

## Patrick Curry: Two Chapters from *Astrology, Science and Culture*

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### The Cosmocritic Preface

Patrick Curry's involvement with astrology has taken many forms over the past forty years—longer if you count his early days of study---as practitioner, advocate for 'astrology as science', critic of same, academic, independent scholar, social historian, and philosopher. What unites these various roles is a critical intelligence and fierce intellectual independence which has slight respect for the traditional boundaries between disciplines. The broad outline of the path Curry has taken---moving from a proto-scientific conception to an embrace of astrology as divination---is one familiar to those of us who have arrived at a divinatory perspective. What is notable is the energy, passion and depth of thought he has invested in each of his stances to arrive at his current position. Suffice it to say that Curry has cut a rather wide path through the more thoughtful end of modern astrology.

For an in-depth introduction to Curry's work, allow us to recommend: ['Patrick Curry and the Advent of Astrology, Science and Culture: A Segment of Astrology's History and Philosophy in Text and Biography' by Kirk Little.](#)

The two chapters which follow provide a clear eyed assessment of astrology's epistemological status and repay a close reading. They are excerpted from:

Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Apart from the introduction which was written collaboratively, each chapter of the book was written solely by Curry or Willis (see p. 13 of the book for a full breakdown). The two following chapters were written by Curry.

Notes to both chapters appear at the end of this pdf. Some additional notes, present in Patrick's last draft, were not included in the book but are included here.

Note on pagination: chapter 8 begins on p. 93 of the book. The beginning of each subsequent page is marked by a number in square brackets, so: [p. 94].

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## Chapter 8: Science and Astrology

### Astrology as Scientific Heresy

In a radio broadcast in 1996, the only issue of agreement between Professor Richard Dawkins and an Anglican bishop was the iniquity of astrology. This cosy unanimity between otherwise often bitter enemies perfectly illustrates the continuity between monotheistic religion and modern science. As Horkheimer and Adorno noted, endorsing Weber's insight, "Reason and religion deprecate and condemn the principle of magic enchantment" (1994: 18). It also lends support to the view of contemporary astrology as enchantment that still survives, and/or a kind of popular re-enchantment.

On the religious side, hostility to astrology is not peculiar to the Church of England. There is a long history of papal bulls condemning belief in astrology, most recently in the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1993 (paragraph 2116), which rejects "all forms of divination", including "consulting horoscopes". By the nineteenth century, however, science had become astrology's chief opponent, almost replacing Christianity and informing the attacks of critical journalists. Since science has had such an impact on contemporary astrology, then, let us turn to the 'scientific' case against astrology.

We have already mentioned the 186 "leading scientists" who signed a statement organised by the American Humanist Society in 1975 condemning "the increased acceptance of astrology". But it seems that when some of the eighteen Nobel Prize Winners included were asked for an interview they declined, explaining that they had never studied astrology – "which did not prevent them," as Feyerabend (1978:91) pointed out, "from cursing it in public." Even the authors of the statement show a poor grasp of the subject, which he compared unfavourably with that of the Catholic church's condemnation of witchcraft, *Malleus Malleficarum* (1484). But the strength of their conviction, at least, cannot be doubted.

Dawkins, in his capacity as holder of the Charles Simonyi Chair of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, is probably the most visible public proponent of science today. He has also written at some length about astrology, most notably in the *Independent on Sunday* (31 December 1995), most of which also found its way into his *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the [p. 94] Appetite for Wonder* (1998). It repays a close look.<sup>1</sup> In aggressively militant metaphors, Dawkins advocates "fighting... these glitzy con-artists". The Princess of Wales is nailed as "an enthusiast for astrology" – a revealing choice of word, since its meaning of 'unbalanced irrationalist' began precisely with the reaction by the founders of the Royal Society in the late seventeenth-century against astrology, among other things, as partaking of "the wildest and most Enthusiasticke Fanaticisme".<sup>2</sup> The continuity of this vehemence, together with the slenderness of direct acquaintance that accompanies it, evinces a more-or-less unconscious mentality on the subject, with collective metaphysical and institutional origins that are now at least three centuries old.

This is worth exploring further. With the long tradition, notably Platonic and Aristotelian, of viewing them as perfect and superior to our sublunary muddle, the heavens offered far too important a resource to modern science to be passed up. Not only did they promise perfect and therefore superior knowledge, but if the cosmos could be shown to be mastered then the authority of science would be beyond 'reasonable' dispute. In order to succeed, therefore, modern science had to turn people's remaining experience of the planets and stars from animate and intelligent

agents with a divine dimension into fully 'natural' – that is, now, lifeless and mechanical – objects, which scientists alone were qualified to understand.

In other words, science had first to destroy astrology – which it largely succeeded in doing, within elite and mainstream opinion, albeit unevenly and incompletely. So for most scientists today (and this is where the mentality comes into play) contemporary astrology is a reminder, irritating at best and threatening at worst, of the failure of their collective mission of universal enlightenment, i.e. disenchantment. In other words – and this is entirely consistent with the emotional content of their reaction (it would be tempting to say 'irrational', if the abuse of that term wasn't one of their own favourite weapons) – *astrology is scientific heresy*. It should be stamped out, and those 'pagans' still who practise it excoriated. But "Asking for more science and less of something else is itself a social and political move. This move can be quite legitimate but it must not be mistaken for part of a pure, mysteriously objective science which stands outside society" (Midgley 2001:49).

With this in mind, Dawkins's rhetoric becomes more comprehensible. For example, he asserts that "a constellation is of no more significance than a patch of curiously shaped damp on the bathroom ceiling." First, notice his choice of metaphors: a patch of *damp* on a *bathroom* ceiling. This is about as far removed from a disinterested or "objective" analysis as possible. Second, characteristically, he is stating, without any qualification, what is and is not significant for everyone and all times and places; and the item concerned is one that has had immensely rich significance (religious, cultural, aesthetic) for most human societies for aeons. No awareness here that "there are many ways of thinking and living"; science alone has the final word. Such universalism is one of the clearest signs of scientism, and the [p. 95] dangerous arrogance that accompanies it needs to be identified as such. The irony of Dawkins's religiosity, as his rhetoric repeatedly betrays value-commitments that cannot themselves possibly be justified scientifically, is impossible to miss (except, notoriously, for him).

He continues that constellations "constitute a (meaningless) pattern when seen from a certain (not particularly special) place in the galaxy (here)." Here the deliberate programme of disenchantment is plain. And what is its object? A certain place – clearly any place where anyone happens to be – and therefore, by definition, here. As meaningless as what the person is experiencing in that place – in this case, a constellation – *here*, no matter where that is, is nothing special. It is no accident that such a perception stands in the strongest possible contrast with the aboriginal mythopoetic human condition (and, we are saying, that of astrology):

Wisdom about nature, that wisdom heard and told in animated pattern, that pattern rendered in such a way as to preserve a place whole and sacred, safe from human meddling: these are the concepts with which to begin an exploration of myth. Of these, the notion of the sanctity of place is vital. It anchors the other concepts.... Once the power of the place is lost to memory, myth is uprooted; knowledge of the earth's processes becomes a different kind of knowledge, manipulated and applied by man" (Kane 1994: 50)

That kind of knowledge is just the goal of Dawkins and his colleagues, such as the physicist Steven Weinberg, another scientific triumphalist, who describes human life as a "farcical" accident in a "hostile" universe which is "pointless".<sup>3</sup> It bears repeating that these are not perceptions of a given reality so much as interventions intended to help bring about, to *create*, such a world, "and to compel it universally."

Theirs is a programme meant to cleanse the world of personal meaning and start again at epistemological (and axiological) year zero. No astrologer has ever publicly entertained such a disturbed and disturbing fantasy. As Midgley (1992:33) remarks, “This cosmos is, after all, the one that has produced us and has given us everything we have. In what sense, then, is it hostile? Why this drama?”

The rest of Dawkins’s proclamation need not detain us long. He simply assumes (albeit in numerous company) that astrology is either a *bona fide* science or – there being no other alternatives – the practice of solely fools and knaves. With a blind spot resembling a black hole, he describes it as “the debauching of science for profit as a crime”, without mentioning the billions of pounds of profit resulting from industries exploiting science for the arms industry, industrial agriculture, mining, timber, pharmaceuticals, etc. (Astrologers: in your dreams!) And he concludes by labelling astrology as “an enemy of truth,” whose practitioners, like the IRA terrorists denounced by Margaret Thatcher, should be deprived of “the oxygen of publicity”, and “jailed for fraud”. Like Fichte – one of the enemies of [p. 96] liberty anatomised by Isaiah Berlin (1998:222) – he appears to hold that “no-one has rights...against reason”. (It should not need adding that ‘reason’ always amounts in practice to someone’s particular version of it.)

Of course, if Dawkins were alone all this would hardly matter. But articles of the same scope and tone, or worse, feature regularly in the British broadsheet press, at least, presumably informing as well as reflecting educated intellectual opinion. To pick one almost at random, Thomas Sutcliffe, writing in *The Independent* (9.1.02), condemns astrology as an “infection”, “a kind of scabies of the intellect”, and “an epidemic”. If astrology were not the kind of tacit heresy we have suggested, it would be difficult to understand this hysterical language of the witch-hunt and show trial, directed against such an apparently insignificant target.<sup>4</sup>

There is also an organisation, an offshoot of the so-called humanists of the 1975 statement, devoted entirely to debunking the ‘irrational’: CSICOP (the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, aptly-pronounced ‘psicop’).<sup>5</sup> Their foray into direct involvement with research on astrology in the early 1980s turned into an embarrassing *débâcle*,<sup>6</sup> since when they have contented themselves with publishing others’ work and op-ed pieces. But a closely-related group has been involved in such research for twenty-five years, and Garry Phillipson (2000) has recently produced a very useful summary and discussion, based on extensive interviews, which we shall draw heavily upon below.<sup>7</sup>

### **True or False?**

Most of these researchers’ discussion of astrology, in the course of interviews with Phillipson, centres on three issues: is astrology true? Is it objective or subjective knowledge? And does it work? Both these questions and the answers supplied in response repay close examination.

Their stated starting-point, both originally and in this analysis, was to ask themselves: “Was astrology true?” (Phillipson 2000:124) This question is itself peculiar, as can be seen if we imagine equivalent alternative: ‘Is science true?’ ‘Is art true?’ or ‘Is religion true?’ It is very difficult to imagine how one could possibly arrive at an adequate response to such a sweeping and (as it is stated virtually without qualification) impossible demand. So we shall have to figure out for ourselves what exactly is meant by ‘true’ here.

That is made a little easier when they ask, “Is it true that that positive signs are extraverted, that an elevated Neptune is musical, that adverse Mars transits indicate accidents...?” and so on (Phillipson 2000:127). It seems, without being stated, that in each case, ‘always’ and/or ‘necessarily’ is assumed. So the test, before a single ‘result’, has already been set up in a particular way: the claims at stake must be systemic, [p. 97] abstract, nomothetic ones. But this would rule out just the kind of contextual, situated, embodied and embedded interventions of which astrology as divination consists. That impression is strengthened when they ask rhetorically whether a birthchart’s factors have any “real intrinsic meanings” (Phillipson 2000:140). “Intrinsic” here means clearly factors which do not depend on, let alone are constituted *by*, context, and the imprimatur of “real” is conferred on them alone.

A closely related scientific criticism – and agreed by at least one leading astrologer<sup>8</sup> – sees astrologers’ “dramatic disagreement on fundamentals” (Phillipson 2000:157) as a profound problem, and points to the lack of “progress” in deciding that. But as usual, objectivist assumptions have been smuggled into the discussion. Regarding ‘progress’, what if astrology is more like art than science? Do we spurn Renaissance painting because it has been superceded by, say, abstract expressionism? There may be progress of a sort here, but it is not the sort that is going anywhere in particular, and can therefore be judged by its final destination. And what if what is ‘fundamental’ responds to, and thus changes in relation to, context? Typically, the objectivist assumes that his definition of “fundamental” – something that is always and everywhere the same, regardless of the situation – is the only possible one. But in life as it is lived, including astrological practice (and, for that matter, scientific practice: a point which apologists for scientism find even more offensive, if possible, than astrology), it is not just permissible but unavoidable that what is fundamental changes, in the precise actual situation concerned, without being any the less fundamental for that.<sup>9</sup>

The kind of context that matters most in this case, as the researchers initially seem to recognise, is the ritual of preparing and interpreting the relevant astrological map, either for oneself or for another, in the divinatory situation nowadays usually called (in the latter case) a ‘consultation’. However, since both the astrologer and/or the client bring a complex set of values, assumptions, problems and strategies to *every* such situation, there is no such thing as its repetition; and since it is impossible to ascertain algorithmically which of all those factors are ever important, that point is true not just trivially but substantively.

The researchers’ objectivist/ realist bias becomes crystal clear when they state that “The issue is whether the astrology ritual works better than a control ritual, e.g. by providing new information or by improving self-esteem” (Phillipson 2000:143), “The” astrological ritual – as if its practice was always the same in every important respect – is bad enough, but the oxymoron “control ritual” would be laughable, if it did not reveal such a gross misunderstanding of the phenomenon supposedly being analysed. As Roy A. Rappoport (1999:37-38; cf. 169) points out, “Ritual is not simply one of a number of more or less equivalent ways in which the material...may be expressed, presented, maintained or established....The manner of ‘saying’ and ‘doing’ is intrinsic to what is being said and done.” It [p. 98] follows that after what is unique in each ritual has been subtracted in order to leave what is in common, the remainder is no longer ritual but its empty husk.<sup>10</sup> Once this has been done, the fetish of ‘replication’ becomes quite irrelevant – “As if,” to quote Wittgenstein (1956: 265), “someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.”<sup>11</sup>

After all this, to be told that the spirit of science is “genuinely open-minded”, and that “As scientific researchers, our worldviews...are only tentative”, rather fails to reassure (Phillipson 2000:126,150). Indeed, it seems to leave only the alternatives of remarkably unself-critical naïveté, bordering on sheer ignorance, or else hypocrisy. Scientists’ worldviews are no more or less tentative than anyone else’s, since the very criteria that scientific research depend on depend for their efficacy on *assuming* the truth and importance of ideas and values for which no scientific support can be adduced without begging the question (and so on, in a potentially infinite regress). And in the case of these researchers, it is clear that an “open mind” extends only to the phenomena to be subjected to scientific scrutiny, not to the nature of that scrutiny itself.<sup>12</sup>

### **‘Subjective’ vs. ‘Objective’ Astrology**

The same unadmitted bias continues in the researchers’ treatment of “subjective” vs. “objective” astrology. Taking these in order, “In subjective astrology only subjective values matter. The correctness of a particular statement, or of a chart reading, or even of the chart itself, is of no direct concern” (Phillipson 2000:129). But in practice there is only *perceived* correctness; even scientific correctness requires its apprehension as such by scientists. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 106) rhetorically ask, “If it’s not a truth for us, how can we make sense of its being a truth at all?” So how could correctness, of any kind, have nothing to do with subjectivity? Conversely, does subjectivity have no concern with correctness? That would seem to be contradicted by the researchers’ own unavoidably subjective pursuit of ‘truth’. Nor is it true of astrologers or their clients, no matter how ‘subjective’ they may be. Most practising astrologers know the truth of the poet Michael Longley’s observation that “when you capture something with precision, you also release its mysterious aura. You don’t get the mystery without the precision.”<sup>13</sup>

With subjective astrology, apparently, research would “examine its effects on people rather than its content.” But how could these be unrelated? Again, “the experiences of astrologers and their clients are themselves fascinating, whether or not they prove to be astrological.” (Phillipson 2000:164, 165). But an astrologer just *is* someone who practices astrology, and the experiences of their clients just *are* ones of astrology. A radical separation of the two depends entirely on an unargued, and highly dubious, rationalist-realist assumption that there is something called astrology ‘out there’ which can be separated from astrologers, and vice-versa.<sup>14</sup> [p. 99]

The researchers continue that “In objective astrology our subjective values do not matter.... What matters are issues like: Are the statements of astrology true?” (Phillipson 2000:129). Once again we find the same naïve realism, not only as if ‘truth’ was entirely straightforward and unproblematic, but as if science, a thoroughly human practice and tradition – or objectivity, a human attitude and ideal – or truth, a human judgement – were possible without subjectivity (commitments, views, assumptions and values, not to mention ideas). And note the assumption underpinning their whole approach: that of a radical distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’. There are good reasons to doubt that such a crude divide, while analytically possible, is either defensible or useful as a way to understand *any* human activity.

Perhaps the researchers were aware that their results are vulnerable to a critique of the assumptions on which they depend, because an aside pre-emptively damns questions about “the nature of truth, reality, perception, language, and so on”

as “a smokescreen of speculation.... Talk yes, actual progress no” (Phillipson 2000:152). Unfortunately, it is necessary to point out the obvious: that the meaning and value of “actual progress” in this context is not itself in the least obvious or simple, and that it cannot be decided without just such a discussion. It seems these researchers have already decided what actually constitutes ‘actual progress’, and tried to place it safely off-limits.

The fundamental point at stake doesn’t seem particularly difficult, but it bears repeating: human beings don’t live in an entirely objective world, since without subjective awareness of and interaction with a world, it effectively doesn’t exist for them. Nor, conversely, can human subjectivity exist in a void; it requires a world to sustain it and be aware of. Every human activity necessarily partakes of both, and none are *either* purely subjective or objective. That, it should hardly be necessary to add, includes both astrology and science. The enterprise of ‘explaining’ astrology will be addressed below; here let us just note the irony, given the researchers’ concern with ‘progress’, that they don’t seem to have noticed how, even within scientific discourse, things have moved on somewhat since Cartesian dualism – for example, in systems, autopoietic, chaos and dissipative structure theories – in ways that recognise the point just made.<sup>15</sup>

With such a badly skewed starting-point, it is not surprising to find further confusion in its adumbration. Qualitative tests of astrology are rejected as non-rigorous (which seems to mean much the same thing as ‘subjective’), being “more open to creative interpretation, which amounts to the same thing” (Phillipson 2000:131). The contrast drawn here is between metaphoric interpretation on the one hand and scientific rigour on the other. The logic seems to be that openness to interpretation = lack of rigour, and rigour = unamenability to interpretation; so complete rigour = no possibility of interpretation at all. But nothing, including the most rigorous scientific datum, interprets itself. As with every other human [p. 100] cognitive and communicative endeavour, “Metaphorical thought is what makes abstract scientific theorising possible.”<sup>16</sup>

It is embarrassing to have to make another such elementary point. On the other hand, it is instructive as to the kind of intellectual standards that prevail where criticism of astrology is concerned. The researchers also have plenty of company in practising, while denying, metaphoricity. Stephen Hawking’s mystical-megalomaniac fantasy about knowing the mind of God through physics and Dawkins’s “selfish gene” – positing not only a gene as capable of acting selfishly but people as doing so for that reason – are only two of the more egregious examples. What makes them egregious, however, is not just that the particular metaphors are so clumsy and inappropriate, but the intellectual dishonesty (politely but efficiently exposed by Midgley) of pretending that they are not metaphorical at all.<sup>17</sup>

Although we do not need to explore them here in order to make our case, even the statistical analyses which the researchers’ showcase depend crucially on assumptions and interpretations which are open to question in both principle and application.<sup>18</sup> This makes their citation as conclusively damning evidence against the reality of astrology as such all the more purely ideological.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, despite the researchers’ tendentious opposition between ‘objective truth’ and ‘subjective experience’, there are only different kinds of experience, and therefore truths. The canons of ‘objective’ science are therefore not more rigorous than those of ‘subjective’ humanities or the arts; they are simply different. And the same is true of astrology. The researchers comment that the difference between astrologers and themselves is that they (the latter) “are more

careful and rigorous” (Phillipson 2000:127). Again, not so: astrologers and researchers are engaged in different enterprises. The former are attempting to answer questions astrologically, while the latter are attempting to answer a second-order question along the lines of ‘Is astrology true?’ Both parties are in pursuit of the truth in their own domains, and may be *equally* rigorous *or* sloppy in relation to that goal.

The researchers continue that “Astrology seems unlikely to feel right unless astrologers and clients share a belief in [the truth of] objective astrology. Otherwise why bother with accurate charts?” (Phillipson 2000:156). But this is to conflate ‘true’ with ‘objective’, as they do throughout, and without even the possibility of any ‘scientific’ support that doesn’t involve already assuming the truth (or value) of science. The astrologer’s work would be impossible without a notion of truth that is ultimately as demanding and precise, and potentially possesses as much integrity in his or her own sphere, as the corresponding notion for scientists in theirs. And the attempt to work with the appropriate kind of accurate data is as much, and as important, a requirement for astrologers as it is for scientific experimentation. But – and this is not to denigrate either pursuit – it is a *ritual* requirement. [p. 101]

Another crucial point concerns the researchers’ assumption that just because astrological discourse consists, in part, of statements about the world or its states which therefore qualify as “objective”, it can, at least to that extent, be scientifically tested. But is that necessarily true? Suppose, in keeping with our construal of astrology so far, that someone has followed “the advice of the stars” and taken one course of action as opposed to another. Is there any way at all he or she could go back to the point in his or her life preceding that course of action, and compare the outcome of following the advice of the oracle with that of ignoring it or doing the opposite? Of course not.<sup>20</sup> Yet this is the paradigmatic situation for those involved with the practice of astrology. And there is equally no way it can be “scientifically tested” without first being turned into something very differently, namely a second-order, artificial experimental situation, in which it becomes meaningful to speak of “control rituals” and the like.

### **“Does Astrology Work?”**

At this point, let us follow the researchers’ own advice and “consider what ‘it [astrology] works’ actually means.” In their opinion, “It means that *all non-astrological influences leading to the same result have been ruled out*” (Phillipson 2000:132; italics in original). The researchers cite a long list of “cognitive errors” which supposedly not only explain astrological truth but explain it away, i.e., there is supposedly nothing astrological left: for example, the Barnum effect (reading specifics into generalities), the Dr Fox effect (using impressive but meaningless jargon), cognitive dissonance (actually an unpleasant sense of conflict between experience and belief, but what they mean is explaining away the former in order to preserve the latter), hindsight bias (rearranging experience retrospectively), stacking the deck (asking only confirming questions), safety in complexity, and misattribution (mistakenly identifying causes).

But as already noted, astrology just *is* the experience of its truth – of it ‘working’ – in practice. To redescribe that, for everyone, as entirely something else is not to understand astrology, but to replace it with something else, in keeping with a very different agenda. And the latter is quite clear, because what actually distinguishes the modern psychological armoury, *as applied* by researchers to astrology, from the medieval theological apparatus used by Holy Mother Church to



defend herself and save our souls from heresy? Or the armoury of “cognitive errors” from St Augustine’s demons?

Furthermore, how can ‘astrological’ and ‘non-astrological’ or “control” factors possibly be cleanly separated and compared? Since every astrological situation is whole and unique, it is nonrepeatable, and therefore noncomparable, *in the sense the researchers assume*. In practice, of course, similarities as well as differences [p. 102] can be noted, and doing so is an essential part of learning astrology, or anything else; but nothing warrants their further extrapolation to universality or necessity, which is just the move that the ‘scientific’ critique of astrology depends upon. In an earlier metaphor, we suggested that the scientific claims of successful research amount to saying that the operation was a success, although the patient died; but it is more that astrology, as a lived and living experience, must already be dead, and have been replaced by someone else (albeit of the same name) before this kind of operation can be performed at all.

The researchers rightly refer to the central experience of astrology ‘working’, although they do so only to de- and re-construct it as ‘not (really) working’. But what does ‘It works’, taken seriously, actually mean in practice? Let us see.

- The ‘*it*’ refers to the *whole astrological situation*, not just certain marks on a piece of paper which, by themselves, mean nothing until and unless they are interpreted in the context of, and in relation to, that situation. And that situation never repeats itself. (Even if the same question, linguistically speaking, is asked by the same person of the same astrologer, the initial situation has been radically affected by its ‘repetition’.)
- The ‘*works*’ of ‘it works’ means nothing more or less than ‘person *x* in situation *y* experienced the truth of a perception or statement’, where astrology was integral to situation *y*. So if the astrology is not present – even if, *per impossibile*, everything else is ‘the same’ – it constitutes a radically different situation.

Furthermore,

- To argue that ‘*astrology works*’, as a realist astrologer might (and often does) because of experiences that it *did* work is a further step with grave difficulties. Aside from the Humean point that no finite number of such experiences can support it, if astrology is divinatory it can still ‘work’ and be ‘true’ in a valid and meaningful way that owes nothing to a realist/objectivist sense of those words, which requires it to work always and everywhere – in the words of that marvellous scientific escape-clause, *ceteris paribus* (‘other things being equal’). To quote John Heaton (1990: 18) again, “Astrology predicts, but you cannot predict when it is going to predict.” And being unavoidable, this is no failing!
- So to argue that ‘*astrology doesn’t work*’ – in the manner of a realist critic (or equally realist disillusioned ex-astrologer) – is another further step which is equally unsupported, for the same reasons.

Finally, to argue that astrology *seemed* to but *actually* ‘didn’t work’ – that is, that person experienced astrology working but was ‘actually’ or ‘really’ wrong (mistaken, deluded, etc.) – is another further step which is an essential part of the [p. 103] strategy of scientific critics. But what does such a claim mean in practice? It amounts to saying: ‘person *r* (the researcher) in situation *s* (one to which examining the truth or otherwise of astrology is integral) has the experience that person *x* in situation *y* was wrong.’ But persons *r* and *x* are very different, with different agenda generating different criteria; as are situations *s* and *y*. So what is happening here is an attempt to

the appropriate  $x/y$  and replace it with  $r/s$ . And this attempt proceeds by trying to convince an audience (which may include  $x$ ) of the counter-truth of  $r/s$ , using rhetoric and persuasion (centred on showing the truth of  $s$ ) in order to induce a similar experience that will replace  $y$ .

Now the exercise of explanatory redescription is not in itself wrong or harmful, of course. To repeat the distinction already made, it can illumine – indeed, it helps to create – our understanding of the primary phenomenon. Not so appropriation, however: the attempt to exclude all other explanations, and indeed eliminate the phenomenon as such. And why such a concerted programme, riding on a wider scientific groundswell, if not in order to eliminate this atavistic enchantment, which has somehow (like many ‘pagan superstitions’) stubbornly survived the scientific revolution, and bring about Enlightenment? That, at any rate, is how the modernist magicians see themselves: a noble, even heroic image. The actual terminus of that programme is surely even clearer now that it was when Horkheimer and Adorno (1994:3) laid it bare in 1944: “the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.” But this a question of values which cannot itself be decided scientifically.

It has been necessary to go into the subject of astrology and science in some detail because it is such a common contemporary misunderstanding that astrology is either scientifically/rationally true or false; and if the latter, then it must be delusory, fraudulent or superstitious. Thus most of the power/knowledge struggles over its nature have been concerned with this issue, and it has been assumed that to show astrological knowledge to be scientifically false settles the issue.

In fact, competent observers of modern science confirm that it is not able to do this kind of job. The historian of science John Henry (2002: 49-50), underlining that conclusion in his discipline, adds that

sociologists of science have repeatedly shown that scientists who might, in principle, live up to the demands of this [experimental] method, in practice do not do so (even though they may retrospectively claim to have done so). Philosophers of science, moreover, have repeatedly been forced to acknowledge the impossibility of demarcating science from non-science in terms of a characteristic methodology.

And the philosopher of science A.F. Chalmers (1982: 166) concurs:

there is no general category ‘science’ and no concept of truth which is up to the task of characterizing science as a search for truth. Each area of knowledge is to be judged on [p. 104] its merits by investigating its aims and the extent to which it is able to fulfill them. Further, judgements concerning aims will themselves be relative to the social situation.<sup>21</sup>

Yet the ready recourse to science as ultimate arbiter of truth or reality persists,<sup>22</sup> feeding off the scientific assumption (not difficult to perceive in the above researchers’ nostrums, and articulated by Dawkins) that non-scientific knowledge is inferior, if not unreal. In this approach, as Scott (1998:305) puts it, “Knowledge that arrives in any other form than through the techniques and instruments of formal scientific procedure does not deserve to be taken seriously. The imperial pretense of scientific modernism admits knowledge only if it arrives through the aperture that the

experimental method has constructed for its admission.” This is an extreme view, certainly; but it is also a worryingly common view.

As we have suggested, recognising the contingency of realist/ objectivist presuppositions (preeminent in scientism) frees us to realise what an impoverished set of alternatives for human discourse they leave us with. And we have argued that astrology – at least in one crucial dimension, or one crucial kind of it – is not like that at all. That suggests that truth in this case (along with many others), while not a kind of propositional knowledge dealing with universal or necessary truth, is nonetheless integral to astrology as such. But in that case, what kind of truth, or perhaps more neutrally, knowledge, are we talking about?

### Metis<sup>23</sup>

Extremely schematically, the paradigm for knowledge in subsequent Western intellectual and cultural life was initiated by Plato who, after Socrates, set *episteme* – truth, by which he meant certain theoretical knowledge of abstract universals – over against *doxa*, or vulgar opinion. Only the former was granted the status of true knowledge. Aristotle, recognising that this severe dichotomy failed to exhaust the nature of human intelligence, added the intermediary idea of *phronesis*: practical intelligence, as manifested in a craft or skill. This was considered to be a second-best kind of knowledge, not of universal and therefore necessary truth but local skills, nontransferable to other domains and with an irreducibly tacit component. And there the matter largely rested, successively refined but substantively accepted by subsequent philosophers. The superiority of propositional knowledge (often to the point of identifying it with knowledge as such) continued through Christian thought and Descartes, Locke and Hobbes to Kant, and remains the dominant view, suitably rephrased, in the sciences, both natural and social.

Recently, however, another kind of intelligence has been suggested: *metis*, or cunning wisdom. More a ‘mode of action’ or attitude of mind’ than a concept, and therefore rarely articulated, it had hitherto escaped the purview of the history of [p. 105] ideas. It is characterised by suppleness of thought and action, the ability to see through and disregard conventions, to embrace paradox, and to respond quickly and appropriately to changing circumstances and particulars. Even compared with *phronesis*, *metis* is both intellectually and morally ambiguous. It “operates with a peculiar twist, the unexpressed premise that both reality and language cannot be understood (or manipulated) in straightforward ‘rational’ terms but must be approached by subtlety, indirection, and even cunning” (Raphals 1992:5).

Metis was the daughter of the Titan Oceanus – animistic god of the great ‘river’ encircling the Earth – and the Titaness Tethys, themselves children of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaea (Earth). Zeus swallowed Metis, his first wife, while she was pregnant with Athena, who was then born from Zeus’ head. She continued to advise Zeus from within. Athena, the goddess of strategy, was the patron of Odysseus: the best-known ‘Western’ exemplar, together with Penelope – although the virtues extolled by Machiavelli are also characteristically metic – and in ‘Eastern’ discourse, Monkey, but also Kuan Yin (the Bodhisattva of compassion). Detienne and Vernant (1978) reveal it as a consistent semantic field for more than ten centuries in the Greek world, and its cross-cultural presence has been carefully confirmed by Raphals (1992), who points to a remarkably precise Chinese equivalent, *zhi mou*, or wily wisdom, as exemplified by the Taoist sage. (*Zhi* just as much a problem for Confucian

moralism as *metis* is for Platonic and Christian truth.) It is also recognisable in Buddhist discourse as *upaya*, or ‘skilful means’.

In contrast, Socrates, as developed by Plato, sought to make *tekhne* – an application of *episteme* – foundational: a science characterised by Aristotle in terms of measurement, universal applicability, teachability, and amenability to explanation. But as Raphals (1992:227) points out, “These four qualities are precisely those that *metis* eludes.” Its realm is one “of shifting particulars that can be apprehended and described only indirectly and with skill and cunning.”

It would seem to follow that if metic truth is not unitary, universal and abstract but multiple, perspectival and particular, then it is also not passive, waiting to be apprehended by the heroic initiate, but *active*. It would make sense in this context that agency cannot be anthropocentrically reserved for human beings alone, as it is in modernist monism. And that further implies a real relationship between knower and known (that is, one in which the knowing can affect *both* parties). Perhaps this is how we may begin to make sense of Weber’s extraordinary and tantalising definition of truth: “only that which *wants* to be valid for all those who *want* the truth.”<sup>24</sup>

Scott (1998:340) also draws a strong contrast between *metis* and *episteme* in that

Universalist claims seem inherent in the way in which rationalist knowledge is pursued... there seems to be no door in this epistemic edifice through which *metis* or practical [p.106] knowledge could enter on its own terms. It is this imperialism that is troubling. As Pascal wrote, the great failure of rationalism is ‘not its recognition of technical knowledge, but its failure to recognise any other.’ By contrast, *metis* does not put all its eggs in one basket; it makes no claim to universality and in this sense is pluralistic.<sup>25</sup>

It is our contention that metic intelligence is the ‘natural’ mode of divination, and therefore an appropriate way to approach its understanding. Or, to put the same thing a different way, *metis* is the mode of being appropriate to negotiating an enchanted world. In a way that suggests that it is an instance of *metis*, divination too proceeds by way of the openly metaphoric (rather than propositional) development of symbolic images, often proceeding by indirection and intuitive (rather than rational in the sense of *episteme*), in response to a situated inquiry, not so much influenced as constituted by its context, in which a strategic element, constellated around the inquirer’s desire, coexists with constantly and unpredictably shifting particulars (not an eternal realm of universal truth).

In divination, an answer to the inquiry is elicited through a ritual whose point – and to this extent, it is indeed purposive – is precisely to allow contingency to take a form relevant to the exigencies of that moment (and not a form that is necessarily true, or for that matter good, in their Socratic senses). Hence the ubiquity of ‘randomisation’ in divinatory ritual: the fall of the coins, the hand of cards drawn, the unpremeditated disposition of the planets at the moment a question is asked. The divinatory moment, when it metically takes such form and ‘speaks’, is one of enchantment: that is, a realisation that the world *is* enchanted. And since *metis* shares with wonder a recognition of ontological and existential contingency, and therefore profound humility, it also admits the inalienable human attribute of purpose, of trying to plot and keep to a particular course; it thus corrects any tendency on the part of wonder to excessively transcendental otherworldliness.

To put it another way, divination is always ritually aleatory just because chance is the opposite of purpose and instrumentality, and its mode of being – like that of wonder – entails an opening up of the ‘common sense’ of narrow and limited purposive consciousness to what Gregory Bateson (1972:434) called “the whole systemic structure”, the “recognition of and guidance by a knowledge of [which]” is, he suggested, wisdom. And that coheres with what Morrison and others have noticed about divination historically and anthropologically: its central concern is not knowledge (factual, let alone scientific) but wisdom (ethical, spiritual and pragmatic). It remains only to add that not only any moment chosen for a divinatory purpose but the moment of birth itself, so considered, is aleatory – contingent, ‘random’ – in just the same way...which doesn’t necessarily thereby render it arbitrary, insignificant or meaningless; far from it.

[p. 107, p. 108] – these pages are given over to Notes for ch. 8. See the end of this file for notes to both chapters. [p. 109]

## Chapter 9: Divination Today

### The Big Picture

It is time to review where we have been so far. As we have shown, the history of astrology, both ‘internally’ and ‘externally’, strongly suggests the overall development Weber called ‘disenchantment’. And this notwithstanding its complexity, nor the fact that at any one time in that history, there are co-existing countermovements; nor the absence of a teleological and thus ‘necessary’ movement towards some sort of predetermined goal. From its origins as plural and local divination – that is, a dialogue with fate or the gods when “concrete magic” was not yet undivided into spiritual or subjective and material or objective – astrology underwent a lengthy and uneven process of progressively more rationalisation, abstraction and naturalisation, initially Platonic but predominantly Aristotelian/Ptolemaic, into a single “Machine of Destiny”, until the ‘natural’ part was absorbed by the still more efficient modern Megamachine, whereupon what remained was redescribed (whether positively or disparagingly) as ‘supernatural’. Overall, this process has entailed a significant impoverishment of symbolism, and consequently its potential for enchantment, whose hallmark is existential wonder.

Among the ironies involved is the extent to which astrologers themselves have helped to bring about this situation. As susceptible as anyone else to the seductions of the universalist (latterly modernist) promise of power, they have cast astrology as a misunderstood and unjustly unrecognised science, dealing with knowledge of an astrally-determined future: a caricature at best, and an outright betrayal at worst. Of New Age gurus we might perhaps expect it; but even among those who seek to return to traditional astrology are some who maintain, without a trace of irony, that it offers a perfect system which can potentially be applied with guaranteed success. To do so requires ignoring Lilly’s (1985:B, 397) own insistent advice: “...the more holy thou art, and more near to God, the purer judgement thou shalt give”; “Discretion, together with Art...”; This emphasis on discretion, i.e. wisdom, in the practice of judicial astrology – the kind that requires judgement – is exactly the opposite of *episteme* and system. On the contrary, it is *metec*, and allows for enchantment.

By the same token, Lilly (1985:192) also advised the astrologer that “you must know how to vary your Rules... wherein principally consist the masterpiece of [p. 110] the Art.” This too is a *metec* kind of knowledge, one that isn’t, and *cannot* be, in the rules, that is, exhaustively specified propositionally. As Wittgenstein pointed out, one forever lacks a rule for how to interpret a rule, because such a meta-rule would require another one stating how to apply it, and so on in an infinite regress.<sup>26</sup>

As for the question, ‘Why practise astrology?’ Bateson’s (1979:209) intuition should be heeded: “I do not believe that the original purpose of the rain dance was to make ‘it’ rain. I suspect that that is a degenerate misunderstanding of a much more profound religious need; to affirm membership in what we may call the ecological tautology, the eternal verities of life and environment.” Given the weight of literal-minded materialist misunderstanding, Bateson is obliged to overemphasise the spiritual component of concrete magic here; a rain ceremony affirming such membership does not by any means rule out the arrival of otherwise unforeseen rain, or other such practical and precise consequences. But the point he was trying to make stands. No more is the primary purpose of astrology to predict the future. Its proper role is the same affirmation of citizenship in a living world – the recognition of which is an experience of enchantment – in the course of addressing a particular and

personal question. (In fact, the more general, casual or disinterested the divinatory question, the less likely is the answer to either inform or enchant; as the poet said, no precision, no mystery.)

Of course, to say this is to invite contempt from both sides of the great divide. The materialists will accuse us of being unacceptably metaphysical, while the supernaturalists – led by the ghost of Plato, and his many heirs<sup>27</sup> – will grumble at our introducing petty personal concerns into issues of spiritual truth. Actually, Dawkins objects equally strongly to such muddying the clear waters of material truth, thus showing yet again the continuity of modern science with theism. William James is another philosopher from whom we can still learn much; indeed, his insights, arrived at quite independently, are often indistinguishable from those of Weber.<sup>28</sup> And James's (1958:377-78) discussion of this point cannot be bettered:

To describe the world with all the various feelings of the individual pinch of destiny... left out from the description – they being as describable as anything else – would be something like offering a printed bill of fare as the equivalent for a solid meal.... The individual's religion may be egotistic, and those private realities which it keeps in touch with may be narrow enough; but at any rate it always remains infinitely less hollow and abstract, as far as it goes, than a science which prides itself on taking no account of anything private at all.... I think, therefore, that however particular questions connected with our individual destinies may be answered, it is only by acknowledging them as genuine questions, and living in the sphere of thought which they open up, that we become profound. But to live thus is to be religious... [p. 111]

We are concerned here with a specific form of religious life, of course: divination, and its leading 'Western' form, astrology. And it seems that against all the odds, and despite all the contempt, corruption and confusion (among astrologers as well as their opponents), its true potential survives. As Kane (1994:238) observes, "The gods have not been silenced; in fact, they have been driven underground."<sup>29</sup> 'Concrete magic' is not simply an archaic or atavistic state of mind/ world long since happily outgrown (or, for that matter, tragically lost); although ancient indeed, it is a way of being in the world that is still present, and alive. And although it cannot be commanded or be relied upon, enchantment can still emerge, and surprise and change us, whenever it is invited.

In fact, it has a very contemporary urgency: in the context of a global programme of disenchantment, an integral part of the capital-state-science nexus, such apparently insubstantial moments take on a new significance and potential. True, they cannot themselves be marshalled into a counter-programme – not without contributing to the creation of merely another monist monster – but they can indirectly sustain a life, shared as well as private, of enchantment that is itself resistance and alternative.<sup>30</sup>

We are therefore not advocating a literal-minded return to some primal undifferentiated state of mind or way of life. That would hardly be a promising strategy, let alone a metic one, in any case. But there is no good reason not to attempt an intelligent recovery of certain insights, priorities and practices – those of sanity and, inseparably, sanctity – too many of us have been unwise enough to abandon. As David Abram (1996:270) has observed, "It is surely not a matter of 'going back', but of coming full circle." And many of those share with divinatory astrology an embedded, embodied and ecological pluralism, including a post-secular spiritual (but not supernatural) dimension.

It also follows from this understanding of astrology as divination that its practice – in common with all other human practices – can be neither entirely ‘objective’ nor ‘subjective’; or rather, that it is necessarily both. An act of divination necessarily requires *both* an enquirer with a question (‘subject’) *and* a world of which that subject partakes, including the cosmos that is essential to astrology in particular (‘objects’). It entails a ‘subjective’ participation in an ‘objectively’ embodied and embedded way. So, for example, it is not surprising (in theory: always a surprise in practice) that astrological symbolism refuses to confine itself to either just the ‘objective’ world or the ‘subjective’ self, including the map of the birth of its putative subject.<sup>31</sup> As Hyde (1992) has pointed out, and as any reasonably competent astrologer will have experienced, it can equally speak, very pointedly, to and about the interpreter, and/or the circumstances in which it is being interpreted, regardless of ‘whose’ map it is. As a corollary, there is a considerable difference between the merely thematic kind of astrology that often passes for its practice today, in which the subject is acquainted in a more-or-less general way [p. 112] with the psychological or archetypal ‘themes’ in his or her life, and the kind ofmetic precision that is possible with a really skilled astrologer.<sup>32</sup>

Abram is very perceptive on the trap inherent in privileging either objectivity or subjectivity. Writing of the dominant kind of scientific discourse on the one hand and most of the ‘New Age’ kind on the other, he points out (1996:66-67) that

by prioritizing one or the other, both of these views perpetuate the distinction between human ‘subjects’ and natural ‘objects,’ and hence neither threatens the common conception of sensible nature as a purely passive dimension suitable for human manipulation and use. While both of these views are unstable, each bolsters the other; by bouncing from one to the other – from scientific determinism to spiritual idealism and back again – contemporary discourse easily avoids the possibility that both the perceiving being and the perceived being are of the same stuff, that the perceiver and the perceived are interdependent and in some sense even reversible aspects of a common animate nature, or Flesh, that is at once both sensible and sensitive.

Or as Bateson (1987:51, 59) earlier put it, “These two species of superstition, these rival epistemologies, the supernatural and the mechanical, feed each other.... And both are nonsense.”

Ironically, then, to the extent that astrology is incorporated into a “New Age” worldview, it becomes embroiled in this sterile dualism which simply feeds the fantasy of a single Truth, to be accomplished by finally successfully absorbing its symbiotic twin (idealist or materialist). Since (re)enchantment depends, as Weber pointed out, on a spiritual plurality of the kind that divination entails, astrology then loses its ability to re-enchant. And that is precisely what makes it so valuable now. The subject-object split, made famous by Descartes but based on centuries of Christian spirit/matter dualism (itself strongly influenced in this respect by Platonic philosophy), is fundamental to the strategy of disenchantment. Astrology has the potential to resist that, and to remind us of the sectarian and senseless way that distinction has been turned by science into an article of faith, and turned so destructively on many other fields of life.<sup>33</sup> Enchantment, in contrast, is an experience of the world as intrinsically meaningful, significant, and whole in a way that is fundamentally mysterious, and that includes oneself. In divination, an answer to a



question which rings mysteriously but precisely true for those concerned is just such an experience.

Two reminders might be necessary here. First, the fact that this kind of truth is very different from the second-order experience of truth in an objectivist sense in no way disqualifies it, unless one subscribes to objectivist assumptions. Conversely, the experience of enchantment does not make it true in an objectivist sense; nor does it need to be.<sup>34</sup> Second, the centrality of spiritual wonder does not at all rule out the answer's pragmatic usefulness. *Instrumentalism* and *utilitarianism* are the attempt to turn usefulness, which is integral to being alive, into the dominant [p. 113] value of a virtual religion – a very different matter. To view pragmatic and spiritual value as mutually exclusive is simply to accept that convention without question, and forget Weber's point about concrete magic. While it seems that Weber himself was ultimately pessimistic about recovering such a sensibility, it is not necessary to be an optimist to hold that "coming full circle" is both desirable and at least possible, individually and even, to some extent, collectively.

Insofar as astrology still partakes of divination, then, enchantment is still at its heart; and as such, it is not to be fully explained in any fully calculable, rational or material and therefore masterable way. As we have seen, plurality and mystery are integral to such experiences, and their integrity can only be sustained by wonder and its correlates (as developed by Hepburn [1980]): humility and respect for otherness. They cannot be mastered through the application of a system – i.e., disenchanted – without becoming something very different.<sup>35</sup> They also cannot be captured (alive) by any physicalist metaphor, such as, say, the physical distances of the planets from the Earth; these have no relevance except insofar as they are interpreted *symbolically* and incorporated, as we have already said, ritually. In Hyde's phrase, astrology is "a poetics of the cosmos."<sup>36</sup>

To put it another way, astrological divination is fundamentally and therefore, in its own terms, rightly unconcerned with the question of 'How?' The domain of wonder is irreducibly one that 'It is so!'<sup>37</sup> So to explore the former question is to engage in a different enterprise. That is perfectly legitimate, of course. Not so the attempt to reduce the latter domain entirely to the former, however; such an act of imperialism can only 'succeed' in not only misunderstanding and misrepresenting its subject, but in destroying it in the instances it stumbles upon. But such effects are, of course, far from accidental. "The war against mystery and magic was for modernity the war of liberation leading to the declaration of reason's independence.... [The] world had to be de-spiritualised, de-animated: denied the capacity of the subject" (Bauman 1992: x). It is here that astrology, rightly understood and practiced, has something to contribute to a healthy and hopeful re-enchantment of the world.

A fundamental dilemma is thus posed for astrologers, in that success as defined by the mainstream entails failure as enchantment, and therefore loss of the only way they can offer a critique of (let alone alternative to) mainstream culture; but success in terms of enchantment results in their marginalisation and rejection by the mainstream, along with loss of the power, influence and respectability that the latter can offer. Some attempt to escape this difficult choice by pursuing the path, central to the entertainment industry, of glamour: enchantment for profit. But glamour, being will-driven, is only enchantment's simulacrum; the real thing has fled or died, so the price of escape that way – pretence as a way of life, best maintained by permanent self-delusion – is high. Our own view is, to coin a phrase, [p. 114] what does it profit a discourse to gain the world but lose its soul? This is the unworldly choice, of course, but what kind of a world does the other course offer?

## ‘Explaining’ Divination

It follows from everything that has been said so far that the enterprise of explaining astrology must be carefully qualified from the outset by what is meant by “explaining”. For example, insofar as astrology is divination, it cannot be treated as if it was putatively, potentially or actually science (in the modern sense). Insofar as it is a participatory experience, it cannot be treated as if the contribution of that particular astrologer in that particular situation in relation to that particular question(s) could be taken for granted, or averaged out. Insofar as it is a ritual, it cannot be compared to a “control ritual”. Insofar as it is metic, i.e. tactical and/or strategic, it cannot survive being treated as *episteme*, i.e. as algorithmic, universal or strictly propositional knowledge.<sup>38</sup> Insofar as it is enchantment, it cannot be expected to survive putatively total rational explanation.

In other words, if it is a firm *desideratum* to take astrology seriously as such, those approaches, which are guaranteed to destroy it (within their ambit), must be rejected. But does that leave us with nothing to say? Only if one subscribes to the what Bernard Williams (1985:18) aptly called “a rationalistic conception of rationality”, which confuses reasons with Reason,<sup>39</sup> and offers a false choice: either everything can, at least in principle, be fully explained, or nothing can at all. Such mystification is essential to the ideology of scientism, and its programme of disenchantment. As such, it is uniquely inappropriate to something like astrology – but at the same time, unable to resist trying to master and thus eliminate it. (Hence the whiff of hypocrisy, whether conscious or not, in such researchers’ occasional claims to ‘really’ have the interests of astrology at heart.)

The trouble is that scientism has such a firm grip now on the very idea of explanation and what constitutes it. Perhaps, then, we should leave it to them, and say that respecting astrology, what *is* a defensible intellectual goal, in which reason plays an indispensable part, is *understanding* it: a better understanding, and therefore deeper appreciation, of the phenomenon, as it exists in the experience of those participating in it – something that includes those who are ‘studying’ it. (Wittgenstein still has much to teach us here.).

This was the goal of the pioneering anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Notwithstanding that he was never forgiven by the intellectual community for imputing a lack of logic to the ‘primitive mind’ – something he soon retracted – Lévy-Bruhl’s concept of “mystical participation” is very close to that of divination, and his late attempts to get to grips with it are a model of intellectual integrity. His [p. 115] starting-point was a recognition that participation is not representation or cognitive knowledge, and “to try to apply this scheme to participation is to do it violence and to distort it.” Rather, “from the affective point of view which predominates in the complex where participation is included... something felt as real is definitely real, whether it is possible or not.” And in seeking to understand mystical participation, he advised against “taking for granted that things are given first and that afterwards they enter into participations.... Participation enters into the very constitution of these things. Without participation, they would not be *given* in experience: they would not exist”. He concluded that “participation is not ‘explained’ – it cannot be and ought not to be, it has no need of legitimation; but one sees its necessary place in the human mind – and as a result its role in religion, in metaphysics, in art and even in the conception of the whole of nature” (Lévy-Bruhl 1975: 1, 5-6, 192, 179-80).

An approach of this kind would also realise and accept that examining astrology in different contexts and with different questions in mind will result in different understandings, which do not necessarily either cancel each other out, or have to eventuate in one great and all-inclusive meta-understanding (the notorious “view from nowhere”). It accepts all understanding is necessarily limited, incomplete and provisional – but none the less potentially valuable, interesting or helpful for that. By the same token, since it can never be final or complete, it always needs renewing, both individually and collectively – a fact which entails a salutary humility. And if such an enterprise amounts more to wisdom than to what the mainstream is pleased to call knowledge, so much the worse for the latter. It is at least in very good company: the arts and humanities, for a start, along with those social sciences with a phenomenological and/or hermeneutic approach. (It is no mere coincidence that Weber was a pioneer of the latter.)

On this subject, we shall give the last word to the eminent Indologist Heinrich Zimmer (1948:1-3), writing on the closely related subject of myth:

The dilettante – Italian *dilettante* (present participle of the verb *dilettare*, “to take delight in”) – is one who takes delight in something.... The moment we abandon this dilettante attitude toward the images of folklore and myth and begin to feel certain about their proper interpretation (as professional comprehenders, handling the tool of an infallible method), we deprive ourselves of the quickening contact, the dæmonic and inspiring assault that is the effect of their intrinsic virtue. We forfeit our proper humility and open-mindedness before the unknown, and refuse to be instructed.... What they demand of us is not the monologue of the coroner's report, but the dialogue of a living conversation.

And what do the deadening compendia of so-called ‘negative results’ by the scientific researchers constitute, if not a coroner’s report?

In the case of understanding astrology as divination, however, there is another and more specific obstacle, with strong historical roots. It is apparently a simple [p. 116] stipulation (in contrast to the crude reductionism of the scientific researchers) to take it seriously, in its own right, *ab initio*. But the experience of divination was very early and severely banned within Christian discourse, and it remains in exile. Whatever the tacit compromises in practice, this made it extremely difficult to theorise in a way that allows it to exist. And the same is all the more true within the modern scientific discourse that succeeded and partially supplanted Christianity. Both theistic and secular monisms (including their respective internal dualisms) rule out of court the reality of the relational, and therefore plural (which is both objective and subjective, and therefore solely neither) and soulful (which is both spiritual and material, and therefore solely neither) even before enquiry can begin.

Given these difficulties, we can appreciate C.G. Jung’s remark (1950: xxxix) that “The less one thinks about the theory of the *I Ching*, the more soundly one sleeps.” It is also no coincidence that some of the best general discussions of divination are still either pagan – such as that of the neo-Platonic philosopher Iamblichus (c.250-c.338) – or non-Western, such as that of Chu Hsi (1130-1200), the neo-Confucian philosopher. Since there is no good reason to assume that all passage of time necessarily constitutes progress, there is no shame in returning to these sources in order to recover their wisdom, before trying to move beyond them. It is

also good to be reminded of how long debates which may appear uniquely contemporary have been going on.

Plotinus, for example, objected in principle to the very idea that the planets cause things to happen: "...countless myriads of living beings are born and continue to be: to minister continuously to every separate one of these; to make them famous, rich, poor, lascivious... What kind of life is this for the stars, how could they possibly handle a task so huge?"<sup>40</sup> Cicero (1923:537) concurred, seeing the divine as an "excellent and eternal Being" that would, or could, have no traffic with petty human concerns. And it is not difficult to translate such a view into Dawkins's apparently secular reverence for the heavens, and outrage at astrologers.

Iamblichus (1999:81), in response to the similar doubts of Plotinus's follower Porphyry, explains "that the Gods, employing many instruments as media, send indications to men; and that they also use the ministrant aid of demons and souls, and the whole of nature, and of everything in the world.... For [divination] does not draw down the intellect of more excellent natures to sublunary concerns and to us, but this intellect being established in itself, converts to itself signs and the whole of divination, and discovers that these proceed from it."<sup>41</sup>

Compare a neo-Confucian understanding of divination, according to which the tutelary spirit (*shen*) guiding divination is "not a personal spirit but a daemonic power or intelligence which is active within the operations of heaven and earth, and which emanates from the person of the sage" (Graham 1957:111-12). There is a distinct resonance with the classical *daemons*, before they were demonised by [p. 117] Christianity. But even this definition was too arbitrary for Chu Hsi, the great philosopher of the classic Chinese divinatory text, the *I Ching*, who criticised the popular notion of divination as the work of *kuei* and *shen* (ghosts and spirits), as distinct from *ch'i*, the psycho-physical substrate of all things: "*Kuei* and *shen* are merely *ch'i*. That which bends and stretches back and forth is *ch'i*. Within heaven-and-earth there is nothing that is not *ch'i*. The *ch'i* of mankind and the *ch'i* of heaven-and-earth are always in contact, with no gap, but human beings themselves cannot see it. When the human mind moves, it must pass through *ch'i* and mutually stimulate and penetrate this bending and stretching back and forth. In such cases as divination...when there is movement there must be a response" (Smith et al. 1990: 202). Or as another neo-Confucian, Chou Tun-I (1017-1073), put it, the spirit (by which divination works) is that which, "when acted upon, immediately penetrates all things" (Chan 1963:467). That definition coheres perfectly with the nature of divination as requiring participation in order to become real.<sup>42</sup>

## Ways Forward

We suspect that an attempt nowadays to produce a 'comprehensive' theory of divination would be likely to view it as, broadly speaking, a means of allowing access to the unconscious mind (whether as knowledge that one 'has' without normally being aware of it, or as knowledge that is trans- or super-personal of which one is normally unaware). But such a move could not, in itself, bypass the constraints of participation, *metis* and so on; and it brings its own potential problems. Too much psychological theory simply reproduces the ancestral split in terms of an 'inner' subjective mind and an 'outer' objective world, both equally reified, whose interrelations are then mystified. One also suspects that the use of the word 'unconscious' is being made to do a lot of work making something feel secular, safe and already understood that is actually none of these things. That in turn makes it more amenable to abstract system-

building of the kind William James (1977:32) called “vicious intellectualism”, which treats a name “as excluding from the fact named what the name’s definition fails positively to include”.

But the dire intellectual situation of divination and related phenomena in contemporary Western thought is slowly changing for the better. Recent advances in pluralist and “relativist” thought, several of which have already been touched on here, definitely permit new hope. We have already drawn upon Weber and his heirs in contemporary critical theory, the humane pragmatism and pluralism of his near-contemporary William James, and the efforts of Lévy-Bruhl, among others. One could also mention the rich new possibilities opened up by the pioneering systems theory of Gregory Bateson and its further development by Maturana and Varela [p. 118] (capably described by Capra); Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, as articulated, for example, by Abram; the importance, recently rediscovered (by intellectuals), of local knowledge;<sup>43</sup> the post-critical philosophy inspired by Michael Polanyi’s concept of “tacit knowledge”; and the influence of the idea of “forms of life” of the later Wittgenstein in philosophy. We have already described anthropology, which is intertwined with many of these approaches, as the single most promising so-called social science vis-à-vis astrology; but the potential of history and the humanities too, especially literary theory, cannot be discounted.

The burgeoning of science studies is encouraging, especially the kind developed by Bruno Latour.<sup>44</sup> He points out that both realism and relativism agree that reference to an absolute, universal (and therefore disenchanting) yardstick is essential, only differing in that the former hold that it is attainable, with it full knowledge; and the latter that it isn’t, and therefore no knowledge. What Latour calls relationism, in contrast, is all about relations: practices, instruments, documents and translations. This focus is based on the realisation that a Culture bracketed off from Nature is an impossible artifact, as is the reverse. “There are only natures-cultures, and these offer the only possible basis for comparison.” Nature-cultures, subject-objects, local-globals – these are the appropriate *focii* of analysis. And they are constituted by networks, which themselves “are simultaneously real, like nature; narrated, like discourse; and collective, like society” (Latour 1993: 104,6). There are no essences, then, but a process: one which partakes of all of these, and which produces both humans and nonhumans – a distinction which is therefore not fundamental. This resonates promisingly with the experience of divination, in which a process of interpretation is not produced *by* humans but takes place in a way that unites and transcends, or subverts, the modernist divide between the human/ cultural (e.g. the astrologer) and the nonhuman/ natural (e.g. the planets). It should also remind us of the point made earlier about truth as active and even, albeit in a nonhuman way, sentient or intelligent.<sup>45</sup> Finally – and this is where Latour shows the way when Weberian pessimism cannot – he reminds us that (in the words of one his titles) we have never *been* modern, in the way the modernists would have us believe. This realisation points to how (in ways that remain to be articulated) enchantment has survived.

Analytical psychology and its “post-Jungianism” offshoots also have something to offer here. Tantalisingly, Jung (1966:56, 55) realised that “astrology represents the sum of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity”, and that in the experience of “the divinatory power of the *I Ching*... we have here an Archimedean point from which our Western attitude of mind could be lifted off its foundations”; but he apparently failed to connect the two. The principal such foundation is, of course, just the subject/ object split instituted by monist rationalism-realism, and the attendant disenchantment – just what not only the *I Ching* but also astrology, [p. 119] properly

understood, has the potential not only to reveal but in practice to undermine. And the schools of depth-psychological astrology (developed by Liz Greene) and archetypal psychology (whose chief articulation has been by James Hillman) facilitate such a recognition through their emphasis on metaphor, in particular that of myth, as the irreducible language of psychic reality. The emphasis on soul as where we actually live – embodied, embedded, inherently relational, contingent, messy and incomplete – as distinct from the impossible dreams of either pure spirit or pure matter – is a healing one.<sup>46</sup> But that will also depend on a willingness, as already discussed, to leave behind Jung’s own psychological monism behind.

Finally, the slow mutual absorption and adaptation between Buddhism and the West is starting to bring to our awareness the oldest and almost certainly most sophisticated critique of essentialism, whether spiritual or material, of all: that of the philosopher Nagarjuna (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries), based on the concepts of *anatman* (nonself), *sunyata* (emptiness) and *pratitya samutpada* (co-dependent origination).<sup>47</sup> Undoubtedly such an awareness would, at the least, help make possible a more profound understanding of divination.

The liberating and fruitful potential of all this, however, depends on the extent to which particular intellectual practitioners, whatever the name and provenance of their discipline, are able to shake off its and their own scientific, secularist and anthropocentric prejudices; and the latter run deep. As Charles Darwin once noted, “Great is the power of steady misrepresentation”; and few subjects have been so long and consistently misrepresented, in keeping with those prejudices, as divination, astrological or otherwise. Change will not occur overnight, and it will encounter serious resistance along the way.

### **The Judder Effect**

In a brilliant paper, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) has contrasted the radically different cosmo-philosophical premisses of ‘Western’ and Amerindian thought. Not its least benefit is to reveal the sheer contingency of our most matter-of-fact, common-sense assumptions.

Viveiros de Castro discusses what constitutes a threateningly uncanny situation for an Amerindian. This invites the question, what is the corresponding situation (although not an exact structural equivalent) which we in the ‘West’ find disturbing, disorienting, ‘spooky’: in short, what the astrologer Pat Blackett, together with Maggie Hyde (2001) – describing the sort of unpleasant jar/shudder that can shake someone who experiences astrology and other forms of divination actually working – have called “the Judder Effect”? It seems to us that it is something like this: an encounter between a ‘normal’, sensible, educated person and something which is [p. 120] normally as simply a physical object or set of objects – a piece of paper, mapping the positions of the planets (themselves reassuringly ‘physical’); a book opened to a page determined by the throw of more objects called coins; a spread of cards – which, however, then reveals itself as a subjectivity which ‘speaks’ to him or her.

Lévy-Bruhl (1975: 56) pointed out the usual ‘solution’:

before the unintelligibility, at least, relative, of the mystical world, where the most extraordinary and inexplicable transformations occur, where the irregularity of phenomena appears as natural as their regularity, our mind experiences discomfort, confusion and perplexity: what is a world which is not

rational and intelligible? And it gets out of it by saying: it is a world which is not real (imaginary, arbitrary, fabulous, like fairy stories)...<sup>48</sup>

This is the easy way out that Jung, to his eternal credit and our benefit, never took. In fact, he wrestled with this issue, framed as “synchronicity”, his entire working life, and never satisfactorily resolved it. In a letter to a colleague in 1957, he remarked that “I well understand that you prefer to emphasize...the psychological angle, but I must say that I am equally interested, at times even more so, in the metaphysical aspect of the phenomena, and in the question: how does it come that even inanimate objects are capable of behaving as if they were acquainted with my thoughts?” (Jung 1976:344)<sup>49</sup>

Now, someone who has such an experience is characteristically in a strange and delicate position. On the one hand, he has learned to consider himself, too, as essentially an objective physical body in spacetime: in short, an ‘it’. But there is a ghost in the machine: his body is apparently inhabited by a subjective self, even though the authorities reassure him that this too will soon be explicable as merely the epiphenomenal effect of a brain. On the other hand, however, he has almost certainly absorbed the lesson that human beings have been telling themselves, in varying forms, for the past several millenia: that they alone are subjects, in the company solely of other humans and disembodied spirits. (Science has banished the latter, of course, en route to attempting to get rid of human subjectivity too.)

The worldview of most people in the ‘West’ today is a peculiar and unstable muddle of these two positions. But what concerns us here is that in *either* case, our hypothetical person is vulnerable to being overwhelmed by what both of them rule out of court: the experience of objects turning out to be also subjects, e.g. the planets, coins, book or cards knowing and communicating something – and not just anything, either, but something intimately personal. In the process of that shared knowing, he becomes a subject too, but not the customarily accepted way; rather one in a world of nonhuman subjects (and therefore also perspectives). And it’s too late to resist, because in the moment of recognising and responding (however involuntarily) to the shared subjectivity of the hitherto safely objective world, it has *already happened*; so subsequent resistance can only take the form of [p. 121] denial and damage limitation. All in all, to the extent this person, either by temperament or training, subscribes to the dominant or hegemonic ideology – and not surprisingly, a big part of educational institutionalisation involves inculcating just that – such an experience is deeply uncomfortable one.

Of course, even if this is a fair description of one aspect of that ideology, it would be reductionist and patronising to suggest that it is true of virtually everyone. It is certainly possible to learn to tolerate and appreciate the experience described above, and there are even those for whom it is a precious reminder of living in a world which, despite everything that has been done to it, is still enchanted.

The same polarity is reflected in another notorious part of Cartesian ideology, namely the fiction (so convenient for the food and pharmaceutical industries) that other animals too are really just objects: organic machines, in effect. To the extent this idea has been accepted, directly encountering nonhuman animal subjectivity, as distinct from sentimentality about animals, can also be unsettling. For others, however, that encounter too is a major source of cheer and relief in a relentlessly objectivised world.

Let us be quite clear: we are not suggesting, as a careless or hostile reader might suppose, that stellar matter, paper or coins can think (in just the way we think,

that is). Rather they, like us, participate in what Bateson called “the larger interactive system” which is itself intelligence, and pervades everything, as Iamblichus and Chu Hsi also recognised, in appropriate ways and extents. (Which is why, being the basis of understanding, it is not fully or finally understandable, let alone specifiable.) How could the appropriate response to this possibly be to predict ‘the’ future, or in Bateson’s example, to ‘make “it” rain’?

This brings us back to the observation (by Morrison, among others) regarding ancient divination: its point was not to foretell but to reveal a truth in and of the present, in a way that affirms shared membership in an inexhaustibly mysterious world. Nor is this attitude confined to the past; in Lama Chime Radha’s contribution on Tibetan Buddhist divination to the same collection, *Oracles and Divination*, his awareness (alone among the other scholars) of working within a *living* tradition is striking, and lends additional weight to his affirmation (1981:24) that “The search is not merely for a way of foretelling specific events, but for the expression of an underlying world order, embracing both natural and supernatural realities.”

In cases of potential metaphysical dissonance in the presence of divination, who then is our ‘Western’ shaman? There doesn’t seem to be a precise professional equivalent, but certainly there is a basic requirement for negotiating, let alone enjoying, such liminal changes of perspective, namely what Keats (1995:49) called “negative capability”: that is, “capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” (Contrast scientism: an ‘irritable reaching after fact and reason’ turned into an entire worldview.) That ability, in turn, is central to the cunning wisdom of *metis*, so anyone who can think [p. 122] or act metically would not be so unsettled. And certain professions, at their best, involve using metic intelligence to help others not so skilled: counsellors, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts, spiritual (although not necessarily religious) advisors...and astrologers.

### **Astrology as Ecology**

As has been suggested (after Weber), the contemporary hegemony of scientism is only the latest, albeit most powerful, phase of disenchantment. Its coincidentce with ecological crisis, overwhelmingly human-caused, is also significant. The millenia-long emphasis on, and conflation of, the transcendental, the real, the objective and the true has now perhaps reached its apogee; and in this context, the voices of sanity are those reminding us that all our values and experiences “are essentially the result of a cooperation of man and non-human nature: the universe would not contain them, were it not for our perceptual-creative efforts, and were it not equally for the contribution of the non-human world that both sustains and sets limits to our lives.... There is no wholly-other paradise from which we are excluded; the only transcendence that can be real to us is an ‘immanent’ one.” (Hepburn 1984:181-82). More pointedly, as Kane (1994:50) puts it, “all the work that various peoples have done - all the work that peoples must do - to live with the Earth on the Earth's terms is pre-empted by the dream of transcendence.”

That dream has affected astrology too – and not surprisingly, since its province, after all, embraces the cosmic. But the problem corresponds to the extent that the cosmic *alone* is defined as its concern, and the attempt made to eliminate the crucial element of human participation. Since that element was obviously irreducibly integral to divination, divinatory astrology – paradigmatically horary astrology – earned the opprobrium of ambitious astrologers as much as anyone else, if not more so: “the vilest rubbish



imaginable”, and “the curse of the science and the ruin of the astrologer”, in the Theosophist astrologer Alan Leo’s words, and in those of his bitter opponent, the ‘scientific’ astrologer A.J. Pearce, “absurd and unwarrantable”.<sup>50</sup> Ptolemy’s Aristotelian system, so influential for so long, arguably succeeded in preserving the astrological tradition as such in a hostile milieu (no small feat); but it also unwittingly prepared the way for the even more ruthless systematisation of modern science, which has no need of astrology whatsoever. So astrologers need reminding that any pretences on their part to systematic or objective (let alone scientific) truth, as distinct from divinatory (but not therefore merely ‘subjective’) truth, only legitimises the authority of those who would like to see them jailed for fraud.

As a route to short-term power and status, however, the transcendental/objectivist strategy has been so successful (in its own terms) that it presents a constant [p. 123] temptation; and the accompanying mindset can be very hard to shake, when it has become an entrenched mental habit. For example, in an obvious, almost banal sense, the planets and stars are natural objects. However, the meaning of ‘natural’ is itself not self-evident but historically contingent, having resulted from a lengthy and complex process of intellectual struggle. In terms of the modern scientific sense of ‘natural’, the heavenly bodies have by now been so thoroughly naturalised as purely material and lifeless bodies moving mechanically through space – in other words, disenchanted – that it is difficult to recapture the sense in which they have been ‘natural’ for most of astrology’s history: a sense in which that does not preclude the spiritual.

Divination both facilitates and (to work) requires a recovery of that unity. Kane (1994:37, 41, 39) usefully points to “the knowledge of pattern – also very much Bateson’s concern – as “the beginning of every practical wisdom.” And “Nature is full of these patterns (information theorists call them ‘redundancies’) which invite practical divination.” But this is no mere primitive proto-science, because such wisdom is not abstract but metic; it is intimately related to place; and its ultimate repository is myth. To quote Lama Radha (1981: 25) again,

As one works with the symbolism and penetrates more deeply into its meaning, one learns by its aid to arrive at an integrated view of the world, to see the one in the many, the highest in the lowest, the infinitely great in what is infinitesimally small, and to recognise behind all phenomena the unifying Emptiness which is void of all self-qualities and yet the creative source of all existence and relativities. In doing so one develops an intuitive insight into the workings of the world of nature, which reflect these universal principles, and that insight is the basis of the art of divination.

There is another blind-spot to which astrologers also seem prone. A horoscope for anyone or anything on Earth involves, by definition, by a division of space proceeding from the intersection of the celestial equator (extending out from the Earth’s equator) and the ecliptic (the path the Earth travels around the Sun); to put it another way, it is a map of the heavens in relation to a particular place on Earth as well as moment of time. In other words, *without* the Earth there could be no astrology, at least as we know it. Yet this fact is heavily obscured both by the attention paid to the cosmic alone, and by an exclusive focus on ‘objective’ time.

The needed correction is to realise that what astrology offers, uniquely in its way – and this is its specificity with respect to enchantment – is wonder at partaking of an intrinsically meaningful place and moment on Earth that specifically *includes* the

cosmos, especially the phenomenological cosmos (Sun and Moon, visible planets and stars), but also oneself, right down to the precise issue or concern that initiated the inquiry. It is thus an experience at once chthonic, cosmic and intimately personal: “drawing down the Moon” indeed! As the neo-Confucian philosopher [p. 124] Chang Tsai put it, “Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst.”

He continues, “Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature” (Chan 1963:497). The recovery of such a sensibility, whether personal or collective, amounts to a recovery of sanity from the cosmic psychodrama of alienated modernity as famously voiced by Pascal: “Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m’effraie.” Certainly, as Russell Hoban (1992: 139) put it, “we’ve tried making both things and people *It*, and we’ve seen the results.” Anything that makes it possible to experience the cosmos as a *Thou*, as astrology potentially does, should therefore be welcomed, and at least given a chance.

In this context, it is encouraging that divinatory astrology is ecological in the broadest and truest sense: it partakes of an inexhaustible and therefore ultimately mysterious network of relationships and therefore interdependencies; you are necessarily *in* it and *of* it. And this ‘it’ is – ultimately not just is like, but *is* – the Earth itself, a wild and, in effect, infinitely multiplicitous place. By contrast, science as scientism is inherently anti-ecological; the putative view is *of* the Earth, and ‘it’ is reduced to whatever will stay still, so to speak, because as Blake saw, it is already dead: hence the animate ‘as inanimate’.<sup>51</sup>

Notice that this place includes the cosmos, *not* the other way around. Significantly, Dawkins’s scientism would have us believe the contrary: following the Abrahamic off-planet God, the naturalised cosmos includes the place as merely an aspect of space; and since the former is so vast, the latter – here – recedes into absolute insignificance... thus preparing the way for the ultimate scientific triumph, which is also its ultimate hypocrisy, of truth as the view from nowhere. An astrological map is one *of* the sky-space at a particular time; but that is only a ritual prerequisite to its heart: an experience of a place (not space) and moment (not time) that is animate, sacred, intelligent and whole. It includes ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘spiritual’, ‘material’, ‘person’, ‘Earth’, ‘cosmos’ and indefinitely more more besides. So not the least of astrology’s potential services is to remind us that our home (‘eco’) has a cosmic dimension; and conversely, that the cosmos can, after all, be home.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> We shall use the 1996 version of his 1995 article.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Parker, FRS and Bishop of Oxford; see Curry 1989: 49.

<sup>3</sup> See Midgley 1992:33.

<sup>4</sup> The *Guardian* regularly features the same sort of columns, usually by Francis Wheen, Pat Kane or Catherine Bennett.

<sup>5</sup> See Pinch and Collins 1984, Hansen 1992, Clark 1993.

<sup>6</sup> See Rawlins 1981, Curry 1982.

<sup>7</sup> With thanks for his kind permission to do so. For a recent and thorough summary of scientific research into astrology from a ‘sceptical’ point of view, see Stein (1996). It is worth recording that in the spring of 2003, the leading ‘researcher’, Gefforey Dean,

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was elected as a CSICOP Fellow.

<sup>8</sup> Elwell 1987; see Phillipson 2000:183.

<sup>9</sup> See Smith 1988, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Marie-Louise von Franz (1986: 26) on Rhine, the doyen of scientific research into parapsychology: “he was foolish enough to believe that if he wanted to sell parapsychological phenomena to the scientific world then he must prove them statistically or with the concept of probability and – what a fool – he ended up by that in enemy territory.... He tries to prove with the very means which eliminates the single case something which is only valid in the single case.”

<sup>11</sup> With thanks to Mike Harding for this marvellous quotation.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Harding 2000: just such an exercise, which provoked a furious reaction from Dean et al. And since part of our import is that no argumentation is purely disinterested, it is not out of place here to note briefly two of Dean’s chief rhetorical strategies. One is to tendentiously ‘summarise’ his opponents’ arguments and then deal entirely with the resulting creation. The other is to engage in apparently endless reply and counter-reply, while conceding nothing, to the point where his opponents sensibly decide that the process has become fruitless and decline to continue – whereupon Dean claims victory.

<sup>13</sup> From an interview in *The Irish Times* (11.1.1992).

<sup>14</sup> Also, as Brockbank (2002: 15) observes, “the accuracy tests of Dean et al. imply a definition of astrology which excludes an astrologer whereas, in nearly every case, the astrology that is actually being practised requires an astrologer.”

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Varela et al. (1991). A good recent discussion is Capra 1997. (See also section below on ‘Explaining Divination’.)

<sup>16</sup> Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 128. On metaphor, see also Midgley 2001; Hesse 1980:111-124; Ortony 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Barfield 1967, 1977:11-142, 1973, 1979:36-64.

<sup>17</sup> Midgeley 1992, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> See the forthcoming analysis by Geoffrey Cornelius in the second edition of his 1994. See also Lehman 1994 for a good discussion of scientific double-standards, abuse of ‘scientific method’, etc. in astrological research.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. by Kelly 1990, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> This was what Milan Kundera referred to as “the unbearable lightness of being”.

<sup>21</sup> We would like to add, in case there is any doubt, that Henry and Chalmers are not fringe or extremist commentators but respected mainstream scholars. It is for that reason we have chosen not to quote, say, Fuller 1997, despite his acuity.

<sup>22</sup> Also noted by Phillipson 2000:124.

<sup>23</sup> See the penultimate paragraph in Patrick Curry’s portion of the Introduction.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Scaff 1989:118; emphases in the original.

<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, Scott’s analysis is undermined by his conflation of *metis* and *phronesis*, and much of what he ascribes to the former applies only to the latter.

<sup>26</sup> See Holtzman and Leich (1981).

<sup>27</sup> But not, significantly, Iamblichus.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., see James 1956.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hoban 1992:138 – “Why cannot any god die? Because gods do not replace one another.”

<sup>30</sup> See Curry 1999.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Greene (1984: 271), who argues that the connection between the soul and fate is mythic, and “Myths, as we have seen, cross the boundaries between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, and manifest on both levels.”

<sup>32</sup> Cornelius (2001) has conceptualised this contrast in terms of ‘speculative’ and ‘realised’ interpretation.

<sup>33</sup> See Scott 1998, for some of its effects in the twentieth century.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s (1988:156) point that even though the ‘relativist’ hears his own point that ‘truth’ is not merely a function of ‘truth-value’ as a negative one, “the realist will hear it as equivalent to a positive and positively appalling point, namely that just someone’s finding something good enough to believe is enough to *make it ‘true’ in the realist/objectivist sense.*”

<sup>35</sup> See Curry 1999 and Kane 1994: 250.

<sup>36</sup> Company of Astrologers seminar, 8 July 2001.

<sup>37</sup> A point also made by Wittgenstein concerning that fact that the world is.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. what the superb hypnotherapist Milton Erikson is supposed to said about the NLP programme based on his work: “They think they have me in a nutshell, but all they have is the shell.”

<sup>39</sup> See Smith 1997:41.

<sup>40</sup> Plotinus 1991:80; quoted in Phillipson 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Shaw 1995.

<sup>42</sup> See Cornelius 1994: 143-44.

<sup>43</sup> See Geertz 1993.

<sup>44</sup> See also Smith 1997, 1989; also Labinger and Collins 2002.

<sup>45</sup> See also Viveiros de Castro 1998.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Greene 1984, Hillman 1983 and 1997.

<sup>47</sup> See Radha 1981.

<sup>48</sup> He continued, “the philosopher can be tempted (and history shows that he has been and that he has usually succumbed to the temptation) to consider this rationality of the world which our science establishes and verifies, as reasonable in itself, as carrying in itself the reason of its legitimacy.... [But] this intelligibility of the sensible world, ordered and ruled by science, is itself for ever unintelligible.”

<sup>49</sup> See Hyde 1992, Main 1997.

<sup>50</sup> From *Modern Astrology* (1896) 2 (7):434-37; see Curry 1992:165. (The second part of the quotation is actually entirely in the upper-case.) Pearce as quoted in Curry 1992: 165.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Abram 1996.

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