

The Perils of Erasing Astrology from the Past

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Astrology is perhaps the most detested topic of the modern scientific age. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that various kinds of astrology played significant social roles in most past civilizations and their cultures. There is no historical argument at all regarding the fact that the roots of modern astrology are found in very ancient Egypt, India, China, and Arabia, and among the ancient Mediterranean civilizations of Babylon, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Palestine, and so forth. It is also generally agreed that few ancient rulers took many steps without consulting astrologers, although they are considered silly by moderns for having done so. It is also known that in most of those very ancient and less ancient societies, astrology was considered a state function largely held in the hands of state-supported priesthoods.

The social, political, and religious influence of astrology can be traced forward in time, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and into early modern times. For example, in *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England*, the scholar Patrick Curry traces the fortunes and misfortunes of astrology in early modern England from about 1642 to about 1835. This scholarly text clearly establishes that astrology was at least an often vital influence among the nobility and intellectuals responsible for shaping cultural governmental policies.

This "vital influence" dates backward in time into dynastic Egypt, India, China, and Arabia - presumably having even earlier prehistoric roots. In the case of Egypt, for example, elements of astrological practice are evident in the early dynastic period, approximately 3000 B.C. In this sense, then, astrology has at least a 5000-year known history of strategic influence which endured, in various forms and intensity, until about 1830 A.D. Of all social and cultural phenomena, then, astrology in some form has been consistently and sometimes prominently present throughout human history.

The historical presence of astrology is seldom argued. What is argued, though, is whether historical and archeological attention should be paid to it. Both history and archeology, as we take them in their modern sense, are scientific

processes - or, in any event, are not ascientific ones. As such, the two disciplines, whose goals are to reveal the past, however near or distant, are subject not only to scientific methodologies, but to scientific overviews and the "realities," concepts, preconceptions upon which those overviews are constructed.

It is abundantly clear that modern science rejected astrology, and, in fact, many scientists evinced pride in so doing. The ostensible cultural reasons for the rejection are a complex tale-in-itself, but the general scientific justification held that the planets were too far away from Earth to have any virtual effect upon its geological, biological or human psychological phenomena. In this sense, then, astrology was ascientific and not deemed either a credible or an appropriate topic for scientific study or analysis. It was stigmatized as such not only scientifically but socially as well.

Thus, when historians and archeologists attached their disciplines to science proper, the astrological stigmatization had to be observed, or at least danced around, in order to maintain scientific credibility and acceptance. The result is that the term "astrology" does at all figure in scientific, historical, or archeological frames of reference, or if so, then only in a pejorative sense.

The fall-out from this modern anti-astrological situation is that, in large measure, no scientist, historian, or archeologist has studied astrology, its mechanics, or its various stages of past historical and archeological development. In fact, the presence in history and in past cultures of astrology is bowdlerized from modern historical and archeological perspectives and applied anachronistically into the past.

Since many past cultures indeed contained significant astrological socializing cores, it is questionable whether contemporary historians or archeologists working to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible can really do so by bowdlerizing astrology from it. "Bleeping" astrology out of history and archeology serves no valid purpose in either discipline whose mutual interacting goals are to study the past as completely as possible.

And it has to be taken for granted that modern historians and archeologists who know nothing of astrology probably are not capable of even recognizing the astrological elements in the past cultures they select for study. Such historians and archeologists need not themselves believe in astrology; but many of the past societies they select for study did carry various astrological beliefs within them. And how these latter are to be correctly interpreted or identified by the former, if the former possess no astrological database, is a matter of some humorous interest.

Astrology and Astronomy

One significant and telling clue exists regarding the utter importance of astrology to the past. Furthermore, it is one upon which all scientists, historians, archeologists, and astrologers agree. Prior to the middle modern age (beginning circa 1845), nothing in previous human history indicates that any division existed between astronomy and what we call astrology. It is fair to say, though, that the astrological portion of astronomy had its philosophical detractors in antiquity. But a clinical inspection of the "complaints" of these detractors shows that they inveighed more against the fraudulent-divinatory use of astronomy than astronomy/astrology per se.

The beginning of the formal cultural-scientific separation of astrology from astronomy is difficult to date, but it probably began during the Renaissance when Count Pico de Mirandola (1463-94) argued pervasively against the former and an anti-astrological cult formed as a result. The completed separation occurred sometime after the death of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), one of the greatest scientist-astronomers of his age, and an "astrologer." As the scholar Patrick Curry shows, astrology-cum-astronomy remained a vital intellectual force in early modern England until after about 1830.

The term astrology itself is of rather recent vintage when compared to the whole of "astrological" history. A number of linguistic contributions are involved that makes the origin of the term difficult to identify and there is no easy way to sort out the difficulties. But the complexities are eased somewhat if we bear in mind that what we call "astronomy" and "astrology" were considered one and the same thing up until at least the late Renaissance, when a few individuals began to define between the study of the planets and stars per se (astronomy) and the study of their effects on Earth (astrology).

Linguistic evidence shows that, although the Romans considered astronomy and astrology as synonymous, they did discriminate between *astronomia*, which took on a scientific sense, and *astrologia*, which took on a "star-divinatory" sense. But this division in no way carried the same cultural impact as our present use of the two terms does. The acquisition into English of "astronomy" derives from the Old European *astronomia*, an obvious carry-over from the Latin. *Astrologia* was subsequently reintroduced (it is thought) as referring to the practical application of *astronomia* to mundane affairs and thus gradually limited during the eighteenth century to reputed influences of the stars unknown to science. It is worth noting that Shakespeare (1546-1616), the arch-innovator of the English language and neologisms, did not

utilize the term "astrology," and so it can definitely be stated that it was not in popular, intellectual, or even in cult use until sometime after his death.

The modern definitions of astrology and astronomy have separated the two in dramatic definitional ways. But the retrospective application of the modernist definitional differences backward into antiquity and prehistory is clearly an anachronistic exercise that mollifies contemporary anti-astrological sentiments - but which distorts our view of social configurations of past cultures. Many aspects of oral traditions, written remains and records, artifacts, and many ancient and prehistoric monuments cannot more completely be understood by sanitizing them of their astrological connotations. Why this is so now needs to be clearly established.

In his remarkable book, *The Case FOR Astrology*, the astrological archeologist John Anthony West, at length discussed two matters extremely important for historians and archeologists. He shows that all of the scientific objections to astrology have been refuted or answered not by astrologers, but by analogous work of scientists, cycles analysts, and other kinds of research. These refutations and answers, it should be noted, go unacknowledged behind the scientific anti-astrological sentiments that still prevail.

In any case, West clearly establishes the two fundamental premises of "astrology," and shows that these can be found complete in pre-dynastic Egypt and that this extremely early completeness suggests an even earlier origin of the two premises. All of astrology - prehistorical, historical, or contemporary - is based upon a simple two-part premise: 1. That correlations exist between celestial and terrestrial events; and 2. That correspondences exist between the position of the planets at birth and the human personality. To these two premises a third must be added: 3. That the correlations and correspondences manifest on a spectrum ranging from benefic to malefic, constructive to destructive, angelic to demonic, or, as often expressed in contemporary astrology, from negative to positive.

Now, it must be stated that belief in either the reality or correctness of these premises is not necessary to understanding how earlier cultures regarded them, or why they regarded them at all. As a famous Mayan archeologist recently noted, the Mayans did not design their societies for our approval or even with our understanding in mind, but rather within the scope of their own realities, whether these are silly, disgusting, laudatory, or alien to us.

The first premise given above also probably at least approximates what may have been meant in antiquity by astronomy (or celestial watching) - although no definition of astronomy has come down to us from antiquity or prehistory.

But the assumption that the ancients watched the celestial sphere and its activities as a "pure science" of and in itself is completely without any ascertainable foundation, and thus without historical or archeological merit save an anachronistic one. In fact, many celestial activities on-going and repeating in a variety of cyclic sequences do have correlations with terrestrial events, and so the earliest vestiges of celestial-sphere-watching most obviously had to do with practical matters - especially those of a forecasting type.

There is no functional definitional difference between "forecasting" and "divining," except possibly the methods used to arrive at either. Indeed, the calendar in daily use is not just a day-keeping mechanism, but a forecasting or divining tool that shows us when certain important Earth-cum-celestial events will occur - such as the two equinoxes and solstices that correlate with spring, summer, autumn, and winter, etc. Today, we hold that these correlations are merely astronomical in nature; but the imputing of meaning, for example, to the vernal equinox, which always corresponds to 0 degree of the zodiac sign of Aries, is astrology pure and simple, in that we say that the vernal equinox means the end of winter and the onset of spring.

Whether or not additional celestial phenomena correlate with terrestrial events (geophysical, biological, or human-psychological) is merely a matter of accumulating enough statistical and qualitative data about them in order to decide either way. The data, however, must be accumulated before the decision is taken. The only real basic difference between today's astronomers and astrologers is that the former do not accumulate data about celestial-terrestrial correlations, while the latter do - and have done since before 3000 B.C.

A novel way of thinking about the astronomer-astrologers of antiquity is that they were on a par with today's vividly scientific discipline comprised of cycles analysts. Cycles researchers, to their surprise, can now statistically show that a very large number of terrestrial phenomena are timed in keeping with (hence correlate with) certain celestial events - especially cycles of growth and decline, upheaval and calm, war and peace, and long arid and wet climatic shifts. Cycles researchers, then, are capable of imputing meaning correlations to celestial phenomena - and thus have become "astrologers" whether they like the appellation or not.

There is absolutely no reason at all to believe that the ancients were any less interested than contemporary people in the practical celestial-terrestrial matters reflected in our average desk-top calendar. It is we who have to

recover a broader range of celestial-terrestrial meaning-correlations via cycles and astrological research, largely and only because modern astronomers turned their attention to outer space per se, and avoided interacting with correlative celestial-terrestrial events. These are the territory of astrology, whether it is called astrology or not.

When we regard our desk-top calendars, we see them as twelve pages reflecting days, weeks, months, and the 365-day year. But behind this use of it, the calendar is based on the two equinoxes and solstices which divide the year into four equal 90 degree arcs of the zodiac. These four arcs refer to seasons, which are as important today as six millenia ago. And so it is the zodiac that we must examine, which is the centerpiece of all our calendrical aspirations and of astrology itself.

The Zodiac

Although most dictionaries attribute the origin of the term "zodiac" to the late Greek zodion or zodiakos, difficulties are apparent in trying to establish the phonetic language to which it must have belonged. Phonetically speaking, the origin of the term can only minimally be considered as having been Greek. In fact, since zodiacal representations are found preceding the rise of ancient Greek civilization in very early Egypt, as well as very early Babylon, Persia, India, China, and in prehistoric Ireland, England, France, and America, there is then no reason at all to assume that either the astrological concept represented or the term itself is exclusively of Greek origin.

But there is a further mystery, and a very profound one. Wherever zodiac iconography is found, no matter what age or culture is involved, it always means the same thing, and this beyond any question. the iconography refers precisely to 6 to 9 degrees on either side (above or below) of the ecliptic through which the "wandering stars" (the planets, including the Sun and Moon) wobbled their way along the celestial sphere in repeating circular cycles. In contemporary terms, the zodiac might be called the planetary highway, or beltway.

Over time, all zodiac iconography consisted of from six to twelve representative figures (gods) portrayed against certain constellations, but is otherwise always portrayed as circular and divided into at least four, or ten, but usually twelve sections. In most, but not all, cultures, it is further subdivided into 360 degrees. The starting point of the circular zodiac is always the spring equinox in the northern hemisphere which, from some lost date in antiquity, has always been referred to as 0 degrees Aries.

Here, the first principal confusion about astrology is encountered. The astrologically uninitiated tend to understand that the zodiac is comprised of the famous twelve constellation arcs whose names are incorporated into it. This is not the case at all. The twelve signs are obviously named after the twelve constellations that once coincided with these arcs - when 0 degrees of Aries was indeed also the beginning point of the vernal equinox. But, as many anti-astrological skeptics gleefully point out, the equinoxial beginning point has moved against the constellational background due to a long-term astronomical phenomenon called the Precession of the Equinoxial Point. This point slowly moves backward (over approximately 25,000 years) through the celestial constellations.

And so the actual astrological beginning point of the signs' influences is not derived from their background of stars and constellations, but from some conditions of momentum and gravitation within the Earth by virtue of its annual revolution around the Sun. Which is to say, that the constellations are not the zodiac, and that the zodiac is based not upon astronomical factors per se, but upon some consistencies having to do with seasonal changes on Earth.

The beginning, or starting point, of counting around the 360 degrees of the zodiacal beltway is always referred to as 0 degrees Aries, the beginning day of spring always known as the vernal equinox. The zodiac, then, is the "belt" of that part of the celestial sphere that encompasses the paths of all the planets (the "wandering stars" of the ancients) as they orbit the Sun in relation to the vernal equinox, and not in relation to the constellations. The center of the belt is the Sun's apparent orbit, called the "ecliptic" or the Sun's path, as it is seen geocentrically to move around the Earth (or the orbit of Earth as it would be seen heliocentrically from the Sun). The zodiac belt extends 9 degrees above (north) and beneath (south) of the ecliptic, since the planets in their orbits incline and decline that much as they pursue their orbits.

Since at least the time of Hipparchus (2nd century AD), the greatest of the ancient astronomers, this belt has been divided into twelve 30-degree arcs, or signs, measured from the vernal equinox, and which altogether total 360 degrees. Here arises another somewhat confusing matter that so far has never been explained. The apparent motion of the Sun around the zodiac is actually Earth's motion through it.

But the zodiac time-terms are based on where the Sun is "at" at the vernal equinox (0 degrees Aries), at the summer solstice (0 degrees Cancer), at the autumnal equinox (0 degrees Libra), and at the winter solstice (0 degrees Capricorn). In zodiac "time" terms, the circular zodiac is divided equally into

four 90-degree arcs as any circle would be, and is not apportioned according to the actual motion of the solar-Earth year.

The zodiac, then, is only secondarily based on the apparent daily motion of the Sun, and is principally "sensitive" to the great seasonal change-points that demark spring, summer, autumn, and winter. And, in fact, the great iconography or images of the signs of the zodiac are principally derived from the values and meanings of the four seasons, not from the apparent motion of the Sun against the celestial background. Clearly, then, the zodiac is a function of the Earth's inclination and gravitational motion relative to the Sun that also incorporates all the planets orbiting the Sun, and is not principally a function relative to the far-distant celestial constellations.

The Megaliths

Archeologists and investigators who specialize in researching megalithic monuments will already have realized that very many of them were constructed with special features to indicate the exact day of at least the vernal and autumnal equinoxes and the two solstices - which are also the four principal points of any zodiac. Such megalithic monuments are thus some kind of zodiacal-astrological ones, and not merely or only astronomical-calendrical calculation edifices.

That this is adamantly the case can be understood very easily. If these same edifices were utilized to take note of the solar astronomical year, then their functions would quickly be "off" by five or six days - a discrepancy that would surely have been understood by the megalithic engineers who contrived the astonishing feats of heaving the gigantic megalithic monuments into place.

In this sense, then, more meaning was attributed to the tilting of Earth on its axis than to the solar year that was five to six days longer by direct observation than as now. The enormous megalithic edifices, then, are zodiacal ones, and anything zodiacal implies some form of astrological awareness and purpose beyond merely counting the astronomical days it takes to complete the slightly longer solar year.

Furthermore, to my knowledge, all of the known megalithic edifices are ring-like in form and dimension, and many of them are divided into sections radiantly, as is clearly the case of Stonehenge and Mount Pleasant Henge. The circularized construction at Newgrange as well is so exactly oriented to the zodiacal change-points as to accurately reflect them to this very day.

The zodiac, in any form, is the centerpiece not of astronomy, but of some kind of astrology that imputes meaning, and not only measurement, to factors having to do with Earth's axis tilt and resulting seasonal change-points. To continue to refer to such structures as solar calendrical ones only is to deny the mathematics and resulting engineering that obviously were involved in their construction.

The fact that these enormous edifices were constructed with data-meaning, not just calendrical counting, in mind is evidenced by the scope and massiveness of some of the megalithic monuments, called such because they are monumental. Contrasted to these enormous 119 tilt could, with trial and error, be determined by the shadows of two monuments is the fact that Earth's maximum northern and southern sticks placed upward in the ground about ten to twenty feet apart. The two shadows would coincide northward or southward exactly on only two days of the year - the two equinoxes.

Why render into monumental stone constructions or into artificial mounds what could more easily be determined by sticks in the ground? Well, Earth undergoes enormous geo-electromagnetic shifts at the four points of the equinoxes, and these have meaning to biological and psychological life. Those who favor a Greek etymological origin for "zodiac" link it to the term zoon, which, if difficult of translation, was associated in ancient Greece with the idea of "life" or with "living beings." Indeed, the twelve different parts of the Greek zodiac pictured a series of beings which, like the Cherubim of Ezekiel, were held to "dwell" outside of time, with the limits of time being marked in the ancient cosmoconception by the Sphere of Saturn. Geoelectromagnetic forces are certainly "outside" of time, as it is experienced in the human life cycle, and it is the zodiac "time" which reflects some sort of celestial-terrestrial, geo-electromagnetic, correlation-knowledge, whereas solar chronological time alone can reflect nothing of the kind.

I may be speaking out of my hat, but it is feasible to assume that the massiveness of the megalithic constructions was somehow commensurate with the important or ultraimportant meanings implied by the massiveness. Megalithic edifices, such as Stonehenge, could not have been an easy undertaking; to say nothing of the Glastonbury zodiac. This particular zodiac consists of constructed mound-figures stretched over the Vale of Avalon in a great circle ten miles in diameter, the largest of the giant figures being five miles across. It portrays, in the correct order, the twelve signs of the zodiac, with a thirteenth lying outside of the circle, this being the "great dog of Langport," who guards the sacred abode of Annwn, just as Cerberus guarded the gates of Hades.

In ending, contemporary astrologers may be the first of the species that do not literally watch the heavens or the wandering stars moving in the zodiac beltway. Instead, myself included, we "watch" ephemerides and meanings printed in books, and even more recently, watch computer printouts of horoscopes and astro-statistics. Indeed, at many places on Earth today, the full splendor of the night skies is blotted out by artificial light and atmospheric pollution. All megalithic and ancient astronomical-astrological structures, wherever they are found, were built in such ways that the celestial sphere could be watched from them. There would be a great difference between "watching," for example, a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter occurring in an ephemeris, and watching one literally rising on the eastern horizon at night. The former "watching" involves only the mind-intellect, but the latter easily could inspire deeper and fuller sensorium prophetic, forecasting, or divinatory episodes that would clearly be of an inspired or "psychic" nature.