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Astrology in the 18th-19th centuries

The Astrological 'Revival'?

- In what sense did astrology die out?
- 1. Totally – the conventional historical point of view
- 2. Low astrology survived – Curry
- 3. High astrology survived – Champion
- 4. What about Middling astrology?

Context

- Enlightenment?
- Romanticism?
- Both?
- (Are they easily distinguished?)
- Enchantment?

Varieties of astrology

- Scientism – Newtonianism – astrology as influences/result of natural law
- Esoteric – Masonry
- +++
- Syncretic – the Sibyls
- Modernism - Worsdale

Newtonianism

- Newton – universe regulated by single mathematical law + God
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- *Let Newton, Pure Intelligence, whom God*
- *To mortals lent to trace His boundless works*
- *From laws sublimely simple, speak thy fame*
- *In all philosophy.*
- Thomson, James, 'Summer', ll.1545-8 [1744], cited in Porter, Roy, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London: Penguin 2000, p. 135.
- Pierre Laplace universe regulated by single mathematical law without God

Newtonian Astrology

- Richard Mead (1673-1754),
- vice President of the Royal Society in 1717
- one of the most eminent physicians in London; his patients included Newton himself,
- text on solar and lunar influences, *De Imperio Solis ac Lunae in Corpora Humana, et Morbis inde Oriundis*
- appeared in 1704 and was republished in 1710 and 1746; English translations were issued in 1708, 1712 and 1748,
- in 1771, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, used Mead as an authority for the claim that epileptic fits tend to happen when the Moon is New, Full or at its quarter phases.

Franz Mesmer (1734-1815)

- *De planetarum influxu in corpus humanum*
(*Concerning the Influence of the Planets*)
published at Vienna in 1766.





Knowledge of astrology in the mid-18th c

- *Confusion! cried my father (getting up upon his legs a second time) – not one single thing has gone right this day! Had I faith in astrology, brother (which, by the by, my father had), I would have sworn some retrograde planet was hanging over this unfortunate house of mine, and turning every individual thing out of its place.*
- Sterne, Laurence, *Tristram Shandy*, Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1996, p. 141.
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Mixed Messages: Hegel (1770-1831)

(see Aquinas)

- although the Moon has only a 'limited influence on the physical nature of man', its influence on lunatics is apparent because they are subject to nature and incapable of exercising their reason.
- Hegel, G.W.F., *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 39.
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- *The Church itself has therefore rightly rejected as superstitious and unethical the belief in a power exerted over the human spirit by these terrestrial and cosmic relationships. Man should regard himself as free from such relationships of Nature; but in that superstition he regards himself as a creature of Nature.*
- Hegel, G.W.F., *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 38.
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The Revival

- Was in 'Middling' astrology?
- In Britain?
- High astrology???

Ebenezer Sibly (1751-1799/1800).



Sibly

- *A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology*, issued in four parts between 1784 and 8 by the Freemason, Ebenezer Sibly (1751-1799/1800).
- the SYSTEM and ORDER of the Interior and Exterior HEAVENS; the ANALOGY betwixt ANGELS, and SPIRITS of MEN; AND THE SYMPATHY between CELESTIAL AND TERRESTRIAL BODIES...An obvious Discrimination of Future Events, IN THE Motions and Positions of the Luminaries, Planets, and Stars; the universal Spirit and Economy of Nature..; the Principles of etherial, and atmospherical Influx (...) the Foundation and Necessity of that invisible Agitation of Matter which stimulates and impels every living Creature o the Act of begetting its like; the Properties of Vegetable, Mineral, and ANIMAL MAGNETISM: the fundamental Causes and Qualities, visible or occult, of all DISEASES, both of Mind and Body, and the simple Modes prescribed by NATURE FOR THEIR Prevention and Cure.
- Sibly, Ebenezer, *A Key to Physic and the Occult Sciences*, London, 1794, title page.
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- Alliet le Jeune (1731-1791), *Le Zodiaque Mystérieux* 1772.
- Frances Barrett, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer*, 1801.
- Wilhelm Pfaff (1734-1835) *Astrologie*, 1816,
- followed by a set of pocket books on astrology in 1822-3 and then *Der Mensch und die Stern*.

John Worsdale (1766-c.1828),

- *Genethliacal Astrology*, a study of birth horoscopes issued in 1796 (and republished in 1798)
- *A Collection of Remarkable Nativities*, produced in 1799

Raphael (1795-1832)



Zadkiel 1795-1874

- Attempted to found societies, publish journals, in pursuit of acceptance and reintegration



Above: Zadkiel, aged seventy-six.

The Background

- H.P. Blavatsky 1831-1891.
- Founded the Theosophical Society 1875.
- *The Secret Doctrine*
- *Isis Unvelied*



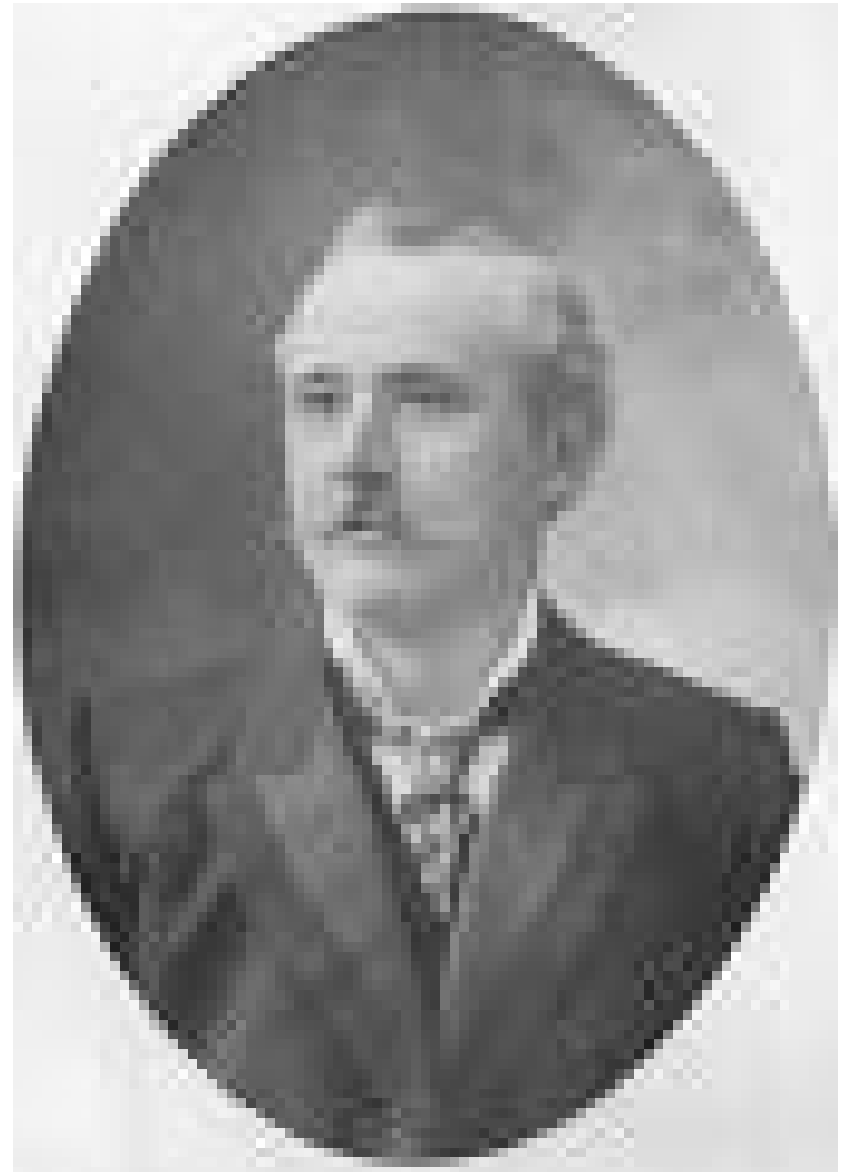
The Principles of Theosophy

- The universe is essentially spiritual, though is masked by matter
- A new phase of history is coming which will initiate the return of the entire universe to pure spirit.
- It is necessary for individuals to prepare for the historical change and the return to spirit.
- Astrology should serve this aim.



Alan Leo 1860-1917

- William Frederick Allen
- 'The most important of these pioneers was Alan Leo, an obscure commercial traveller who was to become this century's first major astrological publicist and, furthermore, the first astrologer of all time to practise his art on a large and well-organised professional scale' (Ellic Howe 1967: 56-7).
- Rectified horoscope to 5.49 am to give 27 Leo asc.



Alan Leo

- Organisational: astrology societies
- Commercial: the shilling horoscope
- Theoretical: the sun sign
- Spiritual: esoteric astrology



Alan Leo

- Sooner or later it must be realised that character is destiny. That is why so much stress is always laid upon the fact that the nativity must be fully understood before 'directions' [\[i\]](#) can be interpreted. We each bring our character with us as a result of past efforts, aspirations and opportunity (Leo 1922: 35).
- [\[i\]](#). Directions are movements of the planets around the horoscopes which are used as the basis of prediction.



Alan Leo's Astrology

- Esoteric (inner) as opposed to exoteric (outer)
- Intended to allow the individual to evolve spiritually: transformational

An Example from Alan Leo: Aries

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

Compare Leo to Zadkiel

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

Some views.....

Theodor Adorno': writes of the 'semi-erudite'.

- Adorno, Theodor, *The Stars Down to Earth*, London: Routledge 1994, p. 119.

Self-taught, artisan class, radical politics (support American independence)

Anthony Aveni:

- a visit to the occult section of any bookstore reveals that 'today's occult movement is very personal, highly noninstitutional and democratic in the extreme'.

- Aveni, Anthony, *Behind the Crystal Ball: Magic and Science from Antiquity to the New Age*, London: Newleaf 1996, p. 303.



The last word.....

- Patrick Curry:
- 'Far from being an irrational aberration, the new occult astrology was perfectly suited to the capitalism and individualism of the age'.

Curry, Patrick, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology*, Collins and Brown, London, 1992, p. 132.

