

# Astrology

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## INTRODUCTION AND INFLUENCE

Approximately a billion people worldwide have some degree of faith in astrology. Science writer, engineer, and astrology critic Lawrence Jerome has written, “The twentieth century has seen a tremendous upswing in the fortunes of astrologers. Easily one quarter of the nearly four billion people living on the earth believe in and follow astrology to some extent.”<sup>1</sup>

In America, polls variously estimate the acceptance of astrology at between 20 million to 40 million people. A Gallup poll cited by the *National and International Religion Report* for July 4, 1988, estimated that ten percent of evangelical Christians believe in astrology. Clearly, astrology is not just a passing fad. In the United States alone, it grosses billions of dollars each year.

Not even many religions can claim to have the influence that astrology has. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* observes that astrology has “a sometimes extensive... influence in many civilizations both ancient and modern.”<sup>2</sup> Professor Franz Cumont, a leading authority on ancient astrology and curator of the Royal Museum of Antiquities at Brussels,<sup>3</sup> has stated that “up to modern times [astrology] has exercised over Asia and Europe a wider dominion than any religion has ever achieved... [and it has] exercised an endless influence on the creeds and ideas of the most diverse peoples....”<sup>4</sup>

In the United States, back in 1955, there was a revival of interest in astrology. At that time well-known occultist and philosopher Manly P. Hall bragged, “Astrology today has probably a greater number of advocates than ever before in its long and illustrious history.... Astrology and all its branches is sweeping over America in a wave of enthusiasm.”<sup>5</sup> In our own day, astrologers West and Toonder have concluded that astrology currently “enjoys a popularity unmatched since the decline of Rome.”<sup>6</sup> Astronomers Culver and Ianna refer to this modern interest as “the greatest resurgence in astrology” since the Renaissance.<sup>7</sup>

Bernard Gittelsohn, former public relations consultant representing the West German government, the European Common Market, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, is now a New Age human behavior researcher. Gittelsohn has calculated that the circulation of newspapers and magazines carrying astrological columns in the United States, Europe, Japan, and South America is over 700 million.<sup>8</sup> Concerning France and Germany he states: “In both... it is common for companies to have an astrologer and graphologist on staff, to be consulted in matters of hiring, firing, and promotions. I learned this first hand....”<sup>9</sup> A Cable News Network (CNN) report cited astrologers who made the incredible claim that “at least 300 of the Fortune 500 [companies] use astrologers in one way or another.”<sup>10</sup>

Even our days of the week are reminders of the influence of astrology:

- Monday = moon day
- Tuesday = Mars’ day (day of Tiw—the Norse Tyr—the Martian god of war)
- Wednesday = Mercury’s day (Woden’s day, the Norse Odin, god of the runes)
- Thursday = Jupiter’s day (Thor’s day, the Nordic Jupiter, god of Thunder)
- Friday = Venus’ day (Frigg’s day, wife of Odin, goddess of marriage)
- Saturday = Saturn’s day
- Sunday = sun day

An examination of the books in print on astrology reveals that this occult art of divination has been applied to literally hundreds of subjects, including pets, babies and children, gambling, cooking, medicine, criminology, dating and marriage, biochemistry, meditation, sex, politics, economics, psychology, feminism, and the Bible.<sup>11</sup> No wonder astrologers confidently assert “there is no area of human experience to which astrology cannot be applied.”<sup>12</sup> Many occult practices (e.g., numerology and tarot cards) have logical connections to astrology; many world religions and religious cults have their own brands of astrology (e.g., Hinduism and theosophy). Astrologers have also attempted to integrate many of the sciences (e.g., medicine and psychology) with their practice.<sup>13</sup>

In the field of education, astrology is offered for credit on some high school and college campuses.<sup>14</sup> In 1972, the spiritist, Rosicrucian, and astrologer, Mae Wilson-Ludlam, taught the first accredited high school astrology course.<sup>15</sup> But now astrology’s influence extends to classes taught at Emory University in Atlanta,<sup>16</sup> Stanford University,<sup>17</sup> the University of California Extension,<sup>18</sup> and to the granting of Ph.D.s in astrology from some universities, such as the University of Pittsburgh.<sup>19</sup>

In 1988, astrology made headlines when it was exposed as influencing the highest level of U.S. national government, the White House. According to Chief of Staff Donald Regan in *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*, “Virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made” was based upon the astrological advice of Joan Quigley, Mrs. Reagan’s astrologer.<sup>20</sup> The effect this had on people was mixed. But as noted astronomers Culver and Ianna in their text *Astrology: True or False—a Scientific Evaluation* observed: “Astrologers... have hailed the acceptance of astrology at the highest levels of government in one of the most powerful nations on earth as a confirmation of its legitimacy.”<sup>21</sup>

What is clear from all of this is that around the world astrology is widely influential today. It has had, and continues to have, a powerful impact in the lives and thinking of hundreds of millions of people.

## **BASIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

Despite its popularity, astrology is confusing to the average person because of its complexity and many unfamiliar words.

The *zodiac* is an imaginary “belt” of sky comprising the 12 astrological signs that the ancients illustrated by mythological figures, both human and animal. In other words, the mythological “signs” of the zodiac are overlaid upon the actual clusters, or constellations, of stars. And importantly, the “signs” exist irrespective of the actual positions of the constellations to which they are said to refer.

The *signs* are the 12 “signs of the zodiac,” also known as “sun signs.” Everyone is said to be born under one of these 12 signs (Pisces the fish, Leo the lion, Gemini the twins, Taurus the bull, and so on). Astrologers often group the signs according to psychological aspects or types.

The *houses* are the 12 divisions of the zodiac that are said to correspond symbolically to every area of life. The houses are also imaginary, and the planets are said to travel through the houses, influencing each area of life as they do.

The *horoscope* is a “map” of the heavens for the time of birth, or for any time thereafter. On the horoscope, or chart, an astrologer plots the positions of the planets, signs, and houses, and then from this “map,” after interpreting numerous complex rules, many of which vary greatly from one astrologer to another, the astrologer gives a “reading.”

Technically, a *delineation* is the name given to an astrological “reading.” This is an

interpretation resulting from the combination of two or more astrological principles. *Analysis* or *synthesis* is the “complete” interpretation of the whole chart.

There is also the concept of *rulership*. Astrologers believe that each planet “rules” a sign of the Zodiac. For example, Mercury rules, or influences, Gemini and Virgo; Venus is said to rule Taurus and Libra; Saturn Capricorn; Neptune Pisces; and so on. In addition, the signs and their ruling planets are related to certain houses.

Another important term is *aspect*, which refers to the angles between the planets as plotted on a horoscope chart. Certain angles are interpreted as “good” and other angles are “bad,” while still others are “neutral” and acquire their “goodness” or “badness” from other astrological indicators. For example, two planets angled at 90 degrees to each other (called a “square”) is considered a bad influence. However, two planets angled at 120 degrees to each other (called a “trine”) is considered a good influence.

In addition to “good” or “bad” angles, astrological delineations must also take into consideration whether or not the planets are “good” or “bad.” Saturn and Mars, for example, are considered “bad”; Venus and Jupiter, “good.” But what is the basis for these angles and planets being defined as “good” or “bad”? The astrologers don’t know; they simply accept these definitions as they have been handed down. Some astrologers say that these definitions result from thousands of years of observing human experience. Others no longer use the “good” or “bad” designations. They have substituted milder descriptions, such as “externalization” and “internalization,” “active” and “passive,” “hard” and “soft” “difficult” and “easy.” Still, there is no one final, authoritative tradition that has come down through history that all astrologers follow. This is why there are many conflicting astrological theories.<sup>22</sup>

*Transits* are another essential concept. By determining when a planet crosses, or transits, a specific point on the horoscope chart, the astrologer feels he can advise a client as to “favorable” or “unfavorable” conditions. Just as there are good and bad planets and angles, there are good and bad times for undertaking activities. This was why Hitler planned his war strategy by the stars and why other world leaders throughout history have leaned on advice of the stars.

It is evident from all of this that astrological interpretations are not only complicated but highly subjective. How does the astrologer know that Venus or a trine is good, that Mars or a square is bad? How does he know that the first house represents personality, the second house money, the third house communication, the eighth house death, the tenth house occupation? On what factual basis do astrologers make their assertions?

Some astrologers claim their definitions are derived from numerology, from the meanings allegedly inherent in numbers, which are then related to astrological theory. But if so, where is a factual basis for the numerological meanings? Why don’t all astrologers agree on this? There is also disagreement concerning how to divide the 12 houses. A given house for one astrologer may be a different house for another; therefore, entirely different influences would be suggested.<sup>23</sup>

Astrological interpretations also rest on other questionable foundations. An astrologer can choose from up to 30 different zodiacs,<sup>24</sup> 28 different signs,<sup>25</sup> and ten different house systems.<sup>26</sup>

Even after wading through all this, the astrologer’s headache has still not ended. He must choose whether to use the concepts of *nodes*, *triplicities*, and *quadruplicities*. The moon’s nodes relate to the intersection of the moon’s orbit with the apparent path of the sun among the stars (the ecliptic). These supposed “intersections” are said to exert certain influences. And there are also the influences from the nodes of the planets, the points at

which the orbits of the planets intersect the ecliptic. *Triplicities* refer to how the four astrological elements of fire, earth, air, and water each relate to three signs. For example, Libra, Gemini, and Aquarius are “air” signs. *Quadruplicities* refer to how the three astrological characteristics called “cardinal,” “fixed,” and “mutable” each relate to four signs. For example, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, and Taurus are “fixed” signs. And, as you may suspect by now, the concepts of nodes, triplicities, and quadruplicities, like all other astrological principles, have many diverse meanings and interpretations.

If all this is not enough mental gymnastics, the astrologer can also consider *dignities* and *debilities*; that is, how the influence of a planet is increased (dignity) or decreased (debility) by its placement on the chart. There are dozens of such conditions.<sup>27</sup> He also determines whether the signs are positive (active) or negative (passive). And each astrologer must pay special attention to a client’s moon sign, and to the rising, or ascending, sign.<sup>28</sup>

And after all this, the astrologer still must choose which method of prediction he will use. There are three common methods: 1) the previously mentioned transits, 2) primary directions, and 3) secondary progressions.<sup>29</sup> And, “No phase of astrology is subject to such differences of opinion” as the means of prediction.<sup>30</sup>

Even with all of this, consider that Noel Tyl wrote a 12-volume series, *The Principles and Practices of Astrology*, which is considered introductory material! No wonder there is no one final astrological tradition that all astrologers follow. It is understandable why there are so many conflicting astrological theories. Yet, millions of people still commit their lives to following these unproven assumptions.

#### Notes:

1. Lawrence E. Jerome, *Astrology Disproved*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1977, p. 1.
2. David Pingree, “Astrology,” *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. vol. 2 Macropaedia, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 219.
3. Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans*, New York: Dover, 1060, p. IX.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. XI, XIII.
5. Manly P. Hall, *The Story of Astrology*, Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1975, p. 9.
6. John Anthony West and Jan Gerhard Toonder, *The Case for Astrology*, Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 1.
7. R. B. Culver and P. A. Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome: A Scientific Evaluation of Astrology*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984 Rev., p. IX.
8. Bernard Gittelsohn, *Intangible Evidence*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987, p. 338.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
10. In Kurt Goedelman, “Seeking Guidance from the Stars of Heaven,” *Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter*, July-September 1988, p. 5. The figure is probably exaggerated, though a significant number of major corporations do use astrology in some fashion.
11. John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *Astrology: Do the Heavens Rule Our Destiny?* Eugene OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1989, pp. 19-20.
12. Derek and Julia Parker, *The Compleat [sic] Astrologer*, New York: Bantam, 1978, p. 60.
13. Robert Carl Jansky, *Astrology, Nutrition and Health*, Rockport, MA: Para Research, 1978; Omar V. Garrison, *Medical Astrology: How the Stars Influence Your Health*, New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973; C. Norman Shealy, *Occult Medicine Can Save Your Life*, New York: Bantam, 1977; Peter Damian, *The Twelve Healers of the Zodiac*:

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14. Carol Cocciardi ed., *The Psychic Yellow Pages*, Saratoga, CA: Out of the Sky, 1977, p. 130.
  15. American Federation of Astrologers, *50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AFA 1988 Convention Program*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1988, p. 198.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
  17. Carol Cocciardi, *The Psychic Yellow Pages*, p. 133.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
  19. Letter from Dr. Atlas Laster, Jr., September 23, 1988, containing a copy of a letter by astrologer Harry Darling M.D., approving his Ph.D. dissertation on astrology submitted to the University of Pittsburgh ("On the Psychology of Astrology: The Use of Genethliacal Astrology in Psychological Counseling," 1976).
  20. Donald T. Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988, p. 3; "Good Heavens!" *Time* magazine, May 16, 1988; "The President's Astrologers," *People Weekly*, May 23, 1988, and *Moody Monthly*, July-August, 1988, p. 10; Brooks Alexander, "My Stars!: Astrology in the White House," *Spiritual Counterfeits Project*, Berkeley, CA, 1988; John Weldon, "Astrology: An Inside Look," Part 1, *News & Views*, August 1988.
  21. Roger B. Culver and Philip A. Ianna, *Astrology: True or False, a Scientific Evaluation*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books (1988 update of their *The Gemini Syndrome*), p. IX.
  22. Ankerberg, Weldon, *Astrology*, pp. 56-60.
  23. Culver, Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome*, pp. 62-64.
  24. Cyril Fagan, *The Solunars Handbook*, Tucson, AZ: Clancy Publications, 1976, p. 25.
  25. Culver, Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome*, p. 87.
  26. Richard Nolle, *Interpreting Astrology: New Techniques and Perspectives*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1986, p. 64.
  27. Culver and Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome*, p. 8.
  28. Nicholas deVore, *Encyclopedia of Astrology*, Totowa, NJ: Littlefield Adams & Co., 1976, pp. 17, 338.
  29. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 121.