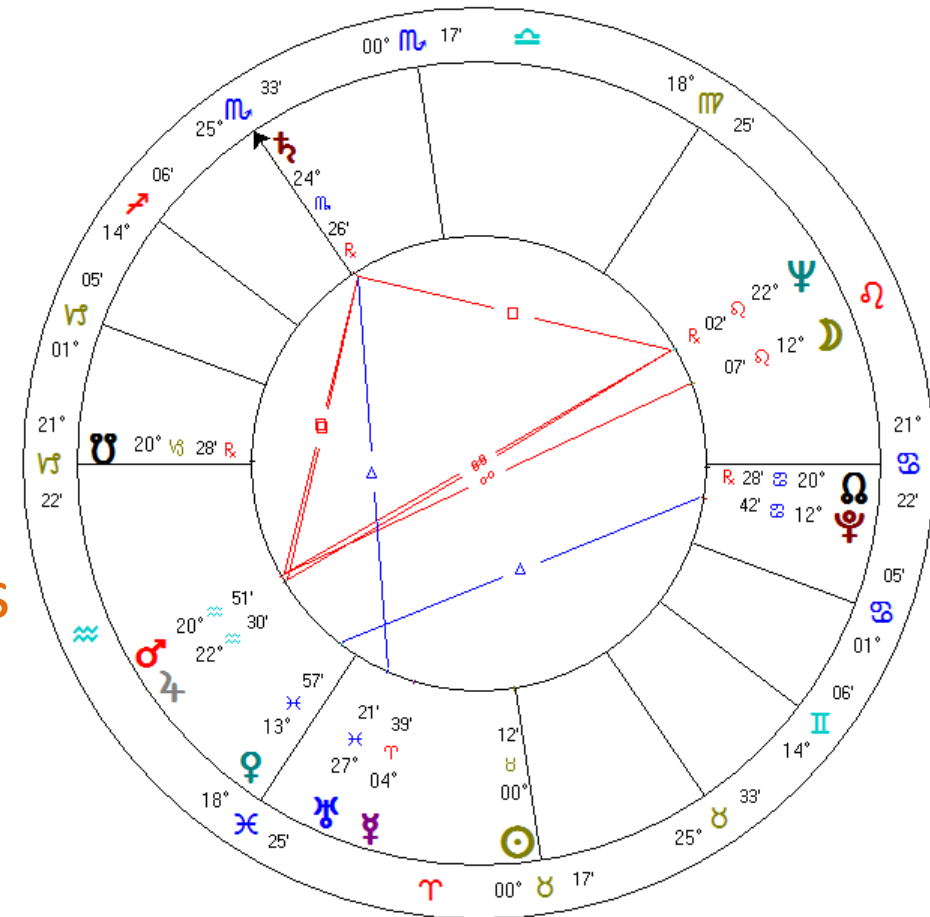
Houses





It is an error to assume that the horoscope can be considered the modern idea of a map.

The horoscope is a medieval map – as it is a blend of symbols and places. It is a personal map of the individual's relationship to the cosmos.



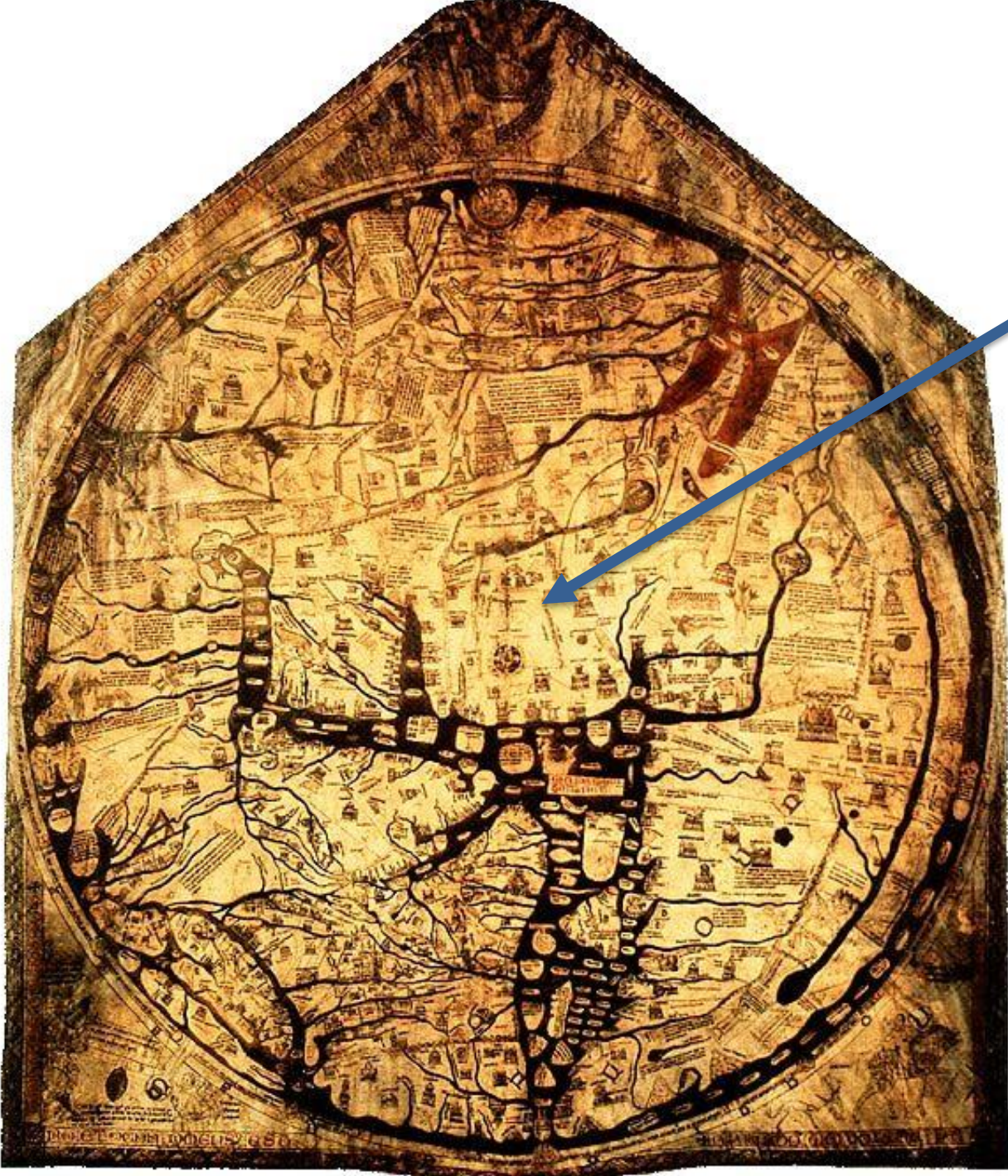
Mappa mundi Hereford Cathedral
13th century



Evelyn Edson

“... world maps were philosophical rather than practical, providing a cosmic overview rather than information for some mundane journey.”

Evelyn Edson and Emilie Savage-Smith, "An Astrologer's Map: A Relic of Late Antiquity," *Imago Mundi* 52(2000).p.21.



The map is believed to represent a flat earth

Jerusalem in the centre

The Known places are not represented:

a) to scale

b) In correct shape

c) In correct orientation

Fictitious places and mythical creatures are displayed with no distinction from actual places.

Dane Rudhyar in 1980

“To cast an astrological chart in the way it is done today is just as symbolical a process as painting an oil painting destined to be framed and exhibited in a home or museum, or writing a complex orchestral score, or filling a page of paper with algebraic formulas whose meaning only a trained mathematician can understand.”



For Rudhyar reading a horoscope was like understanding a painting or looking at a spiritual map – the process of understanding or reading it is not a linear logical process.



See: Gunzburg, Darrelyn. "How Do Astrologers Read Charts." In *Astrologies, Plurality and Diversity*, edited by Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene, 181-200. University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, UK: Sophia Centre Press, 2011.

The Tropical Zodiac

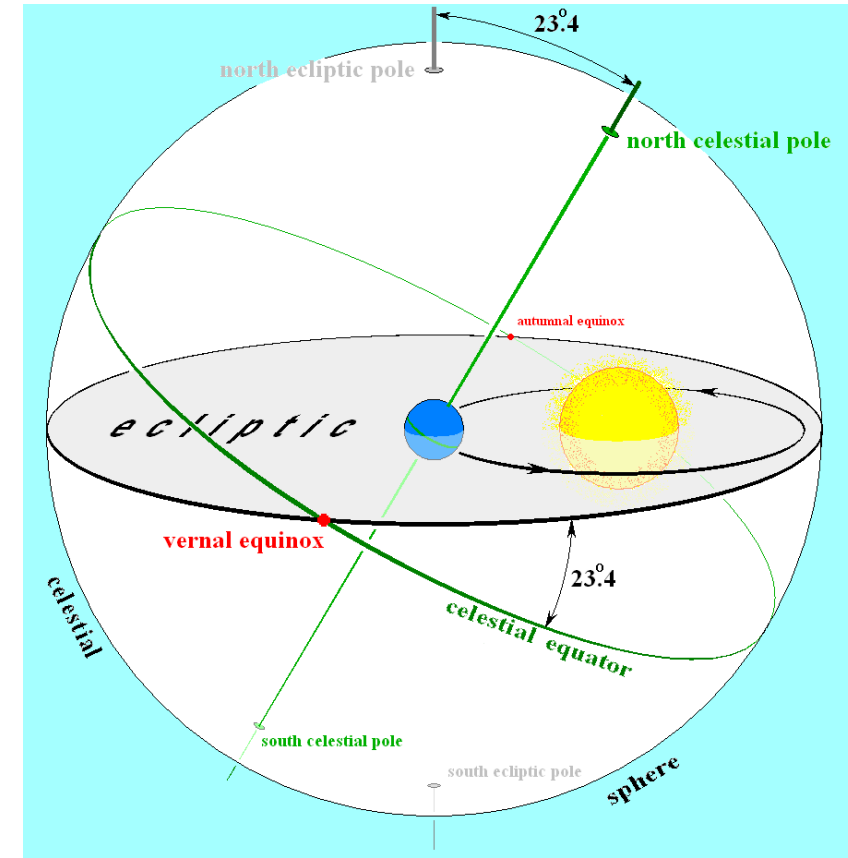
In the west astrologers use what is known as a **tropical zodiac**. One based on the seasons not the sky.

It is based on redefining the position of **0° Aries every year by the exact location of the intersection of the ecliptic with the equator.**

The rate of movement of the 0° Aries Point is 1 degree every 72 years. This is known as the **Precession of the Equinox**. This movement shifts the zodiac signs against the stars, **but keeps the zodiac signs aligned to the seasons.**

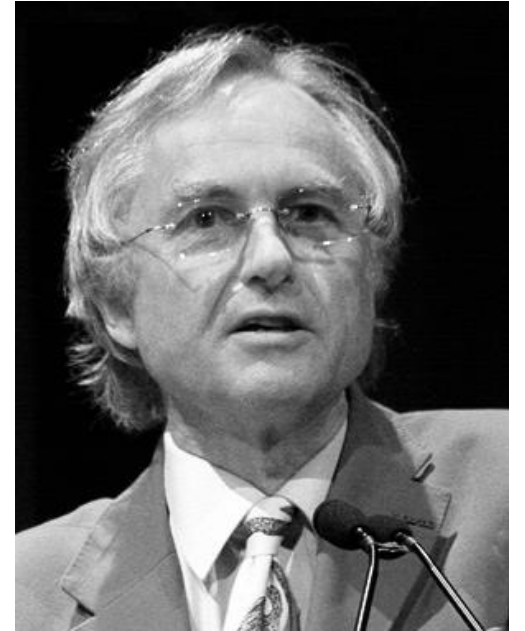
The current tropical zodiac has shifted by about 24° since the Greeks laid down the zodiac.

However, Western astrologers are criticised for not aligning the zodiac with the stars.



A polemic by Richard Dawkins 1995

“My birthday (26 March) is listed in the papers as Aries but this is the sun sign which somebody with my birthday would have had when Ptolemy codified **all that stuff**. Because of the processional shift my sun sign is in fact (**if you can call it that**) Pisces. If astrologers were doing something that had any connection with reality, this presumably ought to make a difference. **Since they aren't, it doesn't...**”

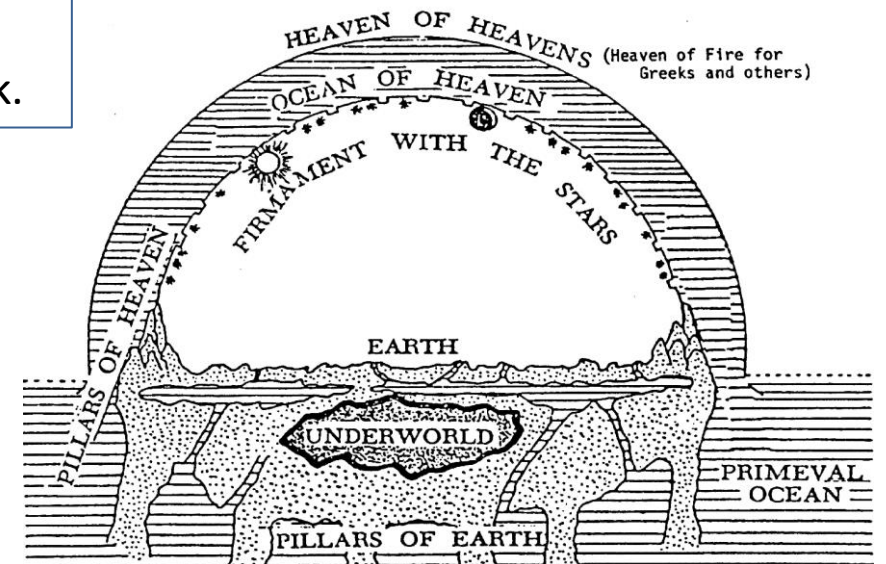


Richard Dawkins, "The Real Romance in the Stars," *The Independent on Sunday*, 31 December, 1995, p 133-141

This is a **outsider sceptical comment**. It uses emotional or dismissive language and assumes that the horoscope should conform to the modern idea of a map.

I argued that the horoscope can be more clearly defined as a personal cosmology map ¹

We will be looking at cosmology next week.



1. Brady, Bernadette. "The Horoscope as an 'Imago Mundi': Rethinking the Nature of the Astrologer's Map." In *Astrologies, Plurality and Diversity*, edited by Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene, 47-62. University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 2011. On the Moodle page.

References

Primary sources

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

Rudhyar, Dane, *The Astrology of Transformation : A Multilevel Approach* (Wheaton, Ill. ; London: Theosophical, 1980), pp. xvii,205p.

Secondary Sources

Brady, Bernadette. "The Horoscope as an 'Imago Mundi': Rethinking the Nature of the Astrologer's Map." In *Astrologies, Plurality and Diversity*, edited by Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene, 47-62. University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 2011.

Francesca Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998)

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