

**Defining the Moment:  
Geoffrey Cornelius and the Development of  
the Divinatory Perspective**

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Page 1:	Introduction - A Personal Tale (The Daemon Enters)
Page 4:	Part I – The Problem of Astrology
Page 10:	Part II – The English Astrological Context (1974 - 91)
Page 20:	Part III – Divinatory Astrology
Page 38:	Part IV – Whither Astrology?

### A Personal Tale: The Daemon Enters

During the days of my astrological virginity in the early 1970's, while hitchhiking home from college, I had the unsettling experience of being picked up by a chatty astrologer, who proceeded to correctly identify both my sun and rising signs simply by looking at me. To my utter astonishment, she also pointed out some rather salient aspects of my personality. Before dropping me off, she asked for my address and promised to send me a "reading" of my horoscope. I never heard from her again.

Three years later, a co-worker cast my chart and confirmed my rising sign. She told me about my horoscope and it all seemed vaguely familiar as I recalled the intuitions of my mysterious acquaintance. This second encounter with the strange workings of astrology piqued my curiosity and subsequently led me to my own study of this strange and beautiful art. Like others before me, my conversion was sudden, unbidden and in my case, aptly symbolized by a transit of Uranus over my natal ascendant. Over the years, I occasionally think about my meeting with that stranger and wish I could thank her.

"She was your daemon<sup>1</sup>," Geoffrey Cornelius told me rather matter of factly in 1997. "She brought you into astrology". No doubt she had, but it was my own conflicted path through the field of astrology which had led me to his book *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination*. Like many astrologers with a rigorous approach, astrology's inconsistent nature and its poor showing in research tests bothered me. My own astrological education was sound: I completed a three year apprenticeship with a practicing astrologer, Bob Mulligan during which time, I made my way through much of the Anglo-American literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further, I had immersed myself in technique and felt competent in the art of reading a horoscope. During the next five years of astrological practice, I experienced moments of profound connection with my clients where the symbolic showings of astrology were unmistakably apropos and simply impossible to deny. Yet at other times, I engaged in speculative interpretations, which felt both empty and meaningless. I was simply providing generic interpretations in the hope that something would hit the mark. Occasionally, my client's seemingly powerful natal aspects or transits would sound a dumb note that was simply embarrassing as well as baffling. To paraphrase Kepler, the workings of astrology were too inconsistent to compel my unwilling belief. I left my practice in 1985, but I could not leave astrology.

In my typically oblique fashion, I learned of Cornelius' work through a close reading of another book: Maggie Hyde's *Jung and Astrology*, whose footnotes were filled with references to Cornelius' "radical modern rethink about the nature of astrology."<sup>2</sup> Over the years, my understanding of astrology had shifted through various phases: astrology as science in the making (Reinhold Ebertin's cosmobiology, John Addey's harmonics, Michel Gauquelin's statistical studies); astrology as esoteric discipline (Alice Bailey et al); and astrology as an interpretive art based on stellar psychodynamics (Liz Greene, Stephen Arroyo, etc.). Yet none of these approaches quite satisfied me. In 1994, after reading *Moment*, I felt as if I had encountered an understanding of astrology that squared fully with my experiences. In Cornelius, I discovered an astrologer who was able to articulate the

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology, daemons were secondary divinities ranking between the gods and men. Cornelius invokes a broader definition, whereby the daemon may be understood as "the transcendental self, the genius, or guardian angel...this being uses various means to prompt us, either by direct voice, or through oracles, augury and divination..." See *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination* (Arkana Penguin Books, London, 1994) p 121; in the new edition (The Wessex Astrologer, Bournemouth, 2003) p. 110. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, I will list the page numbers for the first edition followed by those for the second edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Jung and Astrology*, Maggie Hyde, (Aquarian Press, London, 1992) p. 154

extent of astrology's problematic condition and to suggest an interpretation of its workings, which would account for its protean and inconsistent nature. Even more, I came to realize that Cornelius is clearly a man who loves astrology and who revels in its symbolic beauty and its ability to bring significance and meaning into people's lives. His book paints a remarkable picture of astrology's true guise not as a revolutionary science or some proto science, but as a form of divination, which harkens back to its most ancient historical and philosophical roots.

Originally published as a series of articles under the same title by the *Astrology Quarterly* beginning in the fall of 1983, *Moment of Astrology* did not materialize as a book for over a decade. As I hope to demonstrate, this lengthy gestation period was necessary due to the changes going on in the world of astrology, especially in the UK from the early 1970's to the mid 1990's. The reissue of a revised *Moment*, nine years after its original publication, suggests it is high time to re-examine the ideas central to this important book. Hailed at the time of its original publication by Patrick Curry as a "quietly, but deeply subversive" book<sup>3</sup> it was largely ignored by the vast majority of practicing astrologers, who undoubtedly saw it as another philosophic wet blanket thrown atop their sacred science. Yet the implication of its radical critique was not lost on astrology's leading thinkers and theorists, such as Robert Hand and Charles Harvey. If anything, the ideas and arguments put forth in this book are even more relevant today, since astrology has once again entered the doors of formal higher education for the first time, since its banishment from the academy over three centuries ago.<sup>4</sup> According to Cornelius, modern astrology is circumscribed and weakened by its intellectual isolation and lack of discourse with other disciplines, including or perhaps especially ones hostile to it. It is imperative as astrologers that we examine the unspoken assumptions we make anytime we cast and interpret a horoscope. Why this book matters so deeply—or should matter—and how this understanding came about, is the topic of this essay.

Now to my method: I utilize a largely historical approach to understand the ideas being put forth and to look for internal connections among those ideas. Along the way, as I discuss the historical context of Cornelius' work, I hope to highlight some of the issues in the ongoing debate concerning astrology's status as an art, science, craft, hermeneutic device or some historical hybrid not captured by any single word or phrase.

In **Part I: The Problem of Astrology**, I begin by describing the problematic nature of astrology as articulated by Cornelius. Since his book provides a critique of the Ptolemaic assumptions underlying most modern forms of astrology, I provide an overview of the Ptolemaic model. This is followed by a discussion of the Doctrine of Origins and the knotty problem of time in astrology. I conclude this section with a description of the two orders of astrology and their implications for modern practice. Here the reader will encounter

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<sup>3</sup> Curry is quoted from his forward to *The Moment of Astrology* (Hereafter *MOA*) p. xv; in the new edition, p. xviii.

<sup>4</sup> In the fall of 2002, in large part due to a grant from the *Sophia Trust*, a non profit, educational charity, Bath Spa University College opened the doors to its Sophia Centre, which houses their MA program in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology*. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on historical and cultural aspects of astrology, partly attributable to the presence of Nick Campion and Patrick Curry as its two primary faculty members. Also in the fall of 2002, the University of Kent, in Canterbury used funding from the *Sophia Trust* to launch a module in *Cosmology and Divination* within its 'MA in the Study of *Mysticism and Religious Experience*'. Kent's great strength lies in its philosophically diverse staff and its commitment to studies in Christianity, mysticism and Renaissance philosophy; for this reason, it is philosophically more in tune with the divinatory perspective. The profile of this perspective is enhanced by Cornelius' involvement with this program. Starting in the fall of 2006, the University will launch an 'MA in Cosmology and Divination' with an explicit focus on astrology. It should be pointed out that the *Sophia Trust* also funds research in astrology at other UK universities. In the US, Kepler College in Seattle, Washington also offers a BA and an MA in Astrology.

Cornelius' revival of the fundamental distinction between an astrology of *causes* and an astrology of *signs*.

In **Part II: *The English Astrological Context: 1971-1994***, I provide a description of Cornelius' background and the path he took to arrive at his understanding of astrology as divination. I proceed with this task by providing a detailed analysis of the social and intellectual milieu of UK astrology during the time he was developing his ideas. Among other topics, I discuss the influence on Cornelius' reformulation of astrology of Derek Appleby and the revival of horary astrology in the UK, the philosophy of the *I Ching*, the contributions of psychotherapy and the work of Carl Jung and the renewed interest in the history of astrology on Cornelius' reformulation of astrology. While in no sense taking away from his originality, I hope to trace some of the intellectual debts Cornelius incurred while developing his views.

In **Part III: *Divinatory Astrology***, I undertake a description of the key issues involved in the practice of divinatory astrology. I begin with a discussion of *Katarche*<sup>5</sup> and the astrology of initiatives. This is followed by a discussion of two "technical" topics: finding significance and determining the radicality of a horoscope. Next, I address the issue of interpretive "takes" which is central to the divinatory practice of astrology, as developed by Cornelius and his colleagues. What follows is an extended discussion of several topics related to the development of a philosophy of divination, including the thorny issues of interpretive levels and the subject/object split. This discussion enables me to tackle Cornelius' Fourfold interpretation of astrology, which is based on his groundbreaking revival of a medieval Christian hermeneutic.

In **Part IV: *Whither Astrology?*** I close by pondering some of the broader implications of the divinatory enterprise. I start by discussing Cornelius' most current understanding of the role of the imagination and symbolism in the astrologer's world. This discussion invites and therefore entails a discussion of the ethics of divination. I close by placing Cornelius' book within an emerging perspective sketched by other observers sympathetic to the divinatory enterprise. As will be clear to the reader by then, I think this emerging perspective will lead to a repositioning of astrology, since divination will once again be taken seriously as a cultural and philosophical entity.

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<sup>5</sup> Katarche has both technical and non-technical meanings, according to Cornelius. For the latter, he suggests "beginnings"; for the former, this term is used to denote a style of practice, which places the emphasis on ritual observance and human initiative, as opposed to viewing the horoscope's message as one of blind fate. See *MOA*, pp 138-42; in the new edition: pp. 126-30.

## Part I: The Problem of Astrology

### The Scientific Take on Astrology

A question any astrologers must at some point ask themselves is this: How do I justify my practice in the face of a culture hostile to its overall *raison d'être*? Since the Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, astrologers have been forced to live in a fractured world, where those who seek intellectual acceptance and respectability feel obligated to force their metaphysical practice into the narrow confines of the materialist assumptions of modern science. Over the past forty years, a tiny minority of practicing astrologers has sought refuge or intellectual justification through empirically testing their methods, yet the cumulative results of these efforts have been less than comforting. A summary of much astrological research may be found in Geoffrey Dean's *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology: A Critical Review 1900-1976* and more recently updated in the sections on research in Garry Phillipson's *Astrology in the Year Zero*.<sup>6</sup> The former provides a dispiriting and nearly hopeless picture for anyone who pins his or her hopes on a scientific justification of astrological practice, while the latter presents Dean et al.'s views as part of a broader spectrum of contemporary opinions on the subject. There are a few bright spots, however, even these positive findings cannot plausibly justify the broad range of current astrological practice.

During the late 1970's and 1980's, many astrologers still cherished the fond hope that their astrology could be rescued by the statistical work of Michel and Françoise Gauquelin. Yet, anyone conversant with the Gauquelin's results and the complexities of a chart reading would have to acknowledge the impossibility of interpreting a chart, if they were forced to exclude those planets (Sun, Mercury, Venus and the trans-Saturnians) for which the Gauquelins found no positive results. Leaving aside the fact that their most robust results are based on the charts of extraordinary individuals—especially sports champions and scientists—at best, this research provides statistical truths, which cannot necessarily be applied to the chart of any particular individual. The same holds for most other areas of astrological research. Most professional astrologers know this and also understand the implications of the other negative research findings; and yet, most choose to disregard this whole issue and (understandably) press on with their work.

What choice do they have? Some have chosen to criticize the tests as unfair, and no doubt, some were. But, while it may be tempting and easy to characterize the criticisms of Geoffrey Dean as no more than materialist carping, it is harder to discount the lackluster performances astrologers garner when asked to undertake tests which align closely with what they do in their everyday practice, for example, compare 'blind' charts with life histories, or to demonstrate reliable correlations between various chart factors and specific life events.

The most famous of such tests are those of the American psychologist Vernon Clark performed over forty years ago. While the performance of Clark's astrologers raised hopes, the results of replication since that time have been disappointing: practitioners repeatedly have failed to demonstrate astrology's efficacy when tested by the standards of empirical science. One of the notable achievements of Cornelius' book is his clear-eyed assessment of

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<sup>6</sup> *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology: A Critical Review 1900-1976*, Geoffrey Dean et al., (Analogic Press, London, 1977) *Astrology in the Year Zero*, Garry Phillipson, (Flare Publications, London, 2000) Indeed, Phillipson indicates that some contemporary astrologers such as Bernadette Brady see astrology as much more compatible with modern scientific models. Brady suggests that Chaos Theory and Mandelbrot Sets indicate the interconnectedness of nature and may therefore vindicate astrology. See *AYZ*, pp 177-78.

the scientific studies of astrological practice and their consistent failure to vindicate the claims of astrological practitioners. Undoubtedly, while many readers were dismayed and put off by his assessment, it is critical to uncovering what he perceives as the nature of the stellar art. While many astrologers simply reject the mantle of science, being suspicious of the materialist and reductionist assumptions, which too often accompany it, what they substitute for it often begs other questions. Even the most mystically or spiritually inclined astrologers expect some kind of regularity in their interpretive work. Many justify their practice by appealing to a quasi-empirical basis for their astrological pronouncements, that is by referring to the number of similar charts, aspects, etc. they have seen in their practice. This type of justification simply replaces scientific substantiation with scientism, insofar as it involves borrowing the prestige of science, without risking the downside of negative or confounding results. This simply will not do.

Another variant on the scientific rescue fantasy is found among those who pin their hopes on the discovery of lost or newly “discovered” techniques, which will suddenly connect all the dots and make their practice more reliable. I do not mean to belittle the work of Project Hindsight or Archive for the Retrieval of Historical Astrological Texts (ARHAT), since the reclamation and retranslation of astrological texts is important and necessary for a proper understanding of astrology’s past. But, when its proponents insist that the recovery of certain techniques, such as the calculation of the alcohoden<sup>7</sup> or extending the use of Parts will provide better results, by which I assume they mean more accurate and reliable results, I think we must stop and wonder. The same can be said for any form of astrology which presupposes an absolute or mechanical model of astral determinism.<sup>8</sup>

Everyone wants to believe that their practice of astrology is more accurate and philosophically sound than other forms, otherwise, why would they maintain it? Similarly, modern astrological practice has witnessed a proliferation of techniques and “discoveries”, all touted to improve an astrologer’s performance. But, without proper discretion, the indiscriminate use of these discoveries leads to absurdities such as the “Superchart” in which, due to the overwhelming number of factors used, the aspect grid of the horoscope becomes a blackened mass of overlapping lines.<sup>9</sup> Could it be that, as Cornelius claims, our critics see our practice more clearly than we do, when they brand the whole enterprise as akin to tealeaf reading or palmistry? And is it any wonder that many astrologers have abandoned any notion of justifying their practice on empirical grounds and opt instead for some other kind of philosophical justification?

As every astrologer knows, sometimes astrology just “works”, that is, its symbolism is so stunningly apropos, one would be churlish to deny its claims to some kind of truth. Those times when a symbol is full and rings emotionally true are what keep many people involved and indeed moved by astrological practice. But Cornelius would argue that such “realised” interpretations arise out of a specific context. The astrologer produces the “unique case of interpretation” because they are working with this client in this particular situation. Indeed, Cornelius argues, this is the very manner in which judicial astrology operates. For him, what the Ptolemaic and other mechanistic models of astrology cannot account for are the many

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<sup>7</sup> The alcohoden is the Arabic term for the hyleg, a planet that is regarded as the ‘giver or sustainer of life’. The rules for determining the hyleg are extremely complex. See James Wilson’s *Dictionary of Astrology*, Samuel Weiser, New York, 1974 (originally London, 1819) pp.7-9.

<sup>8</sup> In a recent issue of his journal, John Frawley writes about “...cobwebbed fanatics in search of that One Vital Aphorism that is so illuminating that no other author in our tradition could be bothered to write it down.” See *The Astrologer’s Apprentice*, Issue 21, Spring 2004, p. 5. I want to thank Garry Phillipson for sharing this connection.

<sup>9</sup> *Astrology in the Year Zero*, p. 162.

ways astrology shows itself in daily practice: in horary astrology, decumbiture<sup>10</sup> charts and in those embarrassing cases where the “wrong” horoscope seems to yield correct results. Yet, rather than throw up our hands or simply wish such uncomfortable facts away, Cornelius argues we should embrace them as fundamental to the astrologer’s world.

In Part III of this essay, we shall look at how the divinatory approach encompasses such diverse phenomena by reconstructing the major components of this view of astrology. First, however, we must look at the Ptolemaic model, which provides the philosophic rationale for most western forms of astrological practice.

### The Implications of the Ptolemaic Model of Astrology

The Ptolemaic model of astrology takes its name from Claudius Ptolemy (CE 85-165) perhaps the greatest astronomer of his day. While most historians of science do not judge him to be an original thinker, Ptolemy was an indefatigable compiler of the works of others. His reputation as an astrologer is more uncertain, since Ptolemy himself “was most likely not a practicing astrologer, but rather an academic who compiled all the knowledge of his day”<sup>11</sup> The influence of his foundation text the *Tetrabiblos*<sup>12</sup>, though seldom read by practicing astrologers today, can scarcely be overestimated. Written during the second century C.E., the *Tetrabiblos* was an attempt to summarize and systematize the astrology of the Greco-Roman empire. By linking astrological doctrine to Aristotelian physics, Ptolemy sought to rationalize the hodge-podge of astrological lore and practice his culture had inherited from the astrology of ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>13</sup> This was a brilliant strategic move, since by doing so, he provided astrology with a plausible theoretical rationale and at the same time helped to separate astrology from other forms of divination. Over the succeeding centuries, these other forms of divination, such as liver reading, withered away under the increasingly rational philosophies of the emerging West. While astrology also declined after the fourth century, with the rise of Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire, it was able to re-emerge in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks in large part to the re-discovery of Greek manuscripts of Ptolemy’s book. Put succinctly, the *Tetrabiblos* provided practitioners and consumers with a rational model for planetary causation, which remained viable until the rise of modern science in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. While historians continue to debate Ptolemy’s status as a scientific thinker, there is little doubt over the enduring role his conception of astrology has played over the past two millennia. It is not too much to say that Ptolemy’s model of astrological causation continues to underpin almost all western models of astrology.

Yet, according to Cornelius, Ptolemy’s conception of stellar influence has hamstrung astrology ever since by limiting “what might and might not be valid applications of astrology”<sup>14</sup>. It is necessary, therefore, to closely examine some of the central ideas Ptolemy

<sup>10</sup> Decumbiture horoscopes are cast for the moment that a patient “takes to bed”. They are used to determine the seriousness and length of an illness. See *MOA*, pp.188-9, 223 and especially the footnote on p. 368. In the new edition, see pp. 138-41, 215-18 and the footnote on p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> “A Golden Thread: The Transmission of Western Astrology through Cultures”, Demetra George, *Mountain Astrologer*, Aug/Sept 2003, pp. 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> *Tetrabiblos*, Claudius Ptolemy, translated by F. E. Robbins, Harvard University Press, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> For a description of this earlier culture’s beliefs and practices concerning astrology and divination, see Michael Baigent’s *From the Omens of Babylon: Astrology and Ancient Mesopotamia*, (Arkana/Penguin Books, London, 1994) especially chapter 7 “The Numinous and Mesopotamian Religion”. Baigent makes the interesting claim that certain magical aspects of early Babylonian cosmological speculations “survived the onslaught of Aristotelian philosophy, Christianity and Islam to cross over to the West, where it played a significant role...in the Renaissance.” (p. xi-xii)

<sup>14</sup> *MOA*, p. 96, and new edition: p. 89

propagated concerning theories of astrological causation in order to understand why so many current astrologers feel threatened by the arguments presented in Cornelius' book. The two most important notions he addresses are Ptolemy's notion of time and his doctrine of origins, since they fundamentally determine not only his model of astrology, but also almost all subsequent and current models of astrological causation. I will address the Ptolemaic model of astrological interpretation and Cornelius' competing conception in Part III of this paper. For present purposes, it is necessary that we first examine what Cornelius sees as the problem of time and then turn our attention to the "doctrine of origins".

### **Ptolemy, Aristotle and Plato: The Problem of Time and the Doctrine of Origins**

The very title of Cornelius' book indicates the importance of understanding time, in order to see the nature of astrology. As a discipline, astrology is grounded through the construction of a horoscope to the centrality of time (and by extension, space), yet our literature contains few explicit discussions of its problematic nature for everyday practice.<sup>15</sup> Most astrologers seem to accept time as a self-evident property of the universe, which requires no further explanation. For the practicing astrologer, any problems concerning time are usually technical in nature such as the correct use of time zones or the specific action or event (first breath, time of incorporation, etc.) which symbolize the beginning of some enterprise. Even philosophically inclined astrologers such as those who have embraced the "new physics" (physicist/astrologer William Keepin comes to mind<sup>16</sup>) seem oblivious to the challenge posed by the problematic nature of time. For Cornelius, however, it is this matter of fact attitude and its implications for astrological practice, which requires greater scrutiny.

In a chapter entitled "Ptolemy's Broad Shoulders: The Moment of Astrology in the Western Tradition" Cornelius makes a frontal assault on Ptolemy's theory of celestial causation by exposing and undermining the cosmological assumptions he makes regarding the nature of time and his doctrine of astrological origins. Concerning Ptolemy's theory of time, we must remind ourselves that the author of the *Tetrabiblos* is perhaps more widely known and certainly more respected among scientists, as the author of the *Almagest*. This lengthy treatise of theoretical astronomy was described by one modern historian of science as "the final peak in the development of Greek astronomy."<sup>17</sup> In that work, Ptolemy the

<sup>15</sup> One of the few notable recent exceptions is Michael Harding. In his *Hymns to the Ancient Gods* (Arkana/Penguin, London, 1992), he invokes the notion of "embedded moments" to support his idea of a Primal Zodiac. Harding discusses the individual chart as the "moment of now" which contains everything in the Collective Unconscious that has gone before it. In this model, time is no longer "a series of discrete moments to be analyzed in isolation as separate charts—but instead (is seen as) a flowing sequence of events that flow into each other: time as a continuum." (p. 109) While Harding's model allows him to look at past and future times as connected to the moment of now, he still remains wedded to the importance of objective 'clock' time. In an interview with Garry Phillipson in 1999, Harding told him "So the chart is about 'the nature of time', whatever that turns out to mean. Once we know that it's for a person...we can focus our minds and perhaps make some conjectures..." See *Astrology in the Year Zero*, p. 113. Also see Skyscript.co.uk for the complete interview.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Keepin's model of astrology is based on the theoretical work of physicist David Bohm, whose understanding of nature concerns its tripartite ontology consisting of matter, energy and meaning. In this model, the Universe is seen to have two parts: an explicate order describes the universe of material space, time, matter and energy while the implicate order of information contains its meaning. Keepin adds little to this model and simply describes time as "a particular type of explicate order that unfolds as a sequence of events." (*Mountain Astrologer*, Aug/Sept 1995, p19) The implicate order of time, Bohm called the eternal order, which is beyond manifest time altogether. Otherwise, Keepin does not discuss the implications such notions would have for astrological practice. In the Feb/Mar 1996 issue of *Mountain Astrologer*, "Time" was the special theme, yet there was not one mention of Cornelius' book or any critique of the Western tradition's allegiance to the Ptolemaic model by any of the participating astrologers. For an exploration of the role of time in the mantic art of astrology, it is appropriate that both issues were published under Saturn in Pisces mutual reception and sextile to Neptune in Capricorn!

<sup>17</sup> *Fabric of the Heavens: The Development of Astronomy and Dynamics*, Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1961) pp. 135-6.

astronomer relied on Aristotelian physics when he developed his theories of planetary motion, that is, he compared celestial mechanisms with terrestrial ones. Like Aristotle, Ptolemy held to a relational view of time, in which time is correlated with spatial motion. In the *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy the astrologer attributes “the cause both of universal and particular events (to) the motion of the planets, sun and moon; and the prognostic art is the scientific observation of precisely the change in the subject natures which corresponds to the parallel movements of the heavenly bodies through the surrounding heavens...”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the passage of time as measured by planetary motion will mirror (and thus enable the astrologer to predict) the development of the “subject natures” found in the terrestrial sphere.

Before leaving ancient Greek theories of time, we need to acknowledge the other great competing conception of time, which has also played a key role in western astrology and philosophy. This theory belongs to Aristotle’s teacher Plato and is articulated in his cosmological dialogue, the *Timaeus*. Unlike Aristotle, who was primarily interested in developing a means of measuring planetary motion, Plato was more concerned with the realm of Ideas or timeless essences. For him, the world we inhabit is a realm of “ceaseless change, generation and decay; time itself is of a derivative nature, being merely a moving image of eternity.”<sup>19</sup> Now, in this view, astrological effects are a manifestation of the realm of ideas. According to Cornelius, this model “may be characterized as *cosmic sympathy*: the planets and their positions mirror the occult quality of the totality of the macrocosm-microcosm ‘at the moment’. This sympathy is also mirrored in the knowing that belongs to the soul.”<sup>20</sup> While it is unfair to label Plato’s theory of time as merely subjective, we must admit that it does more easily enable us to examine the subjective-objective nature of time and to look beyond its role in measurement towards some more encompassing goal.

Returning to Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*, we see the first articulation of astrology as a science based on the doctrine of origins, “since it finds the possibility of astrological effect on the receptivity of the seed to celestial influences at the critical instant of germination.”<sup>21</sup> It follows that for Ptolemy, the moment of judicial astrology is the moment of conception and secondarily the moment of birth. Cornelius labels this “the hypothesis of seeds” and further notes that for Ptolemy (and for most subsequent astrologers) this “same-time coming together of objective event and objective heavens” is both a necessary and sufficient cause for the astrological effect. It is this very assumption which Cornelius wishes to undermine in order to enable astrologers to look at another and greater order of astrology’s revelation. In the revised edition of *Moment*, he describes the lack of awareness of contemporary astrologers concerning their Aristotelian assumptions about time as “this blissful non-recognition, widely shared by classical, traditional, humanistic, psychological and scientific astrologers” which he sees “as the single most debilitating weakness in the modern revival.”<sup>22</sup> As we shall see shortly, these two differing conceptions of time offered by Plato and Aristotle result in vastly different models or orders of astrology.

### Astrology’s Two Orders

During Ptolemy’s era and indeed through the Renaissance, astrology was commonly conceived of having two major branches or orders: natural and judicial. The first order refers to a “universal domain of planetary and celestial influence”, whereas the second,

<sup>18</sup> Ptolemy, Op. cit. Book III. P. 221.

<sup>19</sup> *Dictionary of the History of Ideas Volume IV* (Charles Scribner’s Son, New York, 1973) p.390

<sup>20</sup> *MOA*, p.86 and new edition: p. 81

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 94 and new edition: p. 88

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 304 (new edition only)

judicial astrology refers to the interpretation of “particular situations, most usually but not necessarily from horoscopes.”<sup>23</sup> The first branch attempts to make purely objective correlations between events in the sky and events on earth, and during Ptolemy’s day was used to make mundane predictions and was also the basis for astro-meteorology or weather forecasting. In modern times, Cornelius reminds us that those who attempt to scientifically verify the findings of astrology (whether they be engaged in statistical work such as that of the Gauquelins or correlating astrological factors with particular outcomes such as suicide) would fall into this camp<sup>24</sup>. This order is an astrology of *causes*, in that it seeks to establish objective, universal and astrologer-independent laws regulating the relationship of celestial and terrestrial events. Thus, the Ptolemaic model assumes that the movement of the planets in their spheres constitutes, in Cornelius’ apt phrase, a “Machine of Destiny” whose objective workings must be read by the astrologer. The second branch---judicial astrology--- is an astrology of *signs*, in that it is based on a symbolic approach and according to Cornelius, it is participatory, context specific and irregular. Broadly speaking, it is Platonic in nature and relies on the idea of *cosmic sympathy*. As such, it arises out of the interplay between the consciousness of both the astrologer and the client and is conditioned by their culture and their individual beliefs about the nature of reality. It is only this latter branch or order of astrology, which Cornelius sees as rooted in divination. Unlike the rule guided interpretations which arise out of the Ptolemaic tradition, this order is marked by an active act of imagination spontaneously suggested by the immediacy of the astrologer/client interaction which produces the “interpretation of the unique case”. One extremely important point to note is that his reinterpretation of astrology leaves intact the whole domain of natural astrology and in no way precludes its truth claims. For Cornelius, the negative findings of modern research into astrological effects merely circumscribes the astrology of *causes* and in no way invalidates astrology as a study of *signs*.

This distinction between natural and judicial astrology, lost during the rush to make astrology “scientific” in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, was revived by Cornelius and is central to one of the main arguments of *Moment*. Indeed, it is one of Cornelius’ most penetrating insights, that he sees the significance of reviving this ancient distinction, because it enables him to rescue judicial astrology from the deflating and demystifying tendencies of modern culture—particularly as exemplified by its scientific elite. As its title implies, Cornelius’ book is concerned with the true *moment* of astrology, which may or may not be rooted in “objective” clock time. A horoscope with powerfully appropriate symbolism that fits the subject matter at hand may represent the true moment, rather than the chart with impeccably timed credentials. It is the consciousness of the astrologer, not the working of the objective universe, which mediate this process. The process itself is guided by the symbolism and while there are technical considerations, which I will discuss later, the important point is the pre-eminence of the symbolism. Through this process, Cornelius is equally concerned with developing an astrological theory capable of restoring something lost in modern culture: a sense of the sacred in everyday life. But how and why did Cornelius arrive at such a determination? In order to answer that, we will need to look at his background and the state of astrology, when he started to develop these ideas

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 72 and new edition: p. 75

<sup>24</sup>Studies such as the Vernon Clark trials, which test the ability of astrologers to match horoscopes with biographical descriptions wouldn’t fall into this camp, since in Cornelius’ view, “they test the perception and skill of the astrologer rather than supposed objective correlations of astrology.” Such an approach could possibly demonstrate astrology-as-signs—using scientific method to do it.” *MOA*, p. 62, and second edition, p. 57.

## Part II: The English Astrological Context: 1971-1994

### Cornelius' Background

Prior to coming to astrology, Cornelius was preoccupied with other symbol systems such as *kabbalah* and the *I Ching*. According to Cornelius, "I did quite a bit of Tarot reading—whilst other people were going out being normal teenagers..." A few years later, at around the age of 20, he reports being "totally blown away by Jung"; still, even though his reading in Jung made him aware of the ubiquitous symbolism of astrology, its application to horoscopy made no special impact on him. That took an astrological reading, though certainly not a professional one. As he told Garry Phillipson in 1998: "Then I was on holiday in Wales...and there was a girl there who did astrology; she had an ephemeris, and asked for my date and time of birth. She said "Oh yes, your Moon's in Capricorn as well as your Sun," and began to say a few things about my Moon, and something else in my chart. I was quite surprised at what she said; it seemed perceptive (very simple, the things she was doing). My response was absolutely dreadful, actually. I remember thinking, "Hmm...that's interesting, if she can do that, I certainly can...that really was the moment."<sup>25</sup> Sadly, the date and time of that "moment" appear to be lost to history.

Soon after, Cornelius immersed himself in the techniques and craft of horoscopy. While his first astrology book was Alan Leo's *Saturn: The Reaper* (how fitting for a double Capricorn!), his first real textbook was Ron Davison's classic *Astrology*. Over a period of around six months, he plunged rapidly through various house systems and other technical considerations and even studied some Vedic astrology. Within a year, his interest in Jung led him to Dane Rudhyar, or more specifically, he became engrossed in that author's *The Astrology of Personality* (Lucis, 1936), widely acknowledged to be the first serious attempt to marry Jungian thought to the techniques and philosophy of traditional astrology. Despite this immersion in craft, Cornelius continued to take for granted that astrology is a form of divination. At this stage, he wasn't preparing himself to become a practicing astrologer, but rather saw his studies as a means of broadening his understanding of divination by studying perhaps its most popular form in the West. The year was 1971.<sup>26</sup>

Cornelius' initiation into the broader world of astrology took place at the Astrological Lodge of London. In the early 1970's, the Lodge was the oldest astrological society in England and still retained many of the Theosophical trappings it had acquired upon its founding by Alan Leo in 1915. At the time Cornelius joined the Lodge, its President and editor of *Astrology* was Ron Davison, a staunch upholder of the Theosophical tradition. A majority of members (including Cornelius) broadly subscribed to spiritual views and perceived astrology as a spiritual vehicle. Despite his divinatory assumptions about the nature of astrology, Cornelius described himself during the early years as "typically 'Lodgy' in most important respects". At the time he joined the Lodge, Cornelius characterized most members as "middle of the road traditionalists in the vein of Charles Carter". Most were certainly not "up" on trends in neither psychology nor so intent on updating their methods of interpretation and practice as their peers in the Astrological Association or the Faculty of Astrological Studies. According to Cornelius, "The Lodge in those days was very much second fiddle to the mainstream prestige of the Astrological Association, but for the traditionally inclined astrologer interested in practical horoscopy and effective and worldly symbolism, the Lodge had become the place

<sup>25</sup> Garry Phillipson, Op. cit. p. 12: on that point, Cornelius told Mr. Phillipson "I don't have the exact time or date, though I could research it and one day probably will."

<sup>26</sup> The content of this and the next paragraph comes from a personal communication from Geoffrey Cornelius to the author in May 2002.

to be.”<sup>27</sup> Perhaps most significantly, it was at the Lodge where Cornelius met Derek Appleby, a self-taught horary astrologer, who was to become a major influence during the 1970’s. I shall take up his influence later in this essay.

Though Cornelius worked well within the structure of the Lodge—indeed, he was eventually elected its President in 1980—and though he found the Theosophical ideas acceptable, eventually as a result of internal organizational politics, he decided to create his own organization. For a brief time, The Company of Astrologers was the teaching body of the Lodge, but by November of 1983, it became an independent entity. Unlike John Addey’s disaffection twenty-five years earlier, which led to the creation of the Astrological Association, Cornelius’ new enterprise continued to carry on some of the key philosophical attitudes embodied in the organization established by Alan Leo in 1915.<sup>28</sup> While the Company provided the organizational structure for the development of Cornelius’ ideas, as will soon be seen, the world of organized English astrology harbored other dissident voices whose views contributed to the development of the divinatory perspective. For now, we need to turn our attention to another of the spiritual progeny of Leo, namely psychological astrology.

### The Rise of Psychological Astrology

By the mid 1970’s many serious astrological practitioners, including this writer, held out the fond hope that by joining their ancient art with the various schools of 20<sup>th</sup> century psychotherapy—primarily Jungian—they would be able to rescue their “foolish daughter” from social irrelevance and intellectual decrepitude. This idea was not new. Indeed, in 1936, with the publication of Dane Rudyhar’s *The Astrology of Personality*, the astrological public was introduced to a fully articulated model blending Jung’s archetypal psychology with traditional astrology. Yet, despite the influence of this book, for most astrologers until the 1970’s, astrological psychology was implicit within the traditional meanings of the signs, planets, houses and aspects.<sup>29</sup> As a mode of psychological inquiry, this type of astrology was essentially a static model, which tied specific psychological traits to particular astrological factors.

The resurgence of astrology in the late 1960’s brought a new socially conscious and highly educated generation of people into a field heretofore dominated by hobbyists and sun sign columnists. Many practitioners were now faced with a new type of clientele, who were increasingly upmarket, conversant with the lingo of therapy and interested in self-understanding. Some astrologers began to feel embarrassed by their discipline’s arcane jargon as well as the psychological naivety of much of the prevailing astrological literature.

For some, the fields of psychology and psychiatry seemed to provide an intellectual platform, which could once again make astrology respectable. The statistical work of Michel and Francoise Gauquelin, both psychologists by training, suggested that such a scientific resurrection might not be so impossible after all. John Addey and Charles Harvey’s mathematically elegant work in the area of harmonics along with the Teutonic rigor of Reinhold Ebertin’s cosmobiology similarly supported such notions. The writings of Stephen Arroyo, Richard Idemon, Noel Tyl and other psychologically minded astrologers created a new style of astrological discourse that seemed much more relevant (and far easier to read!)

<sup>27</sup> “Derek Appleby”, *Astrology Quarterly* Volume 65/2 Spring 1995 p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> “The Astrological Lodge from Alan Leo to the Present Day”, Geoffrey Cornelius, *Astrology Quarterly*, (vol. 60, no. 1, Spring 1986)

<sup>29</sup> Good examples of this may be found throughout Charles Carter’s *An Encyclopedia of Psychological Astrology*, (Theosophical Publishing House, London, 1924) passim.

than the turgid tomes of Marc Edmund Jones or the forbidding series of “texts” suggested by the Church of Light or other occult teaching bodies. The success of such books by the late 1970’s seemed to suggest that the promise of Dane Rudhyar’s *Astrology of Personality* to blend astrology with Jungian modes of understanding was well on the way to being fulfilled.

No writer fulfilled this promise more completely than Liz Greene. Starting with the publication of *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil* in 1976 and continuing the following year with *Relating*, Greene epitomized this new and popular style of astrological discourse. These books were sophisticated, well written and satisfying to those looking for greater psychological insights in their astrology. Especially influential were her psychological seminars with Howard Sasportas, which created a template for her current line of CPA publications. The increasing popularity of Greene’s work influenced other astrological writers and in the decade following *Saturn*, the astrological public witnessed the ascendance and near-complete domination of psychological astrology as an explanatory metaphor. In the United States, Greene’s success with psychological astrology was mirrored in the work of authors such as Stephen Arroyo and Howard Sasportas.

With Greene’s seminars, the old static model of Carter’s astrological psychology was now replaced with an explicitly psychodynamic model, which unashamedly borrowed most of its deep explanatory power from psychoanalytic concepts, such as the unconscious and transference dynamics. The triumph of this new model was so complete, that by the mid-1980’s, many younger students of astrology seemed almost completely unaware that there was a more traditional understanding of astrological factors. For these individuals, encountering the writings of Alan Leo, Charles Carter or even Margaret Hone was akin to stumbling across old letters from their grandparents: interesting relics that were at best quaint, but for the most part a tad embarrassing. Ironically, most of these younger students and practitioners would have been surprised to learn that the modern origins of psychological astrology were to be found in these very books, which they perceived as so lacking in psychological finesse.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Development of the Divinatory Perspective**

For all its appeal, the methods and practice of psychological astrology did not sway a substantial minority of astrologers, especially in the UK. As noted, the Astrological Lodge was composed primarily of Carter-influenced traditionalists for whom the psychology was implicit within the traditional meanings of the planets. Yet, it is against the background of this new model of psychological astrology that the development of the divinatory approach must be understood. While Cornelius was not hostile to psychological approaches to chart interpretation—indeed, he had read and been inspired by Jung—he was dissatisfied with the manner in which astrological explanations were being replaced by psychological ones. Within this rather parochial world of organized UK astrology, Geoffrey Cornelius possessed the ideal credentials to develop a critique of then current astrological theory and practice. While his background in sociology and philosophy provided him with the necessary

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<sup>30</sup> Leo was apparently not aware of the developments in depth psychology by Freud, Jung et. al. taking place during his lifetime and there is no reference for “psychology” in his seven volume textbook series. As a practicing Theosophist, his emphasis was on spiritual forces and entities, not early childhood events as determinants of character. However, his one-shilling horoscopes certainly met a public’s desire to know more. See Patrick Curry’s *Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology*, (Collins & Brown, London, 1992) for a fascinating description of the development of Alan Leo’s involvement with astrology, including the first high volume horoscope service. Margaret Hone perceptively understood the need for the astrologer to replace the insights of “eastern religion” with psychological terms made familiar through “the press and cinema”. *The Modern Textbook of Astrology*, (L.N. Fowler & Co., London, 1951, revised edition, 1968) p. 298.

intellectual detachment, it was his previous immersion in various divinatory systems, particularly the *I Ching*, which enabled him to perceive the fundamentally divinatory qualities inherent in the astrologer's experience of casting and interpreting horoscopes. Now, the idea of Cornelius as a lone outsider taking on the established organization has a certain romantic fascination, however, the reality appears to be otherwise. Cornelius developed his critique of modern astrology over a period of years through engaging in a rich and varied dialogue with a relatively compact London group of astrologers, who were equally dissatisfied with the reigning astrological paradigm.

An overview of that group and the range of ideas they expressed should demonstrate to the reader some of the intellectual debts which Cornelius incurred during the gestation of *Moment*. In addition to astrologers, this group included philosophers, psychotherapists, historians, scientists and musicians, among others.<sup>31</sup> Much of this group's dialogue was predicated on ideas from these disciplines and reflected various contemporary debates: psychoanalysis and the nature of psychotherapy; existential philosophy and phenomenology and the nature of the self; philosophy of science and the debate over astrology; new historical approaches to astrology and of course, the writings of Carl Jung. Along the way, this dialogue generated renewed interest in older branches of the stellar art, including its role in herbal medicine and the healing arts, as well as traditional astrology, especially the horary skills of William Lilly, the 17<sup>th</sup> century English astrologer and author of *Christian Astrology* (1647). The multi-faceted nature of this dialogue was complex and apparently sustained by its very contrariness. It was at once historical, yet contemporary; predicated on ancient philosophical ideas and yet stimulated by post-modern thought; informed by current trends in psychoanalysis though suspicious of 'deep' explanations; extremely theoretical and yet grounded by a love of craft horoscopy. Significantly, all the participants shared a similar sensibility towards and a love of the witty obliquity of astrological symbolism. In much the same way that Freud's thinking was stimulated and enriched by the diverse backgrounds and ideas of his early followers, Cornelius freely borrowed and creatively transformed the contributions of this motley group of thinkers to develop the complex pattern of ideas which ultimately found expression in his book.

### **Derek Appleby and the Revival of Horary Astrology**

At the heart of the divinatory enterprise Cornelius and his colleagues sought to recover the centrality of symbolism and the importance of imagination in the act of astrological interpretation, yet with this difference: the free play of imagination in the realm of astrological symbols must be reined in by the formal structures of craft horoscopy. According to Cornelius, it was the horary work of Derek Appleby which opened his eyes to the symbolic beauty of traditional astrology, and also enabled him to see the true "divinatory" nature of astrological practice for the first time.<sup>32</sup> In the early 1970's, horary's reputation among astrologers had sunk quite low. Up to then, most astrologers were apparently put off by the seemingly arbitrary nature of horary practice as well as its forbidding list of rules and strictures. In addition, the notion that such astrological charts, cast for the time when a person asks a question, could have any validity seemed strange—

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<sup>31</sup> Two deserve special mention: the physicist/astrologer Michael Shallis PhD and the musician/astrologer Angela Voss, PhD. Shallis, whose book *On Time: An Investigation into Scientific Knowledge and Human Experience*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1983) explicitly discusses time and divination, avoids the now commonplace notion that somehow the "new physics" will rescue astrology. Both Shallis and Cornelius discuss a mutual experience concerning an omen sighting on a weekend retreat. See *On Time* p. 148 and 188-9 and *MOA* pp. 224-231 and in the revised edition pp. 209-14. Voss has written extensively on Renaissance music and astrology and is currently a lecturer in the Kent program 'MA in the Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience'.

<sup>32</sup> *MOA*, pp. 367-8; new edition, p165

indeed, even rather suspect, to most astrologers conditioned to working with birth charts. We might note here that the questions answered by horary charts are similar in nature to those questions asked by a person consulting the *I Ching*, Tarot or some other form of divination. Imbued as we are with the Ptolemaic assumption concerning the importance of the moment of birth, it is hard even for astrologers to fathom what kind of astral determinism or mechanism could be responsible for such charts working. Yet, according to Cornelius, he was “amazed when Derek Appleby demonstrated the capacity to bring such horoscopes alive and make the symbols dance with radicality.”<sup>33</sup>

The influence of Derek Appleby on Cornelius’ developing notions about the divinatory nature of astrology cannot be overestimated. Yet, Appleby was no abstruse theoretician trading lofty thoughts with his younger colleague, but a publicly modest, largely self-taught practitioner, who discovered horary astrology around the same time that Cornelius joined the Lodge. In his book on the subject, Appleby states that he became interested in horary after reading an article in *Prediction* magazine by Joan Rodgers, and “was immediately captivated by the idea.”<sup>34</sup> While Bernard Eccles describes him as being “planted firmly in the tradition—and the textbooks—of Sepharial and Leo before him,”<sup>35</sup> Appleby reports that he “learned the basic rules” from Ivy Goldstein-Jacobson’s book *Horary Astrology*, which he found “on the Lodge bookstall” in 1971.<sup>36</sup> Like many novice practitioners, he was hooked into horary by a very simple—yet true—piece of symbolism. In his first horary consultation for a workplace colleague, Appleby helped her locate a missing ring by telling her to look for it on her kitchen scales. His clue? The horary map had Libra rising, the sign of the scales! This early success pushed him to master the rules of the art. With the diligence and care of a good craftsman, Appleby refined his skills over succeeding years and gladly shared his views and judgments with his peers at the Lodge. According to Eccles, who first encountered him in 1978, when he was solidly in command of his material, Appleby “provided a clear and functional astrology which managed to avoid both nineteenth century mysticism and late twentieth century self-analysis at the same time. Astrology with Derek was a simple and straightforward process, yet always full of wonder.”<sup>37</sup>

It was this sense of wonder which Appleby and Cornelius sought to impart to their colleagues at the Lodge. In retrospect, it seems clear that these two men were largely responsible for the revival of horary in the UK and “a return to the traditional practices as a reaction to the softer astrology of the time.”<sup>38</sup> But that clearly wasn’t the case when Cornelius joined the Lodge, nor for several years afterwards. As the decade wore on, however, an increasing number of the horoscopes the group studied and argued over in the pubs afterwards were horaries. Shortly after Appleby’s untimely death in 1995, Cornelius acknowledged his influence: “He was a superb all-round astrologer, but most especially he was a remarkable horary astrologer, and he enraptured other astrologers with this potent form of our art. The quality of his symbolism and the incisiveness of his judgment strongly shaped my own practice.”<sup>39</sup> For his part, Cornelius promoted Appleby’s divinatory practice style among their peers in the Lodge. One of those peers was Olivia Barclay, who had purchased a rare copy of William Lilly’s *Christian Astrology* (1647) in 1980. According to

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 368; new edition, p. 165

<sup>34</sup> *Horary Astrology*, (The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1985) p. 199. This book has been reissued by Astrology Classics, the publishing division of the Astrology Center of America, Bel Air, Maryland, 2005 with a new foreword by Geoffrey Cornelius. This quote is found on the same page of the new edition.

<sup>35</sup> “Derek Appleby”, *Astrology Quarterly* Volume 65/2 Spring 1995, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> “Mutual, Multiple and Mandatory Receptions” *Astrology Quarterly*, Volume 65/2 Spring 1995 p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Op Cit. “Derek Appleby”, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

Olivia, when she began to attend Astrological Association meetings again in 1978, horary astrology was almost unknown in that gathering. “Then I discovered that there was a faction at the Lodge headed by Geoffrey Cornelius who were interested in horary...”<sup>40</sup> In 1982, she issued an edition of one hundred photocopies of Lilly’s large book and at the encouragement of Nick Campion, she initiated a series of articles on horary astrology in *Transit*, the AA’s newsletter. The positive response to this outpouring led to the facsimile reprint of *Christian Astrology* by Regulus Publishing in 1985.<sup>41</sup> It is no coincidence that it contained two historical postscripts: one by Cornelius entitled *A Modern Astrological Perspective* and an *Afterword* by Patrick Curry, who was then engaged in his researches in 17<sup>th</sup> century English astrology, which would eventually be published as *Prophecy and Power*.

### **The *I Ching* and Divination**

Underlying all of Cornelius’ interest in divinatory arts was his love of the *I Ching* and Chinese philosophy. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the *I Ching*, to the development of Cornelius’ divinatory perspective on astrology. In his view, the *I Ching*, or *The Book of Changes*, of all oracular practices constitutes the most philosophically developed model of divination. While there were earlier translations, it is Richard Wilhelm’s 1923 translation, which has received the widest currency in the West. It was Wilhelm’s friend Carl Jung, who is largely responsible for popularizing the philosophy of the *I Ching* by interpreting it in terms of his own concept of synchronicity. Indeed, Jung wrote a forward to the first English translation in 1949, in which he explicitly compared it to astrology. Jung’s sympathetic attitude toward this sacred text found a willing English translator in Cary Baynes, who was a student of Jungian psychology. Based on the principle that man and his cosmic and terrestrial environments constitute an interacting unity, the *I Ching* contains 64 hexagrams or figurations, each which signify a different condition of life. To find out which hexagram is relevant, the questioner must either toss coins or throw yarrow sticks. Based on an amalgam of Taoist and Confucian precepts, the philosophy of the *I Ching* is not determinist; rather, it emphasizes man’s responsibility for his own fate. According to this philosophy:

Change is fundamental to life; it does not occur haphazardly, but is rather governed by universal principles and patterning processes which are heralded by *signs*...the divinatory art consists in understanding the principles and interpreting the signs.”<sup>42</sup>

Now this reading of the *I Ching* is consistent with Cornelius’ interpretation of judicial astrology as a study of *signs*. We have already noted that when Cornelius first encountered astrology, he took it to be simply another form of divination. Thus, it was natural for him to revive the old distinction concerning the two orders of astrology as either a study of *signs* (astrology as omen reading and divination) or *causes* (astrology as science). For now, it is important to note that the philosophy of the *I Ching* does not regard the future as fixed or purport to tell those who consult it what will happen. Instead, it emphasizes the need for the questioner to develop a serious frame of mind and to engage in an inner dialogue with the commentaries on the text, while at the same time asking the seeker to apply its wisdom to his own unique situation. For Cornelius, the proper approach to astrology similarly entails cultivating an inner stillness and openness to what the signs are telling us. In a chapter entitled “The Unique Case of Interpretation” in *Moment*, Cornelius makes this comment on the *I Ching*: “Understood in this way, divination refers to a dimension of subjectivity to the

<sup>40</sup> “The Traditional Revival in Modern Astrology: A Preliminary History”, Nick Campion, *Astrology Quarterly*, Winter 2003, Vol. 74 No. 1. p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>42</sup> *The Arkana Dictionary of New Perspectives*, Stuart Holroyd, (Arkana/Penguin, London, 1989) p. 90.

extent that its significance depends upon what it means for the participants.”<sup>43</sup> Later, we shall see how this notion of the unique case and the role of inter-subjectivity play an important part in the divinatory understanding of astrology.

### Jung and Psychotherapy

Cornelius' involvement with the *I Ching* was responsible for helping him connect with other like-minded astrologers. While teaching a course in the *I Ching* at the Central Wandsworth Adult Education Institute (AEI) in 1975, Cornelius met both Maggie Hyde and Gordon Watson, two early converts to the divinatory viewpoint, both whom became founding members of the Company of Astrologers in 1983. His connection to Hyde led directly to the importance of Jung, while his relationship with Gordon Watson brought him squarely into the debate over the nature of psychotherapy taking place at the Philadelphia Association. While the ideas of Jung have become almost commonplace among astrologers, with Maggie Hyde, Jung's ideas were never accepted en tout, but were fiercely debated and discussed with Cornelius and others in their early circle. The first fruit of their collaboration is Hyde's book *Jung and Astrology* (published two years before *Moment*) where she adopted Cornelius' formulation of astrology as divination. In many ways, her *Jung* is a theoretical companion to Cornelius' book and acts as a Trojan horse for the Divinatory camp, since Hyde uses her profound understanding of Jung and psychological astrology to introduce her readers to Cornelius' heretical ideas. In particular, Hyde explores Jung's ambivalent attitude toward astrology and she accurately perceives his dual role as both a scientist and a diviner. Her critique of psychological astrology shares a similar contempt for astrological scientism and a desire to unhinge astrological theory from its Ptolemaic origins.<sup>44</sup> While her book is softer in tone than *Moment*, it provides an equally formidable exposition of divinatory philosophy and practice.

The debate over the nature of psychotherapy surfaced during Cornelius' involvement in the mid 1970's with the Philadelphia Association, a teaching body that offered classes in individual and group psychotherapy. A central figure at the PA was John Heaton, a senior therapist/teacher and colleague of R. D. Laing. Like Laing, who is known primarily for his anti-psychiatry ideas embodied in such books as *The Politics of Experience* and *The Divided Self*, Heaton's psychological ideas were informed by phenomenology and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. What both men contributed to the debate over the nature of psychotherapy were fundamental questions about the nature of the self and its relation to society and social expectations. As students of Heaton, Cornelius, Hyde and Watson imported these ideas into their debate over the nature of astrological discourse. Of the three, Watson apparently most strongly shared Laing's contempt of social conformism. In Laing's critique, he found a perfect vehicle for his attempt to radicalize both psychotherapy and astrology. The cross fertilization of radical psychiatry with the philosophy of divination—both informed by Heidegger—ultimately found expression in an attempt to recast psychotherapy as a form of divination. The importance of Heidegger to both Heaton and Watson was eventually taken up by Cornelius, who came to appreciate the importance of this philosopher's ideas to developing a phenomenological understanding of divination. Heaton's *Metis: Divination, Psychotherapy and Cunning Intelligence* was published by the

<sup>43</sup> *MOA*, p 198; sentence slightly modified in the new edition, p. 187.

<sup>44</sup> As Hyde explains in her book *Jung and Astrology*, “The rootedness of astrology in the quality of time is often given by astrologers as an explanation of how astrology works.” She goes on to explain that Carl Jung's dictum (which he later retracted) “Whatever is done at this moment of time, has the quality of this moment of time” is frequently invoked to explain astrology's causal mechanism. Yet, it is just this connection that she and Cornelius wish to sever. See below in my section **Healing the Split: Astrology as Participation Mystique**, where I discuss more fully Hyde's views on Jung's concept of synchronicity.

Company of Astrologers in 1990 and in the following year, Cornelius himself took up this theme with his essay *Psychoanalysis, Divination and Astrology*<sup>45</sup>.

### Recasting Astrological History

This preoccupation with current trends in psychotherapy represents only one strand in Cornelius' far ranging efforts to examine and reformulate astrology's role in contemporary thought. One important theme of *Moment*, as we have seen is its attempt to recast astrological history as a recurrent debate over whether astrology is a study of *signs* or *causes*. According to Cornelius, since the late Renaissance, with rare exceptions such as Lilly, most astrologers have thrown their lot in with those who see astrology as a celestial science and therefore a study of *causes*. However, since the Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this has become an increasingly difficult position to defend. Yet, it is important to note that, as Patrick Curry and others have stated, astrology was not vanquished by its scientific foes—though there were many—it simply lost social and intellectual relevance and respectability during the philosophical shift to materialism, which accompanied the Scientific Revolution.<sup>46</sup> Prior to this cultural demotion, however, a number of astrologers had attempted to put their discipline on a scientific footing through developing an empirical approach, which mimicked the emerging sciences of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Theirs was a notable failure, but Cornelius is more interested in their contemporary William Lilly, whose practice was based on astrology as a study of *signs*, and he links his methods of divinatory astrology to Lilly's approach. This historical reconstruction of astrological practice and its place in that society rests upon the recent work of historians such as Curry, who saw astrology's "adaptability and elusiveness (as) not simply a problem; it is what makes astrology worth studying"<sup>47</sup>

Curry's historical researches sought to "recover astrology from what E. P. Thompson memorably described as 'the enormous condescension of posterity'"<sup>48</sup> His first book *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England*,<sup>2</sup> overturned conventional historical interpretations of why astrology almost died out in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Curry's sociological explanation buttressed the argument that Cornelius was developing, since both were concerned with astrology's phenomenological and epistemological status in a world increasingly hostile to non-materialist explanations of anything. A complex thinker in his own right, prior to becoming a historian, Curry was an early contributor to *Correlation: Journal of Research into Astrology* and a founding member of the Radical Astrology Group. In the first capacity, he was an active participant in the debate over Gauquelin's "Mars Effect", which gained attention in the mainstream press, in the wake of the 1975 publication of "Objections to Astrology" where 186 scientists denounced astrology in *The Humanist*.<sup>49</sup> In the latter capacity in 1983, Curry and four other UK astrologer/academics privately published a series of theoretical papers utilizing phenomenology, structuralism, linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxist thought, modern physics and feminist critical theory to explore astrological theory and practice. Curry's own paper, *An Aporia for Astrology*, deserves a larger audience, since it is one of the first serious attempts to devise a taxonomic classification of modern astrological thought. Adopting a strategy analogous to Michel Foucault's "epistemes", Curry located divinatory astrology within the camp of Hermeneutic Astrology, which he

<sup>45</sup> The Company of Astrologers published *Metis* in 1990; Cornelius' essay is contained in the Company's Bulletin No. 4, Summer 1991. Both are available through the Company of Astrologers.

<sup>46</sup> See Patrick Curry's *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989) for a discussion of this significant historical shift in attitude.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2

<sup>49</sup> See *The Tenacious Mars Effect* by Suitbert Ertel and Kenneth Irving, (Urania Trust, London, 1996) p. K1-19.

characterized as being “a way of preserving and developing a ‘magical’ attitude, at a time and in a society that is hostile to such an attitude. Such an attitude is identified with the kind of mystical experience described in mystical and religious literature, and in Heidegger’s philosophy”<sup>50</sup>. According to Curry, Cornelius relied on Heidegger’s critique of the Aristotelian concept of time and his existential philosophy of the self, which perceives astrology as “the direct expression of the astrologer’s own condition”.

### **Decumbitures, Herbalism and the Importance of William Lilly**

The philosophic threads unraveled by Curry found their expression in other aspects of the group’s undertakings. In rethinking astrology’s historical connection to herbalism and traditional healing, Maggie Hyde resuscitated the long dormant use of the decumbiture chart, cast for the start of an illness.<sup>51</sup> Through her study of the works of William Lilly and Nicholas Culpeper, two 17<sup>th</sup>-century astrologers who used the decumbiture method, Hyde was able to draw the connection between decumbiture horoscopes and the horary methods used to answer other types of questions. Graeme Toby, a student of herbalism, who studied horary methods with Gordon Watson, extended this work. In his book *Culpeper’s Medicine*, Toby reminds us that unlike Ptolemy’s “hypothesis of seeds” this new approach is fundamentally divinatory in nature. As in horary astrology, the moment of the decumbiture horoscope is, like the person’s future, somewhat negotiable. That is, it requires the active involvement of both the client worried about their future and an astrologer intent on helping them:

In medical inquiries, this horoscope may be cast not just at the time of the onset of illness, when the planetary positions and the illness occur simultaneously in time, but also at the time of first consulting an astrologer-physician.... Consequently, the horoscope cannot be simply a mapping of the celestial cause of a disease occurring at a certain moment. It is rather a sign or omen regarding the illness, generated by the desire of the sick person to be healed and dependent upon the free will of that person to seek divination in the matter.<sup>52</sup>

Once again, we see the “moment” of astrology is arrived at through a process, which entails some kind of exchange between the client and the astrologer. This process provides what Cornelius dubs “participatory significance”. In other words, the shared search for meaning, fueled by the intertwined needs of both participants, and discovered by the astrologer in the symbolism of the horoscope, produces a unique interpretation, which might not otherwise occur in a more one-sided enterprise. The divinatory nature of this rediscovered connection between astrology and healing, has been made clear by Toby: “The decumbiture method is

<sup>50</sup> *Radical Astrology*, Paper 5 “An Aporia for Astrology” (published by the Radical Astrology Group, London, 1983) p. 5.2. In this paper, Curry identifies four philosophical schools or attitudes in his survey of contemporary astrology: Hermeneutic or divinatory, psychological, scientific, and structural. In his new book (co authored with the anthropologist Roy Willis), Curry updates his taxonomy by dropping the essentially non-existent “structural” school and adding a Neo Platonic school and a Ptolemaic/Aristotelian school. See *Astrology, Science and Culture: Drawing Down the Moon*, (Berg Press, London, 2004), Chapter Six, “Varieties of Astrological Experience”. In any event, the new schema broadly agrees with Cornelius’ analysis of the problematic nature of modern astrology in all of its schools, except the divinatory one. According to Cornelius, all except the latter uncritically accept Ptolemy’s causal model and this constitutes “the single most debilitating weakness in the modern revival.” *MOA*, (2003 only) p. 304.

<sup>51</sup> According to Cornelius, Maggie Hyde rescued the decumbiture chart from oblivion during the 1980’s. (*MOA* p. 368; in new edition, p. 165) This same period saw a resurgence of holistic medicine in both the UK and the USA. Like other specialties embedded within astrological theory and practice, astrological approaches to healing reflect the prevailing social and technical trends in the healing arts and the field of medicine.

<sup>52</sup> *Culpeper’s Medicine: Practice of Western Holistic Medicine* (Element Books, Shaftesbury, Dorset, 1997) p. 138

akin to the spirit of horary astrology and they form part of the *Katarchai* or astrological initiatives, in which good omens are sought for the matter enquired about.”<sup>53</sup> In this deft reconstruction, Culpeper and Lilly, perhaps the two greatest astrologers of the early modern period, become carriers of the divinatory method, who stand apart from the more prosaic practices of their contemporaries.

The resurrection of Lilly and horary astrology are central to the critique mounted by Cornelius and his colleagues against the Ptolemaic underpinnings of modern astrology. As perhaps the stellar art's foremost practitioner of horary methods, William Lilly stands as both the epitome of astrology's "golden age" during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and as someone whose actual practice transcended the theoretical limits laid down by Ptolemy and his predecessors in the western tradition. In his essay *A Modern Astrological Perspective*<sup>54</sup>, Cornelius makes it clear that he sees Lilly's work as a key text which connects current practice to "the mainstream European tradition, which up to now has been mediated through the attitudes of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of the modern revival"<sup>55</sup>. However, unlike his modern counterparts, as we have already noted, Lilly was able to demonstrate that astrology's "showings...are to be understood more as *Signs* than as *Causes*. This touches on the central question of astrology".<sup>56</sup> Significantly, Lilly did not accomplish this through religious or philosophic argument, but rather through demonstrating the point in his superb horary case studies. It was as a result of his technical mastery of craft horoscopy, his profound love of symbolism and his ability to imaginatively engage his clients in a "participation mystique" that Lilly was able to achieve this philosophical sleight of hand. In a commentary on the "Fish Stolen" judgment, Cornelius makes it clear that Lilly was in no sense making a reading of some "'objective fate' to which we are subject", but instead was engaged with a "symbolic possibility with which the astrologer may choose to participate".<sup>57</sup> Here we see a key difference between Cornelius and other astrologers who have pledged their allegiance to the tenets of traditional astrology. For the latter group are more interested in reviving and strictly adhering to the techniques of the 17<sup>th</sup> century horary astrologers (indeed, they tend to eschew any technical developments made since then, such as the use of the outer planets), rather than question the philosophical implications of their art. By contrast, Cornelius and his followers are more interested in Lilly's *attitude* toward the work he was doing. For Cornelius, Lilly's importance lies in his resurrection of a sacred attitude and practice style, which connects him to astrology's earliest roots in divinatory practices such as liver readings and interpreting the pattern of a flight of birds. It is this understanding of Lilly's work which connects him to *katarche* or the astrology of initiatives.

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<sup>53</sup> "Astrological Judgment of the Piss-Prophets Reconsidered", *The Astrological Journal: Special Medical Astrology Issue*, July/August 1988, p. 203.

<sup>54</sup> *Christian Astrology*, William Lilly, (Regulus facsimile edition, London, 1985) pp. 864-871

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 864

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 867.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 870.

### Part III: Divinatory Astrology

#### *Katarche and the Astrology of Initiatives*

According to Cornelius, the horary work of Lilly provides one of the key historical links between the ancient astrology of initiative and the modern practice of divinatory astrology. Like the early diviners, Lilly's art is to be understood as the interpretation of divine messages. What unites Lilly with these early diviners is a "*katarchic* attitude", which according to Cornelius "discloses a ground of all astrological practice, ancient and modern".<sup>58</sup> By his lights, modern astrology suffers because it insists on divorcing itself from such an attitude and instead adopts the methods and absolute determinism of modern science. By reminding astrologers of their craft's common origins with such practices as reading liver entrails, Cornelius is intent on establishing the importance of this *katarchic* attitude in modern astrological practice.

The Greek term *katarche* was originally used to designate the practice of horary astrology, since a literal translation for this word is "beginning". According to Cornelius "A rendering that is more faithful to the astrological usage is 'initiative'. This accurately conveys the idea of human action and purpose, as contrasted with a natural origin."<sup>59</sup> In ancient Greece, what was initiated was a discourse with the gods, since the astrologer was seeking the appropriate moment to initiate some kind of activity. Over the centuries, this attitude of propitiation was replaced by a more mechanical one of simply looking at technical considerations.

This shift was due to many factors, but chief among them was the ascendancy of Aristotle's philosophy of nature, which represented a triumph of a materialist model, which largely replaced the older animistic or spiritual explanations. Accompanying this triumph were technical developments in astrology, which reflected this new Aristotelian model. It was Ptolemy's accomplishment to codify this model of astrological determinism into a notion of a constant downpour of stellar influence, which was responsible for changes in the affairs of men. During this shift, Cornelius argues that the meaning of the word *katarche* was lost. Where it had once embraced "the thread of sacred primacy and authority"<sup>60</sup> in which the gods were invoked to authorize an action, this sacred attitude was replaced with specific technical rules, which would enable the astrologer to pick or elect the right moment to start some activity. Philosophically, we have moved from a mindset that seizes on a symbol and recognizes it to be significant to one in which the symbol takes a back seat to technical considerations. In the new edition of *Moment*, Cornelius points out this fundamental shift in no uncertain terms:

The differences between the Ptolemaic rationalization and the practices of *katarche* go far deeper than the questions of technique, or of the different areas of application. The *katarche* embodies a certain stance, one which allows the astrologer the creativity—and the uncertainty—of significance in which he or she directly participates.<sup>61</sup>

In our secular age, astrologers are more comfortable with following such technical considerations, than they are with cultivating a sacred attitude. For Cornelius, the "moments" which become important are those seized by the soul, not those dictated by the

<sup>58</sup> MOA p. 138; new edition, pp.126-7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 136; new edition, p. 125.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 138-9; new edition, p. 127.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 152; new edition, p. 138.

clock. If the divinatory approach advocated by Cornelius insists that some “moments” of astrology are more important than others, how is the astrologer to proceed? How exactly does one develop a *katarchic* attitude, which will enable one to know which moments have significance and which do not? This issue threads its way through *The Moment of Astrology* and is perhaps its most difficult argument to grasp, involving as it does both philosophical and technical issues. Because the latter are easier to apprehend and hopefully lead to an understanding of the former, I will start with them.

### **Techne and Soul: Finding Significance and Determining Radicality**

In Cornelius’ model of divinatory astrology, there are two technical considerations, rooted in a symbolic sensibility, which almost force the astrologer to rethink their attitude toward the world and the nature of astrological causation. Yet even here, we must not separate the technical from the symbolic, since Cornelius reminds us that “the problems of ...astrology go beyond technique. Technique counts for very little if the astrologer lacks a symbolic sense.”<sup>62</sup> These are what he dubs “finding significance in the horoscope” and ascertaining a horoscope’s “radicality”. In practice, the two concepts depend upon each other. In order to determine whether a horoscope is radical, which I will define shortly, the astrologer must first locate significance in the chart by isolating and identifying those factors, which symbolize the matter at hand. Unlike Ptolemaic astrologers, who posit a “theoretical significance” for every chart factor by seeing them as specific manifestations of general astrological laws, the divinatory astrologer seeks “participatory significance”, in which meaning is derived from specific chart factors through a shared interaction with the client. While the planets, signs and houses retain their traditional meanings, in divinatory practice, they take on roles, as though they are actors in the “mise en scene”<sup>63</sup> on the “stage” of the horoscope. As such, their situation or status within the horoscope may suggest to the astrologer that the client take certain actions to bring about a desired result. In Lilly’s famous ‘Fish Stolen’ judgment, he realizes that the fish “will never come back to him on the technical perfection shown unless (he himself) embodies the symbolism in order to bring the promise of the horary to pass.”<sup>64</sup> By following the symbolism and making inquiries, Lilly was able to regain his fish, though “part eaten, part not consumed, all confessed.”<sup>65</sup> Cornelius reminds us that in much the same way, the modern divinatory astrologer must use their imagination, astrological skill and judgment to actively participate with their client in addressing the issues, which are most important or pressing. Equally, however, the client must be willing to take actions, which are consonant with the ends they wish to achieve. In other words, if we grant horoscopes the status of omens, then according to Cornelius, “since an omen is only an omen if it is recognized as such, it is clear that its significance is dependent upon the participation of those for whom it is present.”<sup>66</sup>

If finding significance within a horoscope is a shared endeavor, the action of determining a particular chart’s radicality appears to be left to the astrologer alone. In this matter, Cornelius and his followers break from the tradition, which defines radicality in horary astrology as a chart “fit to be judged”. This tradition requires the astrologer to use “considerations before judgment” to determine whether a chart to be judged meets certain criteria. If a chart violates certain strictures, such as having an Ascendant in the first or last three degrees of any sign or falling in the Via Combusta, the astrologer is warned from

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. (New edition only) p. 113

<sup>63</sup> Mise en scene is defined as “The arrangement of performers and properties on a stage for a theatrical production or before a camera in a film.” *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 2000) p. 1123

<sup>64</sup> *MOA*, p. 154; new edition, p. 145.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 108; new edition, p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 146; new edition, p. 133.

making any judgments. For Cornelius, a chart could violate those technical strictures and still be radical, since for him, the move to interpret is largely a ritualistic move, rather than a technical decision. In this regard, he follows Marc Edmund Jones, who cautions the astrologer who interprets, despite the strictures, to maintain “some deeper consideration or hidden factor, which must be then taken into account.”<sup>67</sup> Whereas in the Ptolemaic model, radicality always implies the causal-temporal origin in a birth or ‘radix’ chart, in the divinatory approach, the astrologer assigns radicality to a horoscope because it is symbolically fitting or appropriate. Thus, a horoscope with powerfully appropriate symbolism may be chosen over one whose impeccably timed credentials yield a map lacking in symbolic resonance. Again, it is the consciousness of the astrologer, not the objective workings of the universe, which mediate the process. It is this very manner of proceeding, which distinguishes the divinatory approach from more traditional methods.

### The Practice of Divinatory Astrology

As we have seen, the divinatory model of astrology first found its strongest expression in the less traveled paths of astrological interpretation: in the revival of horary astrology and its medical analogue, the decumbiture chart. Similarly, the importance of William Lilly lay in his superb horary judgments, not his pronouncements on genethliacal astrology. Indeed, when Cornelius does discuss natal astrology, he tends to focus on its failures, as in wrong charts working, or its lack of support from contemporary research. Perhaps for these reasons, the development of a *katarchic* attitude is easier for an astrologer who has practiced or is familiar with the workings of horary astrology. But it is less clear how someone with a divinatory outlook would approach natal astrology. The short answer is that the divinatory astrologer is not interested in conventional readings of personalities and “trends” common to the practice of the psychological astrologer. We must remember the divinatory astrologer does not feel under any obligation to interpret the whole chart. Instead, they engage their client through multiple interpretations or ‘takes’ of specific chart factors or symbols. Such a move is often necessary in horary work, where the planets are customarily used to represent the different players in the action being contemplated. While the astrologer selects the symbols, the takes are based on the client’s concerns and issues.

The idea of an astrological take was developed by Gordon Watson and Vernon Wells and is perhaps the best example of how imaginative free play is circumscribed by what amounts to a limiting factor<sup>68</sup>. With the ‘take’, the astrologer’s interpretive moves are seen as analogous to the multiple ‘takes’ used in movie making. Like a filmmaker, the astrologer is able to recast an interpretation, by ‘shooting’ it from a different angle. What is required is an active use of imagination to bring the symbols to life. The consultation essentially becomes an extended dialogue, which guides the astrologer to the relevant horoscopic symbols. The symbols of the horoscope are brought to life by the interplay between the consciousness of the astrologer and that of their client. Since symbols may refer to any number of levels of experience, a chart can be subjected to multiple takes each addressing the symbols from a different perspective. I shall take up this thorny issue of interpretive levels later in this paper, since it is an important feature of the divinatory enterprise.

In a like manner, the notion of takes also encompasses the subtle divinatory practice of routinely crossing the subject/object divide through interpretations which implicate the astrologer. Again, I take up this issue of the subject/object divide and its implications for a

<sup>67</sup> *Horary Astrology*, Marc Edmund Jones, (Shambhala, Berkeley & London, 1975) p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> For an extended discussion of this idea, see “‘Takes’ and Astrological Interpretation” by Gordon Watson, in the *Astrology Quarterly* (Vol. 57 No. 4, Winter 1983/4) and “‘Takes’—Superman” by Vernon Wells in the same journal (Vol. 57 No. 2, Summer 1983).

philosophy of divination later in this paper, but for now, it is important to note that in divinatory practice, the horoscope may symbolize not just the activities and motivations of the client, but of the astrologer as well. In other words, during the process of the consultation, the astrologer may realize that the horoscope under consideration may actually refer to something they themselves are experiencing. According to Maggie Hyde, “The astrologer presumes that he or she has a chart about someone but it also seems to be about something else. The ‘something else’ often turns out to be the astrologer.”<sup>69</sup> According to Hyde, Jung dubbed this phenomenon “the secret mutual connivance”, where during the process of psychotherapy, the needs and desires of the therapist become intertwined or reflected in those of the client. Like Hyde, Cornelius thinks that such experiences in an astrological consultation aren’t oddities to be dismissed, but become key aspects of the divinatory experience. In other words, since the astrologer is part of the interpretive context, such self referencing is seen as a legitimate interpretive move. As Cornelius points out, “This understanding of context is a liberation of practice from the shadowy bondage of having to know everything, which is the fateful lure of the Machine of Destiny.”<sup>70</sup> Freeing modern astrologers from this “Machine” and its mechanist implications is one of Cornelius’ major concerns by replacing it with a more authentic connection to astrology’s deepest roots. To understand the significance of these roots, we must examine Cornelius’ groundbreaking attempt to fashion a philosophy of divination which seeks to encompass the elusive nature of this mysterious art.

### Towards A Philosophy of Divination

In the first of his series of articles entitled “The Moment of Astrology” written and published in 1983, Cornelius stated his intention of “describing the moment of astrology along the lines of divination”, but then quickly added that we “lack an adequate phenomenology of divination itself.”<sup>71</sup> By the fifth installment, while discussing the limitations of Jung’s psychological explorations in divination, Cornelius informed his readers that “the essential problem is ontological (‘of the nature of Being’) and not primarily psychological.”<sup>72</sup> For Cornelius, the problem of astrology is not only ontological, but epistemological. In another words, astrologically speaking, how do we know what we know? How are interpretations possible? Only in the final article, do we glimpse the “vast range of practices” encompassed by the word ‘divination’, including “prophetic revelation, dream interpretation, intuition, and inspired guesswork” alongside “palmistry, aura reading and dowsing.”<sup>73</sup> While he stated that he was “seeking neither explanation nor general theory”, what these early articles collectively suggest is an outline for a philosophy of divination.<sup>74</sup> Cornelius hopes to explicate a divinatory model of astrological interpretation, which is able to address the interpretive problems raised by two separate, but related issues: the subject/object divide in western philosophy and the problem of level. Regarding the former, we might ask ourselves: Do horoscopic factors primarily symbolize internal, “subjective”

<sup>69</sup> See Maggie Hyde’s *Jung and Astrology*, p. 173. Chapter 10 provides an extended discussion of this phenomenon.

<sup>70</sup> *MOA*, p. 236; new edition, p. 222.

<sup>71</sup> *Astrology Quarterly*, Vol. 57, no. 3, Autumn 1983, Part I “Recovering the Divinatory Attitude”, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 1985 Part V “Divination and the Subject-Object Split”, p. 55.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 1985/6 Part VI “The Man Whose Eyes are Open”, p. 60.

<sup>74</sup> Cornelius is wary of the type of “premature synthesis” I am suggesting here, since such a totalising move would seem to preclude the possibility of other forms of astrology. Thus, “Harmonics as generally extended to cover the whole field of astrology would be one such instance of a premature synthesis.” Instead, his book offers “the beginnings of a description of judicial (especially horoscopic) astrology, along the lines of what is sometimes called inductive divination.” Cornelius does not think that liberation from the confines of Ptolemaic model depends upon “a coherent body of theory...or even promise that there is or shall be such a theory.” Personal communication from the author, December 20, 2005.

factors or external, “objective” real world factors? Or both? For the latter, we must ask ourselves whether all aspects of reality rest upon the same level or actually represent different orders of experience?<sup>75</sup> If there are different levels of reality, how does an astrologer distinguish them in a horoscope?

Since astrology’s ontological and epistemological status is at issue for both astrologers and skeptics alike, it behooves us to address some of these enduring philosophical issues, which make the nature of astrology so difficult to grasp. In the sections that follow, I take up the problematic status of divination and examine some of the key issues: divination and the subject/object split, symbol and the symbolic attitude, participatory significance and the role of metaphor, which Cornelius first raised in this series of articles. Because his thinking continued to evolve between the time of their publication and the initial publication of his book in 1994, I examine several other divinatory assumptions such as interpretive levels and the notion of the participation mystique, which were not articulated until later. Together, these topics provide a philosophical scaffolding which supports his reinterpretation of astrology as a study of *signs* rather than *causes*.

### The Problematic Status of Divination

Despite the prevalence of divination as a human phenomenon, an activity which seems to cut across human cultures and historical eras, according to Cornelius:

Divination is not taken seriously from the point of view of philosophy, and cannot be ‘observed’ by science. Since divination has been a repressed topic in Christianity, it is a non-entity for official culture.<sup>76</sup>

It would seem that divination’s current non-entity status reflects a modernist sensibility, with its prevailing attitude of hostility to non-rational activities of any kind. Yet, we often forget that this worldview is a relatively recent acquisition for the western mindset. In the pre modern era, that is, prior to the Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the wonders of the world were often interpreted as proof of God’s or Nature’s wisdom, love or plenitude.<sup>77</sup> As Keith Thomas’ work vividly demonstrates, the realm of popular magic exhibited a range of divinatory practices, among them astrology, which were carried out by cunning men and wise women for centuries.<sup>78</sup> At a less popular level, Simon Schaffer and others have indicated that this older worldview did not suddenly vanish during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century; and that even Newton retained an element of the religious impetus in his understanding of celestial phenomena.<sup>79</sup> This earlier view did not exclude the notion that God and Nature had other ways of revealing themselves to man. While it is easy to dismiss many early divinatory practices as blind superstition, we might allow Jung’s studies in alchemy to remind us that on closer inspection, such practices often reveal something else going on beneath the surface. Indeed, we might also entertain the notion that, for the premodern mentality, the practice of divination revealed the possibility of expressing moral, allegorical and even mystical truths which this “simpler” age considered to be on a par with literal

<sup>75</sup>My attempt to establish an “equation of orders” between the subjective and objective realms of astrology would be another example of what Cornelius would term a premature synthesis.

<sup>76</sup> *MOA*, 2003 only, p. 277.

<sup>77</sup> For an understanding of this older view, see Arthur Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1936), especially Chapter IV, “The Principle of Plenitude and the New Cosmography”.

<sup>78</sup> *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1971, chapter 8.

<sup>79</sup> See Simon Schaffer, “Newton’s Comets and the Transformation of Astrology” in *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays*, (edited by Patrick Curry, Boydell Press, 1987) for a discussion of Newton’s attempt to connect the study of comets with his study of ancient theology. See pp 238-242.

truths, if not superior. As we shall see shortly, in his attempt to capture such elusive prey, Cornelius seeks to revive a Christian hermeneutic, which is a model of meaning and interpretation, which last found favor during medieval times. Through this medieval hermeneutic he makes a claim for astrology as one of the paths of wisdom.

This path takes us through the process of astrological interpretation: in the divinatory model, this entails the development, or rather the resurrection of a philosophic/symbolist attitude. It follows for Cornelius, that once we make the move from an astrology of *causes* to an astrology of *signs*, we require a new model of interpretation, or at least a different understanding of just how we arrive at our astrological interpretations. If indeed, as Maggie Hyde has suggested, the act of making an interpretation is the moment of astrology, then we must look more closely at this process.<sup>80</sup> Since interpretation is at the heart of the astrological enterprise, it is important for the divinatory model to distinguish itself in this endeavor from the Ptolemaic astrology of *causes*. Unlike that model, which seeks general laws of astrological determinism, the divinatory astrology of *signs* focuses on shared meaning. What transpires between the divinatory astrologer and their client is a process of mutual understanding which assumes what they are doing is inherently meaningful. This accent on a search for meaning within the context of the individual's unique experience has direct roots in Cornelius' grounding in the philosophy of the *I Ching* and in his appreciation for Heidegger's phenomenological methods.<sup>81</sup> Philosophically, Cornelius invites the reader to suspend many mental habits, which are the result of the dominance of the modern materialistic and scientific paradigm in which we live. In a sense, he asks us to develop an animistic or more magical sensibility, which requires the development of a symbolic attitude toward the world, not just the horoscope. This attitude implies a certain stance toward symbols and their role in astrology. For Western astrologers, this attitude requires that we suspend certain mental habits we have acquired as part of our inheritance from Ptolemy.

### **Ptolemy and the Subject/Object Split**

The Ptolemaic model of astrology represents a profound shift, both philosophically and technically, from the Mesopotamian divinatory practices it largely supplanted. In contrast to the ordered and finite universe of the Greeks, the earlier Babylonians had embraced a more open ended cosmos, in which sky omens were considered "a sign or warning of what was possible." As Michael Baigent has explained, such sky omens were "an indication of what the gods, in their control of fate, had determined should be the outcome. This predicted event, though, could be avoided through the magical ritual; it was never considered inevitable."<sup>82</sup> It was this conception of celestial omens, which was transformed by nearly a millennia of Greek rationalism into the astrology Ptolemy codified in his *Tetrabiblos*. Moreover, Ptolemy infused his book with the philosophical realism of Aristotle.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, the *Tetrabiblos*, which was both an exemplar and a summary of Greek astrology of that time, has both the great strengths and the inherent weaknesses of this

<sup>80</sup> Personal communication from Maggie Hyde to the author in May of 2002.

<sup>81</sup> In "The Moment of Astrology, Part IV The Metaphysical Coup d'Etat by Natal Astrology" (*Astrological Quarterly*, Vol. 58, Summer 1984) this appreciation of Heidegger is openly acknowledged in a discussion of the putative importance of the birth moment: "Birth stands for the past, Death stands for the Future. Together they bear the mystery of Being." (p. 41) In the footnote to this reference (p. 49), he states: "Birth and Death: I have been influenced and guided here by the penetrating existential analysis undertaken by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*, (published by Baell Blackwell, Oxford, 1973)".

<sup>82</sup>Baigent, *From the Omens of Babylon*, op. cit. p. 88.

<sup>83</sup>Tamsyn Barton, in her *Ancient Astrology* (Routledge, London, 1994) states "It is impossible to say who first connected the workings of astrology with the Aristotelian universe, for it may have been much earlier than Ptolemy." (p. 104) She does, however, acknowledge the importance of Aristotelian notions in Ptolemy's explanations of stellar influence.

philosophical viewpoint. More specifically, according to Cornelius, it is the implicit philosophical realism of Ptolemy's book, which has played such a defining role for the Western astrological tradition. This realism predictably brings Ptolemy down squarely on the objectivist side of the subject/object split. Many examples could be adduced, but take Ptolemy's discussion of planetary placement in Book II as paradigmatic. Here, he distinguishes between "the two great and principle parts", that is the universal relating "to whole races, countries and cities" and "the second more specific (part)...which relates to individual men, which is called the genethliological."<sup>84</sup> Ptolemy's treatise subdivides the genethliological into subjective and objective realms. What strikes the modern reader is that most of Ptolemy's descriptions of the effects of planetary placement provide "objective" physical descriptions of the individual. When he does discuss the more "subjective" elements in Book III, it is done from a naturalistic standpoint. That is, he describes the native's appearance or behavior, rather than an account of how the person experiences the world.<sup>85</sup>

Thus we see Ptolemy's fundamental realism supports a view of astrology as a natural science of human behavior. One searches the *Tetrabiblos* in vain for any trace of Mesopotamian divinatory practices. Cornelius' critique of the Ptolemaic model is predicated on the enduring role that Aristotelian realism has had for the development of western consciousness.<sup>86</sup> In the fifth installment of the original series of *Moment* articles entitled "Divination and the Subject-Object Split", Cornelius starkly laid out his view:

Western culture has carried through an earlier Greek and Christian attitude, which has divided the realms of spirit and matter, but it has reversed the original philosophical and religious inspiration by learning to seek the foundation of truth in the world of material 'facts'. The description of reality has become sundered into sharply divided objective and subjective realms. Modern thought has emerged within languages whose very syntax embodies a precise subject-object demarcation. Further, within science, a clear method appears to have been attained by which to strip away subjective elements from the exact definition of the universally and objectively true, the laws of Nature.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, in Ptolemy's astrology of causes, there is an assumption that "true" astrological interpretations accurately reflect what is objectively "out there" in the external environment.. Furthermore, the philosophical realism of this model assumes that the truth of things is "out there" waiting to be discovered by the astrologer. Consequently, what is required of the astrologer in making an interpretation is an accurate description of things as they are or (in their predictive capacity) will be. By taking for granted that, "the world can be described without particular reference to the act and context of perception," such a view treats all phenomena "as having a neutral ground of existence independent of any

<sup>84</sup> *Tetrabiblos*, F.E. Robbins edition, Harvard University Press, 1940, pp. 117-19.

<sup>85</sup> Of course, such "subjective" descriptions are the hallmark of modernism. One could argue, as many have, that such subjective descriptions are quite rare in any type of literary undertaking prior to the 18th century. What is important to note here is Ptolemy's preoccupation with describing his subject's passive receptivity to the cosmic forces surrounding them, as opposed to the active intervention required in any divinatory undertaking.

<sup>86</sup> In an extended footnote discussing Robert Newton's contention that Ptolemy may have committed scientific fraud, Cornelius seems more intrigued by the hold that the Ptolemaic cosmos maintained for over fifteen hundred years, which he attributes to "the even greater question of the hold on the European mind of the Aristotelian conception of reality." (*MOA*, 2003, p 97.)

<sup>87</sup> "The Moment of Astrology Part V: Divination and the Subject-Object Split", *Astrology Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 1985) p. 52.

consciousness positing that ground.”<sup>88</sup>

This model of interpretation, in Cornelius’ view, obscures the fundamental metaphoric nature of astrological symbols. As we have seen, for Ptolemaic astrology, the meanings of the horoscope symbols are considered to be straightforward and regular and to have universal applicability. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the logical unfolding of this model, starting with Alan Leo and the development of cookbook astrology and culminating more recently in sophisticated computer programs, which compile pre-written interpretations of various chart factors. At its best, this model of astrology suggests a practical, seemingly rational way to develop an interpretation. Interpretations are built from the fundamentals of the chart: its planets, signs, houses and aspects. At its worst, this model results in a kind of mechanical literalism, which traps both the astrologer and their clients in a symbolic dead end and lessens any opportunity for creative interpretations.

### **Healing the Split: Astrology as Participation Mystique**

Once an astrological encounter is seen as a kind of symbolic dance or ritual involving both archetypal and unique elements, then some of the assumptions concerning the interpretive act are put in a different light. Like any ritual, it involves certain prescribed moves or acts which guide the participants, yet equally implicit in this process, each person must bring something unique to the encounter to insure its significance to them. With astrology as divination, the ritual aspects of practice are openly acknowledged and even encouraged, since this enables the unique aspects of the encounter to emerge more easily. Thus, in the divinatory model, the astrologer takes on board the notion that their interpretive glosses arise out of a specific setting and are in some sense driven or determined by the unique interaction of the astrologer and client. In other words, interpretations are primarily created by the interlocking needs and desires of both the client and the astrologer. The moment of astrology represents this unique coming together of these two individuals, where the burden is on the astrologer to possess a conscious awareness that their interpretations have been aptly symbolized by certain ‘objective’ horoscopic factors. That is, the astrologer in making their interpretations becomes the vehicle which bridges the subject/object divide. It is in this sense, that divinatory astrology invokes Lévy-Bruhl’s *participation mystique* as an explanatory model for what transpires between these two individuals. This term, borrowed from anthropology and later adapted by Jung, describes the pervasive belief of “primitive” man that his thought processes actively take part in nature itself. Such a view undoubtedly found a basis in Cornelius’ study of Jung, who was similarly preoccupied with crossing the subject-object divide, though in Jung’s case, he was primarily concerned with understanding the psychoanalytic process of projection.<sup>89</sup>

We see a similar stance toward the subject-object divide in Cornelius’ close colleague, Maggie Hyde, in her discussion of Jung’s concept of synchronicity. In her book *Jung and Astrology*, she makes a significant distinction between what she calls Synchronicity I, which is marked by the connection between “the objectively observed psyche and objectively observed events” and what she terms Synchronicity II, which entails “the subjective participation of the observing psyche”<sup>90</sup>. Whereas “the first emphasizes the (meaningful) interdependence of objective events among themselves”, the second version brings to light

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>89</sup> “Jung traced the root of projection back to an undifferentiated state or ‘archaic identity’ between man and his natural environment, first described by the anthropologist Lévy-Bruhl as a participation mystique, a condition in which, ultimately both subject and object converge into One nature.” The New Alchemy Website: [web.ukonline.co.uk/phil.Williams/one.htm](http://web.ukonline.co.uk/phil.Williams/one.htm). February 17, 2005.

<sup>90</sup> *Jung and Astrology*, p. 128.

the subjective participation of the observing psyche.”<sup>91</sup> She relates Synchronicity I to Jung the scientist and to an “astrology as science” approach. With Synchronicity II, we see Jung the diviner, whose involvement with the symbolic material is consistent with a divinatory approach to astrology. No doubt, Hyde’s profound reinterpretation of Jung’s concept of synchronicity had direct bearing on Cornelius’ understanding of astrological interpretation as a form of *participation mystique*.

By viewing astrology as a form of *participation mystique*, Cornelius steers clear of the two extreme views of astrology held by most astrologers or their scientific foes. The first, of course, is the realist/objectivist model of astrology articulated by Ptolemy and currently held by those who continue see it as a science (or at least a science in the making). The second view, dubbed “subjective astrology” by Geoffrey Dean and his ilk, sees astrology has having only subjective value. To proponents of this view, “The correctness of a particular statement, or of a chart reading, or even the chart itself, is of no direct concern...*To be accepted, subjective astrology doesn’t need to be true.*”<sup>92</sup> Divinatory astrology steers along a third course. As Cornelius’ deftly precise horoscope delineations indicate, he insists that astrology must retain some connection to the “real” world of consensus reality we seem to share with others. But at the same time, he insists that astrology’s importance lies in its ability to use its symbolism of that world to redirect the soul towards more meaningful pursuits. Paradoxically, the astrologer achieves subjectively meaningful insights for their clients through an objective façade, which is the horoscope.

What Cornelius seems to suggest is that the astrologer, in a Gestalt-like flash<sup>93</sup>, recognizes their client’s whole situation in certain horoscopic symbols, which are assigned to be the *dramatis personae* of the issue or story presented to them. The horoscope contains or becomes a narrative which needs to be unpacked. Thus, the astrological consultation entails a form of narrative therapy, where the future narrative can be changed through the initiative (*katarche*) of the client, aided by the guidance of the astrologer. Cornelius illustrates this model of interpretation in several case studies presented in *MOA*, but none more tellingly than in a horary judgment involving an offer on his aunt’s house.

In a book studded with diverse and interesting horoscopes, this map stands apart as the only one which involves Cornelius on a personal level. For that reason, there is a richness to the context and subtexts which enlivens the symbolism. While the horary judgment ostensibly concerns his aunt’s struggle with a difficult tenant and this man’s effect on her financial and emotional welfare, Cornelius confesses that a favorable outcome could benefit him personally with “a sizeable possible legacy.”<sup>94</sup> As a result, we get a notable blurring of the subjective and objective aspects of the case, but here, this fact seems only to further emphasize the ethical strand which runs through this and indeed, every astrological judgment. Interestingly, the map is cast for a “moment” that occurred nearly three and a half years into the “story” of which it is a part. One wonders whether other maps were cast and discarded for other moments in this unfolding drama. There is no doubt, however, that this particular horary question was motivated by powerful feelings of resentment and anger. Its radicality is ultimately certified by the precision of its symbolic referents and its demonstrated usefulness as a guide to action. Like one of Freud’s early case studies, Cornelius’ rendering of this map is filled with hidden motivations, double meanings and

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 128.

<sup>92</sup> Geoffrey Dean, quoted in *Astrology in the Year Zero*, op. Cit., p. 129. Also see pp. 155-6 for a fuller discussion of subjective astrology by Dean.

<sup>93</sup> “Gestalt-an organized pattern in which the qualities of the whole differ from those of the components of the pattern. The nature of the parts is determined by the whole and secondary to it.” Ronald Harvey, *The Spindle of Meaning*, (Urania Trust, London, 1996) p. 168.

<sup>94</sup> *MOA*, p. 171 and new edition, p. 159.

shifting perspectives.<sup>95</sup> It is also a technical tour de force of divinatory astrology.

Suggestively, this map provides a stellar (!) cast of significators befitting an Agatha Christie tale. At one level, these include the beleaguered Cornelius, his dramatic and “difficult” aunt, two sets of his solicitors, the sullen and scheming tenant, some reluctant builders and ultimately the strong-armed bailiff. But in classic horary fashion, the significators also describe the house itself, with its “persistent leak and rising damp downstairs” (aptly symbolized by an I.C. bracketed by Pluto and Saturn); the unpromising financial offer for the house; and of course, the symbolic keys to resolving the whole issue. Most importantly, the resolution of this case, suggested by a “mutual reception by degree”<sup>96</sup> demonstrates the necessity for personal initiative, which simultaneously illustrates Cornelius’ dictum that “destiny is negotiable”, rather than some fixed fate awaiting the hapless recipient. It also illustrates at several points, a bridging of the subject/object divide, since the map symbolically “narrates” the objective “facts” of the case, while also powerfully describing aspects of Cornelius’ inner experience, particularly his profound antipathy towards the tenant, who acts “as a ‘shadow’ for me, in the sense so powerfully described by Jung.”<sup>97</sup> In this sense, this map is also an excellent example of a “psychological horary” as described by Maggie Hyde.

### Interpretive Levels

The various levels of experience described by this map are an abiding feature of any horoscope in the hands of a seasoned practitioner. Yet, the whole issue of levels is elusive and there is little in our literature to guide us. Throughout astrology’s history, astrologers have aligned their interpretive practices with various philosophical and religious traditions, including Aristotelian, Platonic, Christian, magical, occult and mystical readings, among others. It is these traditions which have provided the interpretive frameworks for determining astrological levels. We have seen how Ptolemy’s astrology, underpinned by an Aristotelian realism, precludes any higher levels, with the unpromising result that its astrological symbols often are merely signs for the things of this world. While succeeding periods in astrology’s history have adopted or imposed other philosophical frameworks, Cornelius argues that these different revelations have never completely obliterated astrology’s fundamental Ptolemaic/Aristotelian assumptions.

The enduring power of this formative interpretive framework, in Cornelius’ reading has produced the 'Machine of Destiny', with its relentless cosmic gears and levers. In its purest form, this machine would account for all human behavior by the endless whirring of the planets in their cycles, as they form and dissolve their aspects against the backdrop of a fixed Zodiac. Consequently, this view of astrology has circumscribed all subsequent attempts to come to grips with the whole issue of level, by denying its fundamental significance. Under its continuing influence, the astrologer apparently has no need for the *imaginal* realm of other levels. According to Henri Corbin, the French philosopher and Islamic scholar, this

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<sup>95</sup> Indeed, like a latter day Freud, who violated his own injunction by interpreting his own dreams, Cornelius seems unconcerned that his own motivations might muddy his judgment. In his defense, he did consult three astrological friends. Significantly, these four individuals launched The Company of Astrologers later that year, very close in time to the legal resolution of this case. His footnotes for this case adequately demonstrate this point. See *MOA*, p. 367 and 165. No doubt, he would point out that it is just such a powerful confluence of feelings which produced this important judgment.

<sup>96</sup> “In this technique, the two planets in mutual reception are permitted to change signs, each planet going to its sign of rulership but holding its original degree...the changes in aspects, horary perfections, etc. signify the possibilities inherent in the original reception. This is an important development in horary astrology, originating with Ivy Goldstein-Jacobson and developed to remarkable effect by Derek Appleby.” *MOA*, p. 356 and new edition, p. 41.

<sup>97</sup> *MOA*, p. 367 and new edition, p. 165.

realm relates to “everything that surpasses the order of common empirical perception and is individualized in a personal vision, undemonstrable by simple recourse to the criteria of sensory knowledge or rational understanding...”<sup>98</sup> Yet, according to Cornelius, it is to this elusive realm we must turn in order to re-embrace astrology’s capacity to carry moral, allegorical and even mystical truths. Only in this way can we rescue our still largely Ptolemaic astrology from the absurdly grandiose claims of its Machine of Destiny. The key to this renewed capacity lies in what astrologers actually do in their daily practice, which is to interpret symbols.

What distinguishes the divinatory astrologer from their historical predecessors in this regard is their attitude toward symbolism. This attitude holds one of the keys to the issue of level, since these levels inhabit the same metaphoric space which James Hillman alludes to in his description of the idea of soul. Like that elusive term, astrological levels:

refer to that unknown component which makes meaning possible, turns events into experiences, is communicated in love and has a religious concern...(substitute: astrological levels operate through) that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic and metaphorical.<sup>99</sup>

Like Hillman, Cornelius is preoccupied with the transformative power of imagination and its role in creating and understanding symbolism. One of the central themes of Cornelius’ book concerns “the longstanding divide between astrology and the magical-religious imagination.”<sup>100</sup> His resurrection of the Four Fold Interpretation of medieval Christianity is an attempt to recover this older attitude toward symbolism for contemporary astrologers. Through the use of this hermeneutic, Cornelius provides us with an interpretive scaffolding, which can account for the different types of understanding an astrological consultation is capable of providing.

To achieve this understanding, we must stop treating symbolism as “an expression of causes” and return to the elusive world of mythopoeic thought. In contrast to modern rationalism, “in which a thing is either this or that”, Cornelius insists that in “the symbolic imagination we enter in our astrology... it is possible for things to be this and that, at the same time.”<sup>101</sup> Once we adopt this open stance toward our symbolism, we can better understand the significance of levels, since “the concept of levels allows us to deal with and-ness.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, the whole issue of level in astrology is bound up in the way we interpret our symbolism, since it requires we abandon the literalism of the Ptolemaic revelation and reconnect our work with these more “primitive” modes of thought. This, of course, is the same primitive realm uncovered by Lévy Bruhl in his exploration of the *participation mystique* with its subtle undermining of the subject/object divide.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>98</sup>Corbin is quoted from Sussana Ruebsaat’s “Mundus Imaginalis/Anima Mundi: Neither Fact Nor Fiction”, a paper she presented as part of the First International Conference on Imagination and Education, July 16-19, 2003. See <http://www.iERG.net/confs/2003/proceeds/Ruebsaat.pdf>, p. 2. Corbin first made the significant distinction between the imaginal and the imaginary in a paper he published in 1964 entitled “Mundus Imaginalis, or The Imaginary and the Imaginal”. It has been published in *Working with Images*, (Woodstock: Spring Publications, 2000) pp. 71-89.

<sup>99</sup> James Hillman, *Revising Psychology*, Harper & Row, New York, 1975, p. xiv.

<sup>100</sup> *MOA*. p. 179 and new edition p. 168

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* p. 262 and new edition, p. 252

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* p. 262 and new edition, p. 252

<sup>103</sup> In an extremely suggestive passage discussing the subject/object divide in Western consciousness, Norman O. Brown in his apocalyptic *Loves Body* (Random House, New York, 1966) describes the participation mystique as “an extrasensory link between the percipient and the perceived; a telepathy we have disowned.” (p.121) Furthermore, Brown insists that one of the principal effects of this dualism is to render the “Cartesian world as machine” and thereby deaden the symbolic consciousness of modern rational man. His chapters entitled “Representation” and “Resurrection”, in their own

### From Literalism to Allegory

By transcending the literalism of this world, divinatory astrologers essentially engage in a dialogue with “some genius or spirit”, that is, with the numinous presence of the daemons. These supernatural entities “reveal themselves as part of the domain of the sacred, intermediate between mortals and the great gods.”<sup>104</sup> For the modern mind, Cornelius informs us that these daemons act “as a higher function or modality of the soul...(and) tend to manifest as other to our ordinary consciousness.”<sup>105</sup> Like Hillman, who also invokes daemons to account for the singular nature of human destiny, Cornelius seems to suggest that divinatory astrologers dare to envision their client’s lives “in terms of very large ideas such as beauty, mystery and myth”<sup>106</sup> and yet do so by engaging in very specific kinds of symbolism about that person’s world. This trafficking with spiritual entities enables divinatory astrologers to understand that the true power of their interpretations is derived from their capacity to tap into some quality which transcends the literal situation and suggests something greater. In this process, the constituents of the horoscope shed their literalist trappings and become in Cornelius’ pithy phrase “symbols of human significance.” Astrology, in its divinatory guise then, becomes a hermeneutic process which locates that significance in the imaginal realm of an astrological consultation. Through this interpretive process, divinatory astrologers move “vertically” through the issue of level by imaginatively engaging the symbols of the horoscope. Thus, in a horary chart ostensibly concerning an offer on his aunt’s house, Cornelius “saw” his aunt as the Moon in Leo conjunct the ascendant, given “her love of amateur music-hall...her hats and her dramatic, rather emotional Cancer nature...”<sup>107</sup> Yet, Derek Appleby “saw” something else in this symbol: a need for this woman to appear in court, despite the solicitor’s assurances that this wouldn’t be necessary. That this came to pass indicates something profound about the capacity of symbols to contain multiple levels of experience. Similarly, astrological symbols may “horizontally” cross the subject/object divide through such imaginative engagement. This same horary’s 4<sup>th</sup> house retrograde Saturn in Scorpio becomes an apt “objective” symbol for Cornelius’ malevolent tenant: “a dark haired and dark-eyed man, sullen and imperturbable”, while its opposition to the chart’s Sun (symbolizing Cornelius) describes the astrologer’s subjective conviction that he “did have the stomach for the war of attrition”<sup>108</sup> required to succeed in a protracted legal battle with this quarrelsome man. In a divinatory model, other interpretations or ‘takes’ could be made. For example, in this unfolding drama, Cornelius, symbolized by this chart’s Sun could be cast as a solar hero engaged in a battle against time, perfectly symbolized by Saturn!<sup>109</sup> These examples demonstrate divinatory astrology’s flexible and subtle approach to symbolism, which distinguishes it from its Ptolemaic counterpart. At the same time, they illustrate the fundamental philosophical

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elliptical fashion offer a critique of modern rationalism which is extremely consonant with Cornelius’ book.

<sup>104</sup> *MOA* p. 191 and new edition, p.178

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191 and new edition, p. 178

<sup>106</sup> James Hillman *The Soul’s Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, Random House, New York, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> *MOA* p. 168, and new edition, p. 155.

<sup>108</sup> *MOA*, p. 171 and new edition, p. 160.

<sup>109</sup> Indeed, this example perfectly demonstrates how astrological symbols can simultaneously cross the subject/object divide and point the way to different levels of experience: In an extended footnote concerning this incident, Cornelius describes himself as “naturally a strong Saturn type”, yet the horary Saturn physically describes his tenant. However, this Saturn almost paradoxically becomes the shadow to Cornelius’ Sun, “in the sense so powerfully described by Jung”. Then he acknowledges that the choice of this case to illustrate this chapter, may in part, have been due to the opportunity this enforced isolation (a very Saturnian theme) afforded him to begin writing the *Moment* series of articles: “Time and the seed moment—Saturn and the Sun!..I never realized the obvious connecting theme with Lilly’s crisis of magic—Saturn and the Sun.” *MOA*, p. 367 and new edition, p. 165.

shift which the divinatory approach entails, seeking as it does, not a guide to what will happen, but a guide to right action. In this manner, the success of any astrology as divination consultation is measured primarily by its capacity to invigorate an individual's subjective desire to initiate new ways of being in this world.

If we follow Cornelius' argument, it is the astrologer, of course, who must first initiate a new way of being, at least in regard to their model of practice. Yet, escaping the gravitational pull of the Machine of Destiny is not easy, since the grip of realism retains a strangle hold on the imagination. Even the most sophisticated divinatory astrologers continue to express themselves in a manner which suggests that they are interpreting causal laws. As a result, we may become seduced by the literal "truth" of our interpretations and attribute their symbolic fit to some causal mechanism. We saw in the example of Derek Appleby's first horary, how a telling piece of symbolism seemed to literally be true, when the woman found her missing ring on the kitchen "scales of Libra". At such moments, without some guiding spirit, we must strain to keep in mind the metaphoric nature of all astrological symbolism. Like any piece of convincing astrological interpretation, this example begs the question, can one learn about the metaphoric nature of astrological symbolism, without first going through a stage of symbolic literalism?

The short answer seems to be no. It is a common experience for people new to the study of astrology to believe that the horoscope accurately mirrors outer reality; indeed, this attitude may even be a necessary factor in order for them to progress in their studies. But as the student of astrology proceeds, they slowly come to understand that there are no neat one to one correlations between their symbols and the things of this world. For some, this leads to despair and the abandonment of astrology. But others slowly begin to understand the metaphoric nature of astrological symbols and to appreciate them for that quality. Over time, the interpretive trajectory of most practitioners illustrates the slow breakdown of astrology as a literal mirror of outer reality and its replacement by a more subtle understanding of the nature of symbolism. This move from the literal to the allegorical to the more mystical categories of interpretation reveals astrology as a path of wisdom by tracing a fiery arc which elucidates the shadowy realms of divination,. By incorporating both the problem of levels and the issue of the subject/object divide into the Four Fold Interpretation of astrology, Cornelius provides nothing less than a map for this tricky terrain. It is to this hermeneutic model of meaning that we now turn.

## **The Four-Fold Interpretation of Astrology**

### **1. Pagan and Christian Symbolism**

It may seem strange at first to think of using a Christian hermeneutic to understand the non linear logic of divination. After all, astrology has had an uneasy relationship with Christianity, which has also distanced itself from its own oracular tradition. Furthermore, the development of horoscopic astrology certainly predates both the Christian revelation and the Ptolemaic formulation, which might make one wonder why Cornelius alighted on this particular hermeneutic, rather than some pre Christian or pagan interpretive strategy.<sup>110</sup> William Lilly's efforts to bridge Christianity and astrology may provide a partial answer.

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<sup>110</sup> This is not to suggest that he was immune to other viewpoints. In his discussion of the "demonization of divination and magic in Christian culture", Cornelius acknowledges the importance of the pagan studies of Alby Stone as a guide to understanding how the whole concept of divination has been marginalized by the dominant monotheistic interpretation of mainstream Christianity. See *MOA*, p. 183, and new edition, p. 172.

Cornelius informs us that “Lilly’s frontispiece engraving in *Christian Astrology* gives an unambiguous interpretation of the prophetic relation of astrology to Christianity.”<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, he is aware that Lilly was writing during the last historical phase in the West, where Christianity comfortably coexisted with a magical worldview.<sup>112</sup> As we have noted, Cornelius is concerned with the divide between astrology and the magical-religious imagination and his revival of this medieval Christian hermeneutic is an explicit attempt to reconnect them. By exploiting astrology’s historical connection to magic and religion, Cornelius allow us to clearly recognize the impoverishment in symbolic thinking brought about by the Scientific Revolution and its baleful influence on subsequent astrological practice.

Cornelius’ revival of a Christian hermeneutic is an attempt to reconnect contemporary practitioners with an older, more nuanced understanding of symbolism. While he is aware of contemporary hermeneutic practices, their lack of genuine metaphysical grounding seems to leave him cold. Yet, in resurrecting this older Christian model of interpretation, he also revives some of the lingering tension that exists between that religious viewpoint and the pagan sensibility embraced by many astrologers in their worldview. By trying to bridge these two views, Cornelius essentially uses pagan means to attain Christian ends. In other words, in his divinatory model of interpretation, the contemplation of horoscopes becomes a road leading to a greater spiritual understanding for both the client and the astrologer. Unlike most postmodern readers of “texts”, however, Cornelius seems more interested in a hermeneutics of soul and therefore words and images from Christianity do play an important role in the two chapters dedicated to the Four Fold hermeneutic. As his chapter titles make clear, Cornelius wishes to make a link between our modern secular astrology and the transubstantiation of Christianity. While both chapters dealing with this subject matter are entitled “The Fourfold Symbol”; the first is subtitled “Divination and Allegory” whereas the second is subtitled “Water into Wine”. As with the Christian revelation, he is intent on demonstrating that astrology too, runs the gamut from literalism to allegory, and that its higher expressions require an attunement to subtler messages. In a manner analogous to Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* was inspired by that Christian hermeneutic, Cornelius is equally intent on demonstrating that, like Dante’s poetry, astrology too, has a capacity for prophecy and divination.<sup>113</sup>

## 2. The Role of The Mutable Cross

Implicit in his discussion of the Four Fold Symbol, Cornelius suggests the hope that his adaptation of this hermeneutic may help unfold some of the mysteries of the symbolic order within astrology. At the most literal level of this symbolic order, Cornelius’ adoption of a Four-fold Christian hermeneutic may have been suggested by the quadratic symbol of the cross, which is the common property of both Christian and astrological imagery. Indeed, it is the astrological cross of the ascendant and midheaven axes which grounds any horoscope to a particular time and place. Furthermore, these two axes provide the framework and interpretive reference points for most astrological house systems. Notably, Cornelius’ interpretive schema centers around the mutable houses, not the more obvious significance of the cardinal cross. Whereas the Ascendant and Midheaven axes of the cardinal cross symbolize the active manner in which experiences manifest in the material world, the

<sup>111</sup> MOA footnote 2, p. 382 and in the new edition, p. 326, footnote 5.

<sup>112</sup> Keith Thomas’ *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1971) remains a key text describing this older world view, but see also E. M.W. Tillyard’s *The Elizabethan World Picture* (Pimlico, London, 1998) and C.S. Lewis’ *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964).

<sup>113</sup> MOA, pp. 264 and 270; new edition, pp. 277 and 281.

mutable houses symbolize more internal aspects of experience, such as thoughts, beliefs, dreams and ideals.<sup>114</sup> Because Cornelius seems more focused on the meaning of experiences, rather than the experiences themselves, the mutable cross serves as a symbolic carrier for the internal process of understanding and perhaps even spiritual growth. Symbolically, his schema takes full advantage of the manner in which the twelve houses and signs overlap and interlock the numbers 4 and 3 through the quadruplicities and the elemental triplicities.

By selecting the houses of the mutable cross, Cornelius signals his intention of focusing on the meaning hidden “behind” the cardinal cross of earthly manifestation. Since on one level, the mutable cross represents the realm of mentation and imagination<sup>115</sup>, Cornelius uses the meaning of these houses to represent the presence of the daemons. In other words, this cross symbolizes the spiritual agency of the daemons, who guide us in our overt behavior, which is symbolically expressed through the cardinal cross. Their agency is in turn sustained by the enduring values symbolized by the fixed cross. Through the mutable cross and its planetary rulers, Cornelius concerns himself primarily with how the literal word of daily discourse becomes transposed or transubstantiated through the act of interpretation into the imaginal realm of allegory and returns to the earthly realm as guidance in the here and now. In their roles as the planetary rulers of the mutable cross, Mercury and Jupiter symbolize the process of communication between the earthly and the imaginal realms. The process of interpretation, which involves a shuttling back and forth between these realms, embraces the fundamental mystery of astrology. *Astrology as divination* requires that we make this leap from the prosaic to the profound and back to the prosaic level again. In this manner, the astrologer acts as an interpreter of “divine texts” or symbols and assumes almost a priestly role. We are reminded that Lilly ended his days by becoming a churchwarden for St. Mary’s Parish Church.

### 3. Speculative Versus Realised Interpretations

Central to this idea of astrological “transubstantiation” is Cornelius’ distinction between speculative and realised interpretations. While both types of interpretation connect astrological symbols to the events and things of the world, or more specifically, our experience of those things, only the latter embrace “the mysterious function by which allegory is seen as reality”<sup>116</sup> Realised interpretations seem to turn upon a central metaphor or theme which offers their recipients a coherence and clarity lacking in their speculative counterparts. In other words, they have a rightness of fit and are often marked by an almost visceral quality which seems to lift the listener out of their blinkered understanding of their situation. This altered understanding, Cornelius equates with “second sight” familiar to us through the phenomena of clairvoyance and ESP.<sup>117</sup> Like the experience of synchronicity, realised interpretations appear to have “some emotional affect attending the realisation of

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<sup>114</sup> Of course, all astrological houses symbolize certain aspects of external reality, such as the third house symbolizing siblings or the ninth house long distance travel, etc. Here, I am more concerned with what Ronald Harvey has called the structure of meaning, when describing the manner in which the houses symbolize what they do. See his *The Spindle of Meaning*, (Urania Trust, London, 1996) pp. 21-51 for a philosophically informed discussion of the meaning of the houses. Harvey sees the crossing of the Meridian/Horizontal axes as the primary framework for meaning, whereas the other house meanings are derived from this primary cross.

<sup>115</sup> The third and ninth houses are frequently associated with mental activities such as speaking, writing teaching, etc. The ninth has also been associated with dreams. The sixth house symbolizes the more practical aspects of the mind, such as learning a craft, while the twelfth house is associated with hidden factors such as intuitions, psychic influences, etc. Any number of textbooks provide these symbolic associations. Margaret Hone’s *The Modern Textbook of Astrology*, (L.N. Fowler & Co., London, 1954) offers a typical example.

the symbol; within Jung's terms, this affect is a consequence of the activation of unconscious archetypal contents, as they erupt momentarily into consciousness."<sup>118</sup> Thus, when a person is touched by an astrological interpretation, it is because the astrologer has engaged them symbolically on a number of levels by embracing--whether through analogy, metaphor or allegory--a more inclusive understanding of that person's being in time. In essence, the power of realized interpretations may be measured by their capacity to spark a desire in the listener to initiate (katarche) some action or change in their situation. Realised interpretations create a bridge between the objective world of facts and the client's subjective understanding of their world. Through the power of realised interpretations, the divinatory astrologer sparks an impetus to action.

#### **4. Hermeneutic Triads: Earth and Air Houses: From Literalism to Allegory**

At the risk of making too literal Cornelius' subtle hermeneutic, we will trace the symbolic unfolding of this model of meaning through the realm of the mutable houses and its subsequent expression within the house triads connected to each cadent house. This movement describes the manner by which an astrological interpretation is transformed from its more literal renderings into increasingly profound expressions of meaning and wonder. We start with the third house, where Mercury, in its humdrum specificity, represents the literal story. As we move from the third to the sixth house, we remain within the houses of Mercury, but we have moved from the literal telling of Gemini into the allegory of Virgo, through the process of craft and ritual, which is the domain of that sign. The triad of houses rooted respectively in the third and sixth houses suggest how this process works itself out for the astrologer and their client. With regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> house triad of the Air signs, the client's literal telling of their story, symbolized by the third house, becomes their primary link to the astrologer, whose actions are represented by the seventh house. This dialogue in turn is connected to the eleventh house, which represents the broader community of thought and the fixed values of their shared collective cultural realities.

In a similar manner, Cornelius looks at the way the Earthy houses are hermeneutically rooted in the sixth house. Here, Mercury expresses itself through both the ritual and craft of the astrologer, who in the act of interpretation transforms the literal story of Gemini into allegory. The Earthy triad of the 6<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> houses traces the interpretive process whereby the applied techniques and ritual of the sixth house become manifest as the astrological judgment symbolized by the tenth, which in turn, leads to the values implied by such judgments, as symbolized by the second house.

#### **5. Hermeneutic Triads: Water and Fire Houses: The Turning of Consciousness**

As the next transition in the unfolding hermeneutic makes clear, we are following a logic of divination, not the counterclockwise movement of the astrological houses. By moving across the wheel from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>, Cornelius graphically demonstrates the trope or 'soul turning' required of both the astrologer and their client in any meaningful astrological encounter. According to Cornelius, the inspiration for this level of interpretation may require the agency of the daemons. Whereas the Earthy triplicity concerns itself with the ramifications of craft horoscopy rooted in the 6<sup>th</sup> house, the transition to the realm of the Water houses is meant to symbolize the process of psychic change engendered by that encounter. At one level, this transition to the Watery triad symbolizes the emotional work

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 282, new edition, p. 293

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 281, new edition, p. 292

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 283, new edition, p. 293

necessary for any kind of psychic change. At another level, this transition from the earthy domain of craft to the imaginal realm of the 12<sup>th</sup> house contains the mystery of how a speculative interpretation becomes a realized one, since according to Cornelius, the difference between them is that the latter brings about an emotional or psychic change within the individual. As Jung so clearly understood, powerful interpretations bring about an alchemical change within both individuals contained in the alembic of the relationship.

What is less obvious is that this work implies a strong moral or ethical dimension. As befitting a Christian hermeneutic, the trope or ‘turning of the soul’ involves a movement from the ritualized behavior of the sixth house towards some type of transpersonal truth, as symbolized by the twelfth. As Cornelius informs us: “The conscious attempt to create an allegory involves a counter movement that is usually hidden from view. This is indicated in the other cadent houses, starting with the 12<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>119</sup> Clearly, the astrologer must be guided by their intuition, not some technical rule, if they are to be effective. While this process seems to point toward the transcendent truths of Christianity, Cornelius’ stated aim is more modest and he only insists that the impact of a realised interpretation brings about a “little death of the ego, or an undermining of its objectifying conscious hold”.<sup>120</sup> Following the emotional logic of the Watery triad, we can see how the evocative clarity of a realised interpretation may encounter the client’s powerful attachments of the past, as signified by the fourth house and must overcome strong emotional resistance as symbolized by the 8<sup>th</sup> house. Thus we see that the “sacrifice” suggested by the movement from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> house is one that involves an emotional relinquishing of certain attitudes. Symbolically, we are dealing with the polarity of Virgo and Pisces, the two signs linked with the miracles of the loaves and fishes of the Christian revelation. As with the movement from the third to the sixth houses, this movement from the sixth to the twelfth is “pulled along” by teleological forces hidden from view.

The third and final stage in the unfolding of this hermeneutic is the movement from the watery allegories of the twelfth to the mystical fire of the ninth house. Here the quarter turn of the wheel moves the soul from the confinement and sacrifice of the twelfth towards its liberation as symbolized by the ninth house. The realm of the Fire houses, however, doesn’t lend itself to some neat interpretive strategy, as we have seen in its elemental predecessors, but seems to symbolize a transcendent function. By structuring his astrological hermeneutic so that it culminates in the Fire triad, Cornelius appears to be invoking a Cabalistic or hermetic understanding, where the Fire element acts as a purifier of the other three “baser” elements. In alchemy, fire brings about the transformation of the three principles of sulphur, salt and mercury in the alembic which is the soul. As the finest and most volatile of the four elements, fire represents a transcendent function which symbolizes the most intense kind of soul growth. Yet, interpretively speaking, we are on uncertain ground here, since the fire principle may symbolize not only exalted spiritual states, but also the most selfish demands of the lone ego as symbolized by the first house. What this final turning of the soul seems to suggest is that these two states may find their reconciliation in the soul’s capacity for expressivity, as symbolized by the fifth house. In other words, we may be led to the most profound kinds of transpersonal realisations because of our narrow egoic interests. Ultimately then Cornelius’ model of meaning suggests that it is faith, a fire principle and prime Christian article, not knowledge which moves the soul toward its highest expression. Indeed, he closes his second chapter on the Fourfold hermeneutic by telling us that “the soul finds its own ways to achieve its ends, and the symbols of divination are a particularly effective means to achieve this goal. And further,

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 275, new edition, p. 285

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p. 275, new edition p. 285

I believe we will find at the core of the belief of most astrologers, the assumption that there is about these showings something that is spiritually authenticated.<sup>121</sup>

We can go no further, since we have traced an elemental teleology which has moved us through various stages of the imaginal realm, from literal thoughts, through their grounding in ritual and technique, to their transposition into an emotional seeing and culminating in a flash of spiritual insight. Taken as a whole then, the Fourfold hermeneutic describes a “cosmology for soul”, to use James Hillman’s phrase.<sup>122</sup> Like all such attempts to delineate the movement of consciousness or to describe elusive soul states, Cornelius’ revival of the Four Fold hermeneutic is more suggestive, than definitive. Yet, it is an important part of his more general attempt to place the whole notion of divination within the context of the western philosophical tradition. In so doing, Cornelius is putting himself in line, not with the more well known figures of that tradition, but with other cosmologists of the soul, such as the pre Socratic philosophers and healers described by Peter Kingsley<sup>123</sup>, the alchemist Robert Fludd and of course, Jung. By reconnecting current astrological practitioners with their symbolic predecessors, Cornelius hopes to rescue the practice of judicial astrology from the clutches of both scientism and postmodernism. If this means the sundering of most contemporary models of practice, that is the price we must pay for wandering so far from our true philosophical roots.

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<sup>121</sup> *MOA*, p. 292, and in the new edition, p. 301.

<sup>122</sup> James Hillman, “Cosmology for Soul: From Universe to Cosmos”, *Sphinx: A Journal for Archetypal Psychology*, Volume 2, 1989, p. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Cornelius states that Kingsley’s *The Dark Places of Wisdom* (The Golden Sufi Center, Inverness, California, 1999) “directly inspired the understanding concerning decumbitures, under charged ‘synchronistic conditions’.” See *MOA*, (new edition only) p. 143, footnote 24.

## Part IV: Astrology Whither?

### The Imaginal Cosmos and the Ethics of Divination

In a stunning lecture Cornelius delivered on the four hundredth anniversary of William Lilly's birth, he invoked the enchanted world of this 17<sup>th</sup> century astrologer and told his gathered audience of contemporary astrologers that they needed to re-enchant the world of their clients "not by plunging into junky occultism" but by crossing bridges of the imagination. Invoking Henry Corbin's translation of an Arabic term *Na-kojd-Abad* as the *mundus imaginalis*, or "the country of nowhere", Cornelius invited his fellow astrologers to spend more time in this strange, yet familiar place:

The nowhere is the world of imagination...It is the heart-mind that sees the mundus imaginalis. This is where we arrive at a very significant Sufi interpretation of the work of symbolism, including astrology. All symbolic working 'materializes the spiritual and spiritualizes the material'...this is where the mystery of astrology lies.<sup>124</sup>

This mystery is not going to be unlocked by the high priests of science. During the lecture, Cornelius made clear that this Sufi phrase is one expression of a tradition stretching back to Pythagoras and the mystery schools, through Plato and the Neo-Platonists and forward to the Gnostic, hermetic and magical traditions. This essentially mystical tradition may have reached its peak during the Renaissance when it suffused the whole magical-religious understanding "with astrology (as) its jewel and center."<sup>125</sup> This is the tradition of William Lilly and the Renaissance philosopher and astrologer Marsilio Ficino. Indeed, in this lecture and in the final chapter of *Moment*, Cornelius has reverted to a sensibility more akin to Ficino, who in his own time embraced astrology's beautiful symbolism and yet penned his "Disputations against the Judgment of Astrologers". Like a latter day Ficino, Cornelius is moved by astrology's symbolic showings and yet, as his book so convincingly demonstrates, he also sadly acknowledges the weakness of much modern astrology. And like Ficino, Cornelius understands "the craft-work with horoscopes (as) practical mysticism and high ritual in one".<sup>126</sup> Though he acknowledges, "we are under the spell of a different cosmology" than Ficino, like his predecessor, Cornelius believes the daemons provide essential guidance through this imaginal cosmos, since it is "they who communicate in signs and showings, including the showings of astrology".<sup>127</sup>

Given the status of daemons as half way between men and God (or the gods, as the pagan view of astrology would have it), we might well ask ourselves whether such communications provide the astrologer with ethical guidance. This is an important question, since divinatory astrologers, like their ancient predecessors, endeavor with the client's aid to "negotiate" destiny. Unlike conventional astrologers, who appear to hand down "the wisdom of the stars", divinatory astrologers are seeking some sign that speaks to them and hopefully the client. Because, as we have seen, the astrologer him or herself may be implicated in the process (and indeed, often is) their concern with the ethical implications of their judgments is not some lingering afterthought, but becomes an integral part of the work of divination. In the final and newly added chapter to the revised edition of *Moment*, entitled "Astrology as

<sup>124</sup> "Angelic Consorts: William Lilly & The Mundus Imaginalis" extracted from a talk given at the Lilly 400 Astrologer's Feast on May 11, 2002 and printed in the *Company of Astrologers, Bulletin* No. 40, June 11, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Geoffrey Cornelius, "Astrology's Hidden Light: Reflections on Marsilio Ficino's De Sole" published in *Sphinx 6: Journal for Archetypal Psychology and the Arts*, 1994, p. 122.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*. p. 121

a Gift of the Soul”, Cornelius indicates how reintroducing the notion of craft as ritual provides an approach to such work. Here, the ritual concerns powerful ethical judgments, which must be faced by the practicing astrologer. The astrologer must take on board “the essentially human question of nature and purpose of mind with which symbolic reality is known.”<sup>128</sup>

The addition of this new chapter emphasizes the profoundly ethical leitmotif of this book. This is something that was less apparent in the first edition of *Moment* and its inclusion strengthens his argument, since it shows the uniqueness of the divinatory perspective. In essence, the symbols of astrology are ultimately to be understood as ethical symbols. From this perception, it follows that the first decision of the astrologer is whether the situation calls for any horoscopic judgment to be made at all. This ethical decision to judge or withhold judgment lies at the heart of divinatory astrology. It is endorsed by the aphorism: *A te & a scientia*, “By you and by the science”<sup>129</sup>. For Cornelius, this aphorism becomes a vehicle for reconnecting astrology to its divinatory roots, by bridging the philosophical divide between the “subjective” judgments of the astrologer and the “objective” methods of their art/science. Throughout *Moment*, one of Cornelius’ central concerns has been to examine what he perceives as the frequently misleading distinction in Western philosophy between the subjective and objective worlds. His desire to unite the subjective and objective realms through astrological divination clearly demonstrates his affinity for a practice style rooted in the philosophy of the *I Ching* and the precepts of Taoism. His critique of Ptolemaic astrology ultimately hinges on his desire to unhook astrology from the materialistic assumptions, which since at least Ptolemy, but especially since the 17<sup>th</sup> century have defined the limitations of the scientific mentality. This same mentality has shackled the imaginations of astrologers as well and contributes to some touchy ethical practices. In a “scientific” Ptolemaic astrology of *causes*, the astrologer is limited in the inferences he can make by *a scientia* or the accumulated knowledge of the “science” of astrology. By extension, any astrological judgments made under such deterministic pretenses pose a heavy ethical burden for the astrologer, because they leave the role of the client in a very diminished state.

However, concerned as he is with exploring the phenomenology of an astrology of *signs*, Cornelius is inspired by the Renaissance philosopher and astrologer Giovanni Pontano<sup>130</sup>, whose reading of this aphorism places the emphasis on the *a te* or the innate capacities of the astrologer. In this reading, which for Cornelius concerns the relationship between science and intuition, Pontano directly underscores the role the astrologer plays in the act of making an interpretation. Thus, the ultimate mystery of astrology concerns that fundamental process where the lead of astrological *scientia* is alchemically transformed in the alembic of the astrologer’s soul. The ethical dimensions of any astrological interpretation are part and parcel of that intuitive process. That very act of interpretation, which requires an active and spontaneous use of the imagination, enables the astrologer to fuse the objective and subjective realms of astrological theory and practice. Thus, the *a te*

<sup>128</sup> *MOA*, (new edition only), pp. 304-5.

<sup>129</sup> *MOA*, (new edition only) p. 303.

<sup>130</sup> Cornelius finds significance in Pontano’s discussion of the *A te & a scientia* aphorism involving the relation between science and intuition, which he thinks mirrors his own distinction between speculative and realised interpretations. Pontano, a contemporary and friend of astrology’s great Renaissance critic Pico della Mirandola, embraced a view of astrology analogous to Cornelius, in that he rejects astral determinism and leaves the way open for the initiative of the individual. According to a modern authority, “Pontano thought of a virtuous man as one who knew how to ascertain a reasonable proportion between the disposition that the stars had given him and the means of modifying this disposition.” See Don Allen Cameron’s *The Star Crossed Renaissance: The Quarrel about Astrology and Its Influence in England*, (Octagon Books, New York, 1966) pp. 36-46 for an extended discussion of Pontano’s attitudes towards astrology. The quoted passage is found on page 40.

aphorism, correctly understood, expresses a fundamental attitude of the divinatory perspective, which entails the astrologer taking responsibility for their judgments. Like Lilly before him, who instructed his readers to “form thy minde according to the image of Divinity”<sup>131</sup>, Cornelius lets us know that the practice of astrology ultimately entails “this intimate genius, natural to us and closest to our innermost intuition, (which) is at the same time *divinely moved and prompted*.”<sup>132</sup> (Italics mine)

### Loosening The Shackles of Determinism?

The question remains: do most contemporary astrologers really wish to be unchained from the “Machine of Destiny”? Cornelius’ fundamental reinterpretation of astrological theory and practice is a difficult meal to digest, because unlike other 20<sup>th</sup> century astrological “innovations” (think harmonics, midpoints, psychological astrology, etc.) which appear to enhance the authority and prestige of the practitioner, the divinatory approach invites the astrologer to accept a much less exalted role in their interactions with their clients. Gone is the false empiricism, in which the astrologer can assure their client that they have seen this difficult transit, birth pattern or unlucky combination hundreds of times before and can therefore render advice with confidence. In its place, they are left with the “unique context” and hopefully a symbol, which “rings true” and has deep emotional resonance for the client. This is not a change most astrologers will readily make. Given their insecure perch in modern culture, most astrologers ape the practices of the psychologist or the physician and view themselves as part of the helping professions, whose advice is based on an empirical tradition. Indeed, the power of psychological astrology, the most pervasive of all contemporary models, is that as an explanatory metaphor, it borrows the prestige of these apparently cognate fields. The current rush to make astrology respectable through exams, certifications and diplomas, (with the attendant letters after one’s name!) attests to this desire to join the mainstream. While it may make business sense, it does not fool our critics, who still can detect the strong odor of scientific heresy.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle Cornelius’ book will continue to encounter in attempting to change the mindset and the practice habits of most astrologers is the grip that phony empiricism and its faithful companion scientism has on the modern imagination, including the imaginations of astrologers. In Lilly’s day, astrology’s greatest opponents were theologians and churchmen, since it was they who defined the truth claims for their society and also felt most threatened by the competing claims of the astrologer. In our day, the guardians of the temple are the various scientists, intellectuals and technicians of the spirit, whose opinions hold sway over much of the public, again including astrologers. As a result, far too many practitioners still share the view of this confident colleague:

Because astrology has such a long recorded history, it is very reassuring that we can confidently tell any skeptic or client that every statement we make has the backing of empirical research, whether its findings were published BC or 2002. We know that this is so, and we can well afford to be quite dogmatic about it: our astrological house is built on rock with extremely solid walls, as well as foundations.<sup>133</sup>

Well, take that, Geoffrey Cornelius! Apparently, this astrologer and many like her, have no

<sup>131</sup> *Christian Astrology*, (Regulus, 1985) “To the Student in Astrology”, page B in the introductory material.

<sup>132</sup> *MOA*, (2003 only) p 323.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted from Patrick Curry and Roy Willis’ new book *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, Berg Press, Oxford, 2004.

time to trouble themselves with demoralizing arguments over astrology's status as a science. They accept its broad tenets as sound in principle and useful in practice. In any event, their clients are seeking assurance at least as much as meaning, perhaps more so. Thus the subtle arguments in this profound book will, I believe continue to fall on many deaf ears in the astrological community. The typical response of many astrologers to any criticism (even coming from someone as thoughtful and sympathetic as Cornelius) usually amounts to the confident assertion that their astrology works! And perhaps for them and their clients it does.<sup>134</sup>

### Repositioning Astrology

In their recent wide ranging and thought-provoking book, *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, Patrick Curry and Roy Willis embrace divinatory astrology as perhaps the only defensible practice model, which has come unscathed through the past forty years of largely negative research findings on astrological effects. They view the conflict between astrology and modern science as not winnable for the simple reason that the rules of engagement and the definitions of truth are set by the guardians of the scientific mainstream. But this does not dishearten them, because they value astrology not for its objective truth (indeed, they question whether such a thing even exists), but for its capacity to re-enchant the world. As Curry reminds us, it was nearly a century ago that the sociologist Max Weber perceived how the increasing rationalization of everyday life has led to our current perception of the world as a place of disenchantment. By excusing itself from this longstanding squabble over astrology's status as a science, the adherents of divinatory astrology are attempting to reclaim something which has been largely lost to modern culture: a sense of enchantment. Further, Curry argues that astrology and other divinatory arts represent a type of knowing that has gone largely unrecognized in Western thought. To appreciate the unique contributions of the astrological tradition, Curry posits *metis*, or cunning wisdom, as a type of knowing to be laid alongside of the Socratic *episteme*, with its search for theoretical knowledge of abstract universals, and Aristotle's *phronesis*, that is the practical intelligence as manifested in a skill or craft. For Curry, the metic truths of astrology are multiple, perspectival, particular, and active.<sup>135</sup> This description of *metis* converges on Cornelius' description of astrology as arising out of specific or particular contexts, involving multiple perspectives or "takes" and requiring the active participation of both the astrologer and the client to enable the appropriate symbol to arise. This reclamation of the unique experience from the universalistic clutches of science, religion or Ptolemaic astrology is fundamental to the divinatory enterprise.

It is highly unlikely that such intellectual glosses as those provided by Curry or Willis or this writer will prove very influential in the war of ideas taking place within the world of astrology at this time. This war is being waged by a very small number of astrologers, most of whom appear to be involved in astrology's reintroduction into academia. Even Cornelius seems to wonder whether astrology can truly find a place within the academy, other than as a cultural curiosity, which requires other disciplines to explain its very continued existence.<sup>136</sup> Like other great reformers of astrology, his ideas will probably not take hold for several generations, if at all.

<sup>134</sup> Garry Phillipson made the astute observation that "When (working astrologers) start exploring the non-rational, divinatory approach, it is likely they will lose their confidence and get worse at astrology (before, hopefully, getting better eventually). Personal communication to the author, June 10, 2004.

<sup>135</sup> Willis and Curry, op. cit. See Chapter 8 "Science and Astrology" for Curry's description of the types of knowing.

<sup>136</sup> See his essay "Verity and the Question of Primary and Secondary Scholarship in Astrology", *Astrology and the Academy: Papers from the Inaugural Conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13-14 June 2003*, Cinnabar Books, Bristol, 2004, pp. 103-113.

But there are a few encouraging signs which could ensure a better reception for his book this time around. For starters, there appears to be greater philosophical sophistication and historical awareness within the astrological community than there was a generation ago. Perhaps for this reason, fewer astrologers seem as affected by the negative research findings as they were in the late 1970's and 80's. Whether cause or effect, this seems to have led to a decrease in enthusiasm for research among astrologers in the past ten years and few of the current astrological journals make any attempt to keep up with the latest research. A more indirect form of evidence for this new attitude may be seen by the relatively positive reception which Garry Phillipson's *Astrology in the Year Zero* received, despite its recap of astrology's dreary drubbing at the hands of scientific researchers. While there were some dissenters (notably Dennis Elwell),<sup>137</sup> judging from the responses found on Phillipson's website, most astrologers seemed not to care. Thus, Cornelius' survey of how "astrology falls down" should not be met with such deafening silence.

There are other heartening signs as well: astrology's reintroduction into the academy, while still quite tiny and tentative, is marked (at least in the UK) by the fact that it makes its home among the ideas of philosophers, religious thinkers, cultural historians and sociologists, not amidst the chilly empiricism of the sciences. Indeed, Curry's own work suggests (as *Moment* suggested ten years ago and does so again now), that astrologers should not waste their time chasing such universalistic claims. In my reading, the most fundamental question posed by the republication of this book is whether the practice of astrology continues to serve some meaningful purpose in our modern culture, dominated as we are by the so called "objective" judgments of our scientific experts. Almost exactly one hundred years ago, Max Weber gave a telling and oft quoted assessment of this scientific elite, which still applies today: "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."<sup>138</sup> Spirit and heart are exactly the attributes, which Cornelius is hoping to reintroduce into modern practice. One thing *The Moment of Astrology* has made clear is that the moment of Ptolemaic astrology has come and gone. It is time for a new and greater revelation to guide the future of astrology. As to whether most astrologers can also be induced to join up remains to be seen, but this revised edition of a true astrological classic provides not only wise and subtle arguments, but even better, powerful inspiration for reclaiming astrology's role as a source of wisdom.

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<sup>137</sup> See the Website for *Astrology in the Year Zero*, [www.astrozero.co.uk/astroscience/elres.htm](http://www.astrozero.co.uk/astroscience/elres.htm) for Elwell's contributions.

<sup>138</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958, (originally published in 1904), p. 182