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Primary and Secondary Sources

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Surveys and Research

- It is often tempting, when beginning a dissertation, to imagine it as a survey, a kind of giant literature review.
- However, all research requires the use of primary sources.

Primary and Secondary Sources

- Primary sources: what people say and do
- Secondary sources: what other people say about what people say and do.
- i.e., Secondary sources are usually written by academics

Primary and Secondary Sources

- All longer pieces of academic work have a literature review – a review of previous work – in other words, of the secondary sources.
- Usually you then move on to report your findings, based on analysis of the primary sources.
- However, it is also to relate your findings to the previous work and therefore necessary to integrate your use of primary and secondary sources.

Primary and Secondary Sources

- Always strive for a balance between the two:
- Introduce an author, quote or topic from a **primary source**, then use a **secondary** source that comments on this.
- OR
- Use a **secondary** source which sets up a theory about the way people are, and then use a **primary** source which may either support or contradict the theory proposed by the secondary source.

- **Primary Sources**

- WRITTEN
- Government documents, data
- Manuscripts
- Novels, poetry
- Newspapers and Magazines
- Web sites
- Social media: blogs,
- Facebook
- VISUAL
- Maps, paintings, film
- MATERIAL ARTIFACTS
- Stones, buildings.....
- THE ENVIRONMENT
- Skyscapes, landscapes, seascapes
- FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS
- Ideas, sayings, rituals, actions
- FOR AUTOETHNOGRAPHERS
- One's own ideas **

- **Secondary Sources**

- Academic books and papers
- Tertiary sources
- Encyclopaedias and dictionaries

Primary and Secondary Sources

extract from Nick Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*

In other words, astrology's inclusion as a New Age discipline is taken for granted by academics who have not engaged either with astrologers or their works, and there has, to date, been no study of astrology's nature in any commentary on New Age culture, with the sole, and brief, exception of Shoshanah Feher's study in the early 1990s. Feher reported on her survey of the 1989 United Astrology Congress in New Orleans, in which she broadly distinguishes a New Age astrology mainly represented by women and concerned with personal growth, and an 'Old Age' astrology mainly represented by men and concerned with event prediction.¹ Many astrologers assume that astrology is indeed New Age, although the use of the word is sometimes nuanced. In 2011, the small but resilient British Astrological and Psychic Society announced on its Facebook page that 'it exists to provide a means of bringing together those actively working in, or interested in, the many different aspects of esoteric, spiritual and "New Age" teachings, such as Psychic Perception, Astrology, Palmistry, Tarot, Numerology and Healing'.²

1. Shoshanah Feher, 'Who Holds the Cards? Women and New Age Astrology', in James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany NY, 1992), pp. 179–88; and Shoshanah Feher, 'Who Looks to the Stars? Astrology and Its Constituency', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 31/1 (1992), pp. 88–93.

2 British Astrological and Psychic Society, Facebook, accessed 15 June 2011.

Primary and Secondary Sources

from Nick Campion *A History of Western Astrology* Vol. 1 chap 10.

Without theoretical models, Plato believed, astrology could only provide alarming predictions of the things to come:

But the choric dances of these same stars and their crossings one of another, and the relative reversals and progressions of their orbits, and which of the gods meet in their conjunctions, and how many are in opposition, and behind which and at what times they severally pass behind one another and are hidden from our view, and again re-appearing send upon men unable to calculate alarming portents of the things which shall come to pass hereafter, - to describe all this without an inspection of models of these movements would be labour in vain.¹

And from these core beliefs are drawn the fundamental features of Plato's political theology. Firstly, if the universe is governed by mathematical laws, then it functions like a vast machine which, like Newton's some two thousand years later, is essentially deterministic. Freedom, then, is essentially a state of mind. It's for this reason that Karl Popper, in the latter part of the twentieth-century, berated Plato as the intellectual ancestor of modern authoritarianism, especially Marxism. As the Marxist prepares for the inevitable revolution by forming a revolutionary vanguard, Popper argued, the Platonic philosopher rides the predetermined cycles of politics and history by administering the state in perfect accord with celestial harmonies. The astrologer, having predicted the future, can influence its outcome; 'all astrology', Popper wrote (meaning Platonic astrology), 'involves the apparently somewhat contradictory conception that the knowledge of our fate may help us influence this fate'.² From Plato onwards, the Babylonian notion of an astrology of signs, in which the onus is on the astrologer to read divine messages, can be distinguished from an astrology of celestial order, in which astrology becomes a means of describing the processes to which all people, from kings to the lowliest peasant, are subject.

1. Plato *Timaeus*, 40 C-D.

2. Popper, Karl, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 Vols., London and New York: Routledge, 1945 Vol. 1., p. 244, n. 1; see also p. 210, n. 5; *The Poverty of Historicism*, London and New York: Routledge, 1986.

Primary and Secondary Sources

(I used a different referencing system here)

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It is generally agreed amongst astrologers that astrology in the twentieth century underwent a substantial change. According to Dean and Mather, 'In 1900 astrology was effectively medieval. It was modernised largely by the work of Alan Leo (1860-1917). The result was a renaissance of interest in astrology' (Dean and Mather 1977: 5; see also Hand 1990: 13-18; Oken 1988 11-13). Jeff Mayo, former Principal of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, wrote that,

Astrology as practised today by trained astrological-consultants is, by its correlation to modern psychology and the eradication of many muddle-headed esoteric theories and 'fortune-telling sensationalism', far removed from the astrology of even the turn of this century (1981: 7).

Nicholas Campion, 'Astrology', *ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE OCCULT* Ed Christopher Partridge, London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2014.

- Much academic commentary assumes that astrology is a form of the occult (Webb, 1980, 1981, 1988; Butler, 2011, p. xii; Jorgensen and Jorgensen, 1982). However, the slippage between the terms magic, occult and esoteric, has been observed in the most recent academic studies, from Galbreath (1986, 1-27) to Butler (2011). Tiryakian (1972, pp. 265-66) distinguished esotericism from occultism on the grounds that the former is theory, while the latter is practice.
- **Occult Astrology 1: Ritual Magic**
- The most obvious application of astral magic is for personal advantage, and personal advantage was often best served by medicine, and the use of amulets, talismans and sigils. The following example from a Greek text illustrates the point.
- - Another amulet for the foot of the gouty man: You should write these names on a strip / of silver or tin. You should put it on a deerskin and bind it to the foot of the man named, on his two feet: 'THEMBARATHEM OUREMBRENOUTIPE / AIOXTHOU SEMMARATHEMMOU NAIIOU, let NN, whom NN bore, recover from every pain which is in his knees and two feet'. You do it when the moon is [in the constellation] Leo (Betz 1992, PDM xiv.1003-1014, p. 244).

Can a **Secondary** source be a **Primary** source?

- To an extent the distinction between primary and secondary sources is contextual
- If you are critiquing a piece of academic work, normally a secondary source, then, in effect, it becomes a primary source. However, to avoid confusion, in your Dissertation, treat all academic works as secondary sources.
- And if I am writing about Plato and cite Aristotle on Plato, is Aristotle then a secondary source. Well, perhaps, but to avoid confusion use ancient texts as primary sources.
- In other words, keep it simple.