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The Proper Relationship of Astrology and Science

Parts I & II

The 1989 Carter Memorial Lecture

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Our grateful thanks to Robert Hand, and to the Astrological Association of Great Britain, for permission to post this talk on Cosmocritic.com.

Rob asked us to mention that this represents his thinking as it was a long time ago!

It’s possible to buy an audio recording of the entire talk from the Astrological Association:

found myself going through a serious crisis of belief, aided and abetted by Neptune transiting my Sun. If you think, by the way, Neptune inspires faith you should think again. What Neptune does is cause you to disbelieve in anything you previously believed in, even if it’s Neptunian. I celebrated this period, strangely enough, by writing *Planets in Transit*. When I tell people I wrote that book with Neptune transiting my Sun they think I channelled it. No, I didn’t. Just wrote it - and to prove it, I could write it again, although it would probably be a little different!

However, back to my crisis of belief about astrology. I ask myself how could so many men of supposed good will disagree so violently with something I found so self-evident? Let us assume for the moment that we are not dealing with out-and-out bigotry - not a safe assumption, to put it mildly. What is the problem? We even have critics who are more or less within the astrological community (who will remain nameless but individuals come to mind) who also have this problem. They are genuinely interested in astrology, but they can’t seem to see anything in it, and yet all of us have managed to find enough in it to dedicate various proportions of our lives, from considerable to total, to astrology. I took quite a few years to answer this question about the disagreement for myself.

The answer did not come from astrology, and it did not come from science. It came from metaphysics - a very loaded word which I will attempt to define further on. Usually when one introduces the word metaphysics all attempts to reason go out of the window. The metaphysics I refer to concerns the nature of reality systems.

**Metaphysics and Reality Systems - Part 1**

It is popularly assumed that there is one and only one reality. This depends on how one defines the word 'reality'. In my own usage of language I have come to two distinct terms which I consider to be quite different in significance, 'reality' and 'truth'. The simplest definition of 'truth' I’ve ever heard is that truth is what is so. Reality is a game-plan or set of rules by which one interacts with what’s so, and there is an almost infinite number of possible reality systems.

I don’t know how many of you saw "The Day the Universe Changed" series on television? It was a BBC series that was also broadcast in the States on public television. It was a history of science series, and the last one was quite remarkable. Whereas through the previous parts of the series one had the feeling one was dealing with another hyper-rationalist, in the last programme he demonstrated the relativity of reality systems by showing that Tibetan Buddhism is at least as good a reality system as contemporary science. And this was not to praise either one. He just pointed out that reality systems are by their very nature arbitrary. I came to the same conclusion, but I had also come to another conclusion which is also implicit in major philosophical discoveries of the 20th century. Yes, there are discoveries in philosophy, philosophers do not merely go around in Robin Hood’s Barn doing the same thing over and over again. In this particular case the discovery was that reality systems tend to be tautological, that is, they frame the questions in such a way that they reinforce themselves and exclude evidence that points to their invalidity. Furthermore it is almost impossible from the point of view of one reality system to investigate another one intelligently. I will give examples of this in the course of this talk as these pertain to astrology.

Whatever you may feel about the matter yourself, just for the moment accept the idea that reality is essentially a set of rules, a somewhat arbitrary set of rules, and rules, themselves, actually affect the way in which one perceives existence.

To give you an example which I have personally encountered recently. I made a statement in a paper which was published in the AA Journal among other places, that astrology described the peculiar nature of individual points in time and space according to a symbolic language. A critic wrote me a letter criticising this statement. He clearly had no idea what I meant by symbolic language. He thought I was referring to symbolic logic, which I was not. What I was referring to was something like the Jungian system of archetypes. I will be giving away the identity of this person when I quote him as having said in print, "There are, damned lies, and symbols".

Now if one comes from a reality system in which symbolic statements are meaningless one is automatically rendered unable to encounter anything like astrology, because astrology poses that there is some kind of inherent symbolic system in nature. If one can’t accept the idea that there is something like a symbolic language - one doesn’t have to say it’s inherent - one’s reality system automatically makes it impossible to comprehend anything like astrology, or psychology, or art, or music, or poetry or about 90% of human existence! Astrology is not alone in being condemned by this peculiar point of view.

The real problem, however, is that when enough people adopt a reality system it becomes known as common sense, one of the most dangerous phrases in this or any other language. Usually it would be more accurate to describe it as common consensus. As the author of "The Day the Universe Changed" pointed out, it was common consensus a few hundred years ago in this and many other countries that there was such a thing as witchcraft (persons in league with the devil to perform black magic, not Wicca in the modern sense), and that witches should be burned in order to save their souls. He illustrated this rather graphically in the last programme, where the camera panned into a burning witch - obviously not a real burning witch, but close enough to make one want to leave the room! His point was very simply that this was common sense in its day.

"Common sense" becomes difficult with respect to people who criticise astrology in that when one raises the issue of astrology and investigating astrology one also has to raise the issue of metaphysical assumptions. One cannot proceed according to common sense. I do not refer to such common sense questions as "how could the planets possibly influence human life?" That is a relatively high level of common sense. The metaphysical aspects of that question are obvious. I refer to the way in which, for example, one frames questions that one would ask in doing astrological research. These are very, very concrete issues. One cannot frame a question until one has a metaphysical foundation for the framing of the question, and people with different reality systems have different metaphysical foundations. The two are locked together so completely that they are essentially two ways of stating the same thing.
the universe are in fact one, the fundamental thesis of mysticism.

Incidentally, I think 'mysticism' is a word that all scientists and conventional rationalists' thinkers should be barred from using, because what they mean is 'mysterious' or 'confused'. Mysticism has a rather specific meaning. The word refers to the doctrine that we and God or the universe, take your choice, are somehow at the fundamental root of things, one, and that the appearance of separateness is an illusion or misunderstanding. Any other use of the word is a misuse of the word. Now of course there are shades of meaning in there, as has been pointed out to me several times when I have presented this simple definition of mysticism. But the fundamental idea of the universe as some sort of underlying unity is characteristic of all mystical systems. The fact that something is perceived as fuzzy, confused, mysterious or weird does not make it mystical, and even though in ordinary language the words 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are often used in that manner. We do not, in fact, in our operational proceedings with astrology assume that subject and object are separate.

Another example—one that might be rather controversial—for those of you that are concerned with astrological research in the highly technical sense of the word: randomness. The idea of randomness is actually coming under fire from a more orthodox scientific community, or should I say a not so orthodox scientific community. The idea of randomness is actually quite debatable. From the point of view of divinatory metaphysics which includes things other than astrology—like Ching, Tarot, or whatever favourite technique one uses to get in touch with the underpinnings of things—everything is a sign of something else. There is nothing that is truly random. If one reads tea leaves, one assumes that the arrangement of the tea leaves at the bottom of the cup is a signature of something. One does not assume that it is a random meaningless pattern. I should point out here that when I say randomness, I imply meaninglessness. If it were assumed that there were meaning in randomness, what I am saying would not apply. Meaninglessness is usually assumed in the way that the word is used. Technically, randomness means something quite different. Technically randomness refers to a set of conditions that satisfies a very precisely defined set of mathematical conditions. I have no quarrel with that definition. But it is entirely tautological. If something fits an arbitrary but clearly defined set of criteria, then by God it fits that arbitrary set of criteria! How could one possibly disagree with that? But in ordinary language, and even ordinary language as used by scientists, randomness implies more than merely fulfilling a set of mathematical criteria. It also implies meaninglessness. The charge, by the way, has come from the new theories of chaos which have come to realise that randomness could be a highly complex order, which is something that any divinatory metaphysician would have to agree with immediately, although there would still be other points of disagreement.

**Primary and Secondary Qualities**

Continuing on the negative side of things for a moment, on what we don't need to learn from science, the conventional sciences—there is another area which is really deadly, and this refers to the very area one has quite consciously made metaphysical statement about primary and secondary
qualities. This issue came up very strongly at a research conference in Michigan. John Townley and Robert Schmitt raised this issue very strongly. I am going to introduce their argument here with some variations.

The exact date of this episode in the history of western philosophy I don’t personally know, but I do know, as Townley and Schmitt point out, that it occurred at the University of Paris some time in the Middle Ages. Logicians realized that there are two kinds of qualities, those that one could quantify and those that one couldn’t. Qualities that can be quantified are those like length, height, weight, distance, volume, velocity, acceleration. All of these can be represented by lines extended in space. These are called primary qualities. Qualities that one cannot quantify readily are things like happiness, sadness, colors, such as yellow and red, although we have since figured out how to quantify those, the sense of meaningfulness. These are called secondary qualities. These are all qualities that cannot be quantified. The decision made at the University of Paris was important because subsequent philosophers of science lost sight of one fundamental part of it in the intervening centuries. Originally they decided for practical purposes not to deal with secondary qualities because they could not figure out how to treat them. So they went ahead and dealt only with the primary ones.

Several hundred years later, in the scientific revolution, the distinction was reaffirmed, only this time a rather important change was made. In the University of Paris in the Middle Ages they knew there were such things as secondary qualities, and they were important. In the 17th and 18th centuries it was decided that secondary qualities were not only not usable, they were also unimportant. Any thing that could not be defined as quantity was considered trivial or worse, unreal. An interesting problem arises. This classifies 90% of human existence as trivial or unreal. However, this choice made it possible to create better industrial machinery, and ultimately bombs. I am only being somewhat facetious here.

My personal academic training is in the history of the philosophy of science. In this, as well as in many other historical disciplines, there is a considerable amount of literature on the Marxist school advocating the role of class interests in influencing the development of the sciences. While I am not personally an advocate of most Marxist interpretations of historical phenomena because they are far too simplistic, they do indicate one thing that is absolutely real and important for us to understand. Philosophies tend to reflect the practical concerns of the dominant class of an era, not the other way round. If the primary thing the ruling class is trying to do is building more artillery, then who gives a damn about secondary qualities?

The sciences, as presently constituted, do have a very strong utilitarian orientation. Now scientists as individuals often do not. Usually the best of the scientists do not. Science is essentially an aesthetic activity where individuals pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful. I have absolutely no quarrel with this idea whatsoever. The fact that they do it using purely quantitative criteria is simply because that is according to the game-plan that has been set down. But they would deny that what they are doing primarily is trying to create more effective cannons. However, the money that supports them comes from the people who want the more effective cannons, so there is a type of Darwinian process here, whereby that which is useful from the utilitarian point of view is supported at the expense of that which is merely abstract, theoretical or aesthetic, although at this point in time people are very nervous about dismissing the abstract and theoretical because some extremely abstract and theoretical principle led to the H bomb—successfully!

Nevertheless there does seem to be a general consensus in our culture among the powers that be that science of feeling, a science of secondary qualities, is neither possible nor terribly important. The rest of us would disagree. Psychology has been particularly a victim of this. When I say psychology I mean laboratory psychology, not depth psychology. One has to make a distinction between depth psychology, such as that of Freud, Jung, Adler, psychoanalysis and various modern offshoots of all of these. These are not laboratory psychologies. Their concerns are quite different. They treat of human affairs rather in a way resembling astrology, hence the fact that we find many of them studying astrology, and many astrologers studying depth psychology. But laboratory psychology, known somewhat derisively as rat-running, operates on an entirely quantitative model, and actually attempts to reduce, and reduce is the proper word here, all human beings’ behaviour to quantifiable phenomena. We even see this in psychological work that is quite close to home. Before I continue with this I want to make it very clear that I do not intend it as a criticism of some absolutely magnificent research. I refer, of course, to the work of the Gauquelin. What I want to call to your attention is the way the Gauquelin quantify personality traits. By counting words in biographies. They counted the number of times that words were used as well as the number of different ones that were used. This is an attempt to quantify a secondary quality. I repeat that this is not a criticism. I want to illustrate to you how far one may have to go to quantify traits arising from secondary qualities, traits that most of us would agree that however significant these results may be from a scientific point of view, the end result is not terribly useful in the consultation room. It may be eventually. I can see ways, in fact, that their work could become usable to the consultant, but at present it is not, except for the redefinition of angularity that really we should be paying attention to.

Quantity is perceived by objectivists as a way of eliminating the personal factor from observation. In another lecture I referred to this as a curious paradox because a discipline that has by and large rejected the existence of God, but has, as a necessary hypothesis, is trying to see the universe from a God’s eye point of view, and if you think about that for a moment, the laughter I hear in some parts of the room is completely appropriate. Either we have a being that can perceive the whole universe at once, or we throw out the idea that the universe can all be perceived at once. Is it truly meaningful to speak of a reality that exists independently of any observer? Any observer. Back in the old days when they had the God that was removed from all creation but nevertheless could look at it, it was probably meaningful to speak of the universe independent of any one observer, but now it’s seriously open to question. Of course, if you are familiar with the idea of 20th century quantum mechanics, you know that in quantum mechanics they have found that
this is impossible. You cannot take a God's eye view. This is the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. What is not clear is why this knowledge has not filtered down to the rest of the sciences.

Now, of course, we astlogers are a bit further along than even the followers of Heisenberg would want to go. Our position is that one cannot separate the observer from the observed because the two are a single continuous field. This is a major difference in point of view from the mainstream of science.

There is an image I would like to present to you while we are on the idea of quantification. Contemplate the following question. Don't answer it, just contemplate it and see how radical a change this would make in your thinking. How many Mars units is an Aries? Or how many Mars units is an Aries as opposed to a Mars rising? That's not how we ask questions, is it? We say "how do they behave?", a very different kind of thing. Now what the traditional scientist would like us to do is come up with something like a Mars unit and quantify the number of Mars units associated with each astrological condition of Mars. I might add, by the way, that when one writes a computer programme that synthesizes horoscopes, one actually does have to do this sort of thing, and it has very strange effects upon one's thinking about astrology.

I recently wrote a programme for some associates that quantifies relationships along 6 different dimensions with different scores for each type of aspect, each possible pair of planets, whether they were applying or separating, and the kind of angle. When I got up to the 6th dimension of the matrix I began to have problems. Keeping track of 6 dimensional matrices in a computer programme can be a little trying. I broke it down into simpler matrices! The programme basically takes two charts and prints out a long series of point scores along various parameters. Are the results meaningful? I don't know. All I gave them was a symbolic language about life, not an algebra, because there are no really rigorous rules for manipulating the symbols. There are flexible rules which we employ to considerable effect, but there are no rigorous ones.

I also hasten to add that there are enough rules restricting interpretation so that one can't say anything that one may wish about anything if astrology is done properly. This has escaped the attention of a number of astlogers. Recently I've been astounded by the literature on the symbolism of Chiron. The one thing that is clear from this literature is that Chiron rules everything! Now when there is a symbol that signifies everything it signifies nothing. It is unusable. Astrology does have an internal logic that prevents this kind of thing, but the logic must be employed rigorously. But I have seen on at least two occasions astlogers led up the primrose path by the sloppiness of their symbolic reasoning.

I'm sure you've all experienced, those of you who do any number of consultations, the horrible and demoralising phenomenon of giving a brilliant reading from the wrong birth data! It's one of those little classic embarrassment we don't like to talk about. I'm about to make an extraordinary statement. When I have encountered the wrong birth data I've usually smelled a rat. Quite recently I had a client who gave me a birth time as being something other in the morning Eastern Standard Time, Atlanta, Georgia, sometime in the 1930's. I could not get this chart to work. That is to say, when I tested it against the events in her life, nothing showed up. I went to bed very dissatisfied wondering if I was going to have to cancel the consultation, a right I reserve if the birth data do not correlate reasonably with events. Then in the middle of the night I woke up saying to myself that Atlanta was on Central Standard Time in the late 1930's. I checked with Shanks' atlas, recast the chart for Central Standard Time. By God, the chart worked! In fact one can tell a correct set of data from the incorrect sometimes! I think, nevertheless, we have
to agree that convincing readings of the wrong birth data are a real phenomenon.

Several years ago as Geoffrey Dean lectured in Michigan, he presented a horoscope allegedly of Petula Clarke. He proceeded to describe as the centrepiece of this chart a Mars-Neptune conjunction, describing it as selflessness, giving oneself to others — and other equally really glowing phrases. I sat there saying to myself that it might be possible to make Mars-Neptune work out this way, but ordinarily it works out somewhat less exalted. Something was wrong, I thought. Most of the people in the group appeared to accept his reasoning and his description, and after he clearly had them convinced he said it was the horoscope of Charles Manson who was born one year later on the same day. I sat smiling to myself because I had not been hooked. Nevertheless if he'd been a little more subtle with it I could have been taken in as well.

So, our language needs a good deal more internal rigour than it has at the moment. I wish I could tell you how to do this but I don't know! This is one of the challenges we face.

Dane Rydhya called astrology the algebra of life but I suggest it's much more like a taxonomy of life than an algebra. A taxonomy is a classification system. It classifies animals as reptiles or mammals, or humans as Aries or Taurus. If we could actually convert astrology into a symbolic algebra, into an algebra of quality, we would really have made a major advance in thought. Do not hold your breath waiting for this task to be accomplished, but the undertaking would be a worthy effort.
The Proper Relationship of Astrology and Science – Part II
The 1989 Carter Memorial Lecture
by Robert Hand

The Art of Framing Questions

Another issue is the art of framing questions. This is very closely related to the last, actually. One of the things that science is good at is framing questions in a way that is meaningful, that is to what it is trying to do. Some of the questions science frames may not be terribly meaningful to you or me, but in terms of the game-plane of what the scientist is doing they’re very meaningful. Most significantly, and at this point I will betray my own philosophical biases here, most significantly scientific statements are falsifiable. No scientific statement is ever completely correct, but by God one can tell if it’s wrong! I’ll give you an example. It is empirically justified to say that all crows are black, but you should know that the existence of one white crow makes that statement incorrect. The statement is highly falsifiable. No number of observations of crows will conclusively prove that all crows are black, but one white crow will clearly disprove it. This is what is meant by a highly falsifiable statement. If we could say, “All Aries are war-like and aggressive”, and we had some kind of test for measuring this, and it, in fact, turned out to be true as frequently as crows are black, that would be a highly falsifiable statement. But what we tend to make are statements such as, “Aries are fairly aggressive people, but there are lots of other factors to be taken into consideration as well.” Please don’t misunderstand me! I do not completely reject that statement, because unfortunately it is the kind of thing that we have to say at present. I accept the necessity of it. The horoscope must be read as a whole. One can’t take a piece out of it and attempt to make a one-to-one correlation. All I say is that we need to do a lot of work on the framing of questions and the making of statements. And science does show us a bit about how to do this.

Now at this point I will have to stick my neck out a mile, because I’m going to make a promise which I will fulfill if I live long enough. That is the one underlying premise, that I live long enough. Not that I’m dying, but if I were to suddenly disappear a year from now this promise will not be fulfilled. It is my intention to write a book between now and final termination, the probable title of which will be “The Metaphysical Foundations of Astrology”. The reason for this book is that in fact the metaphysical foundations of astrology are not well formulated. But it is time to talk a little more about metaphysics.

I have said that a reality system makes basic assumptions before it investigates anything. These are its metaphysics. What metaphysics is not is a series of highly theoretical theological statements. Now this is not to be interpreted as a condemnation or as a rejection, but, to take a concrete example, The Secret Doctrine by Madame Blavatsky is not a metaphysical work. It is a theological, religious, spiritual work. This is not criticism. It’s merely classification. Statements about the number of human root races there have been and which one we are or statements about discarnate masters are not metaphysics, which in no way
Swedenborg are everything aside for the decreas systems. We attempt astro logers, there are Christian W e every Vemon Clarke astrology has a symbol common is investigated to a number of suggests that they will show up. They will be radically different from ordinary people. This raises the metaphysical question. Conventional, common sense metaphysics always has things in two of positions. A or not A. This basic Aristotelian logic. Occult metaphysics suggests that there is +A, –A, and neither.

Now where are there some examples of this? Those of you that are familiar with the I Ching will undoubtedly be familiar with the moving lines, where the old Yang line turns into a Yin, and the old Yin line turns into a Yang. Anything that gets to an extreme can change to its opposite without going through the middle. The middle is somehow more different from the extremes than the extremes are from each other. Now if we frame our questions from the metaphysical point of view that opposites are different, and astrology may not, then one will come up with absolutely zero results. Metaphysics is not merely academic here. We have not clearly stated the metaphysical assumptions that are the basis of our reality. Now the reason why it will take me a long time to write this book is very simple. I don’t know what our metaphysical assumptions are either! All I have done is found a few examples of problematical metaphysical assumptions like the one above.

Let me give you another example which has caused all manner of confusion over years and that she was a very brilliant woman. I don’t agree with everything she says, but this is not germane. Similarly the writings of Swedenborg are not properly metaphysics. They are properly theology. We tend to confuse theology with metaphysics. Theologies make metaphysical assumptions, but they are not in themselves metaphysical system.

The theology of astrology depends on what astrologer one asks. There are Christian astrologers, Buddhist astrologers, Hindu astrologers, Hermetic astrologers and what I would call without any attempt to rigour, New Age astrologers. In the New Age astrology there is a whole new set of theological assumptions. But it is still not metaphysics.

Here is a truly metaphysical question: What are more different, exact opposites, or the opposites versus the middle and what precisely is the nature of the difference?

Here is a concrete example: many years ago there was the famous Vernon Clarke experiment. Vernon Clarke was a psychologist who gave to a number of astrologers paired horoscopes of gifted and mentally retarded children, and the astrologers were supposed to sort out which were which. I was in on one of the replications of the experiment and I realised there was a fundamental problem. I had never personally investigated the horoscopes of gifted or mentally retarded children, therefore I was not really qualified to make a statement. While astrology has a symbol system which suggests hypotheses about almost every aspect of reality, it is still necessary for an astrologer to be an expert in the particular aspect of reality being investigated. Both astrologers and astrological researchers, including debunkers, tend to forget this.) However the assumption here is that gifted children and mentally retarded children, being opposites, should be fundamentally different, and yet there are principles in other types of divination which suggest that what the opposite extremes of mental capacity have in common is being different from the norm, and that this is the thing that will show up. They will be radically different from ordinary people. This raises the metaphysical question. Conventional, common sense metaphysics always has things in two of positions: A or not A. This basic Aristotelian logic. Occult metaphysics suggests that there is +A, –A, and neither.

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questions that may not be valid questions. The problem is that we have such a poor understanding of what our metaphysical assumptions are that we can’t even recognize a valid or invalid question when we see it.

Now I’m very clear about one thing. Were I or anyone else to write this book, The Metaphysical Foundations of Astrology, others from all quarters of the community would probably disagree with us vigorously. That’s fine. I have no intention of making a definitive statement. All I want to do is get people to react, then maybe eventually we can make some kind of statement. Any statement that anyone makes will necessarily be the first of many, and will be broader questions. People are still defining the metaphysical foundations of science! Why would we do it in one try? Why should we even scratch the surface in one try? If I do this book I will do it with a sense of humility, because I know damned well that it will only be the first of many words. Actually it might be the last word on the subject if nobody else makes the effort to do it! However I would suggest that some kind of institutional research is necessary for us to develop the discipline of astrology.

I don’t believe that it is absolutely necessary for any one average counselling astrologer to have a finger on any of this, but for astrology as a whole it is necessary. I also believe that eventually the practicing astrologer will benefit enormously. If nothing else they won’t look like idiots on television if this effort is made.

Always question the assumptions people are asked to answer. Are they questions which are valid in the context of astrological thought? Here is another example. Again I do not intend an attack or criticism of the Gauquelins. One of Michel’s early questions was of correlations between Sun sign and profession. Now I know in popular astrology rags statement of such correlations like that are often made, but have you ever seen a serious astrology text book which indicated the Sun sign as the primary determinant of profession? And yet astrologers were very upset when there was no correlation! Why should there have been? We need to enunciate not only our metaphysics but also more straightforward principles such as the determination of profession from the horoscope.

We also need to do scientific research. Why? Not to prove astrology, but because only by experimenting with experimentation itself, can we find out how to experiment. When we do rigorous astrological research which for the moment fairly well conforms to the canons of orthodox science, what we are doing is experimenting with experimentation. We don’t in fact know how to frame experiments properly in astrology. There are basically two ways in which experimentation is done. One is an uncritical usage of conventional scientific methodology which is probably incorrect when it’s applied to astrology. The other is the application of no known method whatsoever, which is certainly not useful. We need to do scientific research as much to prove to ourselves that scientific methodology is useful in astrology as for any other reason. Obviously again it is the case that not everybody in the astrological community need be involved in this, and it is certain that not everybody will be involved. It is very clear that there will be a small group of aficionados who will spend their time doing experimental astrology, and when I say experimental I mean in a reasonably scientific, rigorous way.

The Need for a New Methodology

It is not at all clear from the history of the scientific revolution and subsequent historical periods that science can in fact do anything meaningful with the secondary qualities that make up most of human experience. I now make a statement that some people will probably take issue with, and I ask you to feel free to do so. I do not consider psychology to be a successful science. I do not consider any of the social sciences to be successful. Not in the sense that physics, chemistry and biology are successful. They have scored small successes within extremely limited game plans. But in terms of being socially useful they are not. However, a major point must be made here for any therapists that are in this room. I do not suggest that psychotherapy is useless, but I do suggest that it might be the therapist that make it effective more than the discipline. I don’t think that should be a worry, because effectiveness is effectiveness. Although that makes many people nervous because that means they have to frame a reality system of their own and stick to it without the support of a consensus. That’s called courage! It is not insane to live in one own reality system. It is only insane if one doesn’t know that it is a personal reality system and one can’t relate other systems. So one is very effective at doing what one does and there is validation for what one does, I would not question the metaphysical foundations too closely if I were you. Do not look a gift horse in the mouth!

Lee Lehman and I have been discussing now for some time a conference on astrological meta-research. As she has pointed out, many critics including those of our friend and associate Geoffrey Dean, are in many respects are quite valid. We do not in fact formulate any alternative to conventional scientific investigation. The reason is very simple. Most of us aren’t scientists. Most of us aren’t philosophers. Most of use are people who apply a craft at a rather practical level. This is not a criticism of that. Many of the world’s greatest disciplines have emerged out of practical crafts. Many of the world’s most exalted theories have dealt with no practical craft whatsoever, and are useless as a result. So this is not a criticism of the practical craftsman astrologer, but we must do this work, for our own sakes, not to prove astrology, but to improve astrology. That is the key, improve, not prove astrology. We must develop our own methodology of inquiry. It may be quite different from anything that’s gone before.

One of the reasons that I am annoyed by scientific criticism of astrology, particularly the debunking type, is that most of them have studied sciences as received bodies of knowledge, while it is true that there are people who expand the frontiers of physics and chemistry, it is also true that none of them are among the school of debunkers. If one looks at the debunkers astrology one finds a pathetic group of has-been scientists, if they are even in fact scientists! Many of these who signed the statement condemning astrology were Nobel Prize laureates, but they were not in fact debunkers. They just thought that it was a good idea at the time. The real debunkers, those who spearheaded the campaign, consisted of second echelon scientists, professors of philosophy, who are not scientists, pop science writers, who are not scientists, and stage magicians, who are not scientists. We find people
who have done nothing whatever to expand the frontiers of human awareness.

We have no body of received knowledge to expand the frontiers of our awareness except astrological tradition, which is powerful in many ways, but does not lead one to make systemic inquiries of the kind that need to be made. We have to create a new discipline from nothing. This is an horrendous task. I think we have already seen the beginnings of it, but these are very tentative beginnings indeed. Significant as the work of the Gauquelin and other scientists have been in astrology, and they are scientists in the true sense of the word, these are still only beginnings.

The Need to Study Our History

Now, as I pointed out to Dr. Lehman in our discussion on astrological meta-research, there is also another problem. Our historical awareness is dismal! How many times have you read articles where somebody has re-invented a wheel? How many people have encountered Solstice points unaware that they have been in use for the last 2000 years. There are many other examples I could give you. Historical awareness in astrology is so bad that astrologers regularly re-invent techniques that were used thousands of years ago and were not rejected. They were forgotten. Not even totally forgotten. They just were not in any works the astrology had read. That's actually not important. What is important is the following. Let us assume, as I think we all should, that astrology arose out of the experience of a certain kind of knowledge that had been in Mesopotamian investigation. There were the ones who invented astrology – not as we know it, but the idea of it. They noticed something, and they tried to codify it as best they could in terms of their own reality system some 3,000 years ago. Then the Greeks took this body of knowledge and re-interpreted it in terms of their reality systems. In fact what the Greeks did was a re-interpretation in terms of Greek reality of an experience had by Mesopotamians. And then the Romans took it and did a Roman re-interpretation of the Greek re-interpretation of the Mesopotamian experience – I think you can see what's going on here. We are several orders removed from the original experience. What were the Babylonians experiencing? Now we have experiences in modern astrology. I do not question that, but astrology is not merely a received body of lore. We have all, for example, experienced Mars transits. Some of the really lucky ones in the room are experiencing Saturn conjunct Neptune on something important in their charts this year. You have my complete sympathy and understanding.

Nevertheless we tend to view astrology through a Renaissance filter of a Medieval filter of an Arabic filter of a Roman filter of a Greek filter of a Mesopotamian experience. What we need to do is to reconstruct their experience historically. We need to the best of our ability, with the best that can be done through academic scholarship to find out exactly what they were doing, what they were feeling, what they were experiencing. We have to include all the people in between as well, because they did expand the experience. We need to do serious work on the history of astrology. All the history of astrology with a couple of recent exceptions has been written by its opponents. Except for purely factual information their information is worthless. They are basically studying the history of an "aberrant superstition", as it seems from their point of view. People who believe that what they are studying is an aberrant superstition tend not to be extremely good students. So we need to reconstruct our history and to experience the reconstruction as vividly as possible. This, by the way, should be the same as making systemic inquiries of the kind that need to be made. We need to create a new discipline from nothing. This is a humanistic research. There is such a thing, by the way. It also has its rules and its disciplines, and it is quite real.

Various Changes We Need to Make in Our Awareness

Now, I'm going to suggest something even more radical. This may sound quite stupid, but I submit that this is a problem. We need to accept astrology. Now that may seem strange to you because of course you accept astrology, right? Well, yes, you do when you are doing the horoscope, but do you when you are walking around in downtown London? When you're dealing with your solicitor or your banker, are you thinking astrologically? No. You're thinking like ordinary 20th century people. Now what I suggest is that if you actually thought completely astrologically at all times you would be a radically different sort of person from the one you are now. If you actually had applied the magical world-view that astrology implies to everything it would be quite a different situation. You would be far less likely to be taken in by a "scientist" asking stupid questions. You will recognize the questions as being stupid. The reason why you get taken in is that you live three-quarters of the way in their camp and only one-quarter hanging out in the weirdness known as astrology. I do not accuse you of duplicity. I'm doing the same thing – maybe a little less than you because I am getting very lucky. But I would like to suggest that most of us in fact are firmly planted in two camps. And as the gap between them is getting wider and wider eventually we are going to split down the middle. Or we will be forced to pick one of the camps!

Critics of anything are an interesting crew. To be a critic is safe because one can usually assume that any new idea or any new piece of art is probably bad. The reason? Most of it is! So one gets to be right automatically 90% of the time through no virtue of ones own. When we actually take the risk of seeing truth in a really bizarre reality system such as that implied by astrology then we take a lot of chances. It takes a great deal of courage, and to the degree to which we can do it we should applaud ourselves for being courageous. I mean that quite literally. Other people may regard us mad, but we should applaud ourselves for being courageous. Remember one is not mad unless one forgets the difference between ones own reality system and everybody else's. As long as we know there's a difference and can work with that, we are okay.

There's a little side trip I'd like to make here. I ran into a very humorous situation a couple of months ago in Michigan. The person involved will remain nameless because he asked to remain nameless, and I will respect that. Some of you may have heard the story from his own lips. A gentleman with considerable academic credentials in psychology (I believe that is his own field of study), has run into a curious problem. In his investigations of astrology he keeps getting positive results. It is damaging his credibility. He told me about the work he was doing which had him really upset. He decided to investigate something that was absolutely, clearly, totally untrue so that he could
come up with negative results. He picked Rupert Sheldrake's theory of formative causation which he found so personally offensive he could not believe there would be any positive results emerging from a study of it. So he constructed a test, the details of which I won't go into because that would be partly a give away of his identity, and because it's also irrelevant. He constructed a test to test the theory of formative causation and guess what? He got positive results. He has since asked that other people who are in a position to do so to replicate his work to see if their results confirmed his. He also took the precaution of not telling them what his results were. They were to have absolutely no idea what was going to happen. I think if they all get the same results, he's going to go public on this one and thereby truly destroy his credibility. This is a major problem in modern thought. This is what I will call the bigotry issue.

A Fundamental Issue

A fundamental issue which I have formulated a number of times but which I will formulate again tonight is that respectability comes from within. We will not be accepted by conforming to the standard canons of respectability. No new discipline has ever achieved status in this culture by first being accepted by the outside. The first thing a new discipline does is work on its internal structure. It creates its own canons of behaviour. It creates ways of proceeding. It also creates things like libraries (a little plug for the Urania trust). It creates institutions of learning of one sort or another. It creates an organisation of communication such as the journals we do in fact have but which are often not read, and often do not survive because nobody wants to buy them. It finds out about its metaphysics. It knows its own philosophy. (Although in practice in the sciences, it is not at all obvious that the typical working scientist understands either his own philosophical bases or metaphysical assumptions. But there are those in the scientific community who do.) It recognises a stupid question when it sees it.

We have to do all of this, and also while we're at it throw out the genuine frauds, of whom there are a number. I doubt that there are any frauds in this room. I can say that safely because most people who identify themselves as astrologers could at most be accused of being deluded, according to mainstream society, but are honest in their belief. But there are people who use astrology and tarot and other divinatory techniques to defraud. One of the most common rackets in the United States is people who will "lift curses" for you for a small fee. We need to police these people as much as we can, or at least distance ourselves from them.

We have to have respect for ourselves and this does not come from what I call the "bastard complex." The "bastard complex" arises whenever a person tries to achieve legitimacy by excelling or by doing things in a way that other people expect at the cost of inner authenticity. We do not need to be the way other people expect us to be. All we need to be is the way we think we should be.

Now when I say this, when I talk about libraries and journals as instruments of communication I also have to say two other things immediately. We are also a fairly off-beat kind of community. I'm sure you've noticed. A lot of the creativity in astrology comes from the free and easy nature of the discipline and we run the risk of destroying that in making it too academic. I hope we can achieve a balance because that balance has never been achieved by anyone else. Other disciplines are either totally crazy or Saturnine beyond belief. If we can be a little crazy and a little Saturnine then we have achieved something unique.

Final Thoughts – We Need to be True to Our Origins

Then there is the other matter which I want to conclude with. With all of this statement of our relationship to science there is something else that I believe we have to do. We have to accept the fact that we are a branch of magick — in the highest sense of the word. Magick has two definitions, both of which are applicable to astrology. The broad definition is that magick is the study of the aliveness inherent in the universe. The narrower definition is magick is the art of bringing about changes of consciousness in conformity with the will. In other words, it's a yoga. It's the West's only yoga in fact. We are a branch of that yoga. We must establish our roots in that while we are doing the rest of this. And if you are not thoroughly depressed at the magnitude of the task by now, you are a hopeless Pollyanna. Nevertheless, there is another way of looking at this. What a phenomenal challenge! You are not only the inheritors of an incredibly ancient discipline, you are also on the ground floor of a revolution, if we try to make it one, that is. This is a revolution which, in its broader implications could totally transform culture.

I've stated on many occasions, once in fact in a lecture that I gave here a few years ago, that astrology is a revolutionary science. The main reason I'm studying astrology is not to counsel people, although I respect that and do that. The main reason I study astrology is that in it's true the deadening world view of our culture, mechanist-materialism isn't true, and that's something the culture needs to hear. We aren't the only ones, but we are among those groups of people who could in fact, by our understanding of the universe save this civilisation. Don't let this go to your head, but it would not be a bad idea if you let it go to your heart.

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