



Synchronicity, Science or Something Else? How Does Astrology Work?

Michelle Proctor, 22 January 2006

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On Sunday 22 January 2006, I gave a paper at the 16th FAA International Astrology Conference in Melbourne entitled 'Synchronicity, Science or Something Else? How Does Astrology Work?'. The presentation addressed astrology's general credibility problem and argued for more critical thinking by astrologers into the philosophy of astrology. My premise is that if astrology is supported by a coherent discourse about what astrology is and how it works, then it's possible that astrology's credibility ratings might improve and its benefits be better appreciated.

The paper offered different explanations of how astrology might work, including ideas from diverse fields such as magnetobiology and anthropology and from diverse thinkers such as Gauquelin and Jung. The findings of prominent astrology researchers and the theses of prominent astrology academics were also discussed.

Following are the overheads used in the presentation. A list of references is also provided.

Overhead 1 – Opinion of 5 researchers on critical thinking in astrology

The totality of research results to date involves hundreds of diverse studies, some positive but mostly negative... To overturn such a weight of negative evidence would require an avalanche of new studies where the results were consistently and dramatically positive... For twenty-five years we ... have ransacked the literature and tested the most promising claims, both as astrologers and scientists. We have gathered our own data and analysed it using the most powerful methods available... As far as we know nobody else has been as systematic or as thorough. The point is, if astrology could deliver the necessary goods then somewhere in all this it would be shining through. But we have found nothing that could not be explained by reasoning errors and other artifacts. Yes, a great way to spend twenty-five years!

From: *Astrology in the Year Zero* (2000), by Garry Phillipson, p. 153.

The five researchers are: Dr Geoffrey Dean, Arthur Mather, Professor Emeritus Dr Suitbert Ertel, Professor Ivan W Kelly, Rudolf Smit

Overhead 2 – Correlations found by Michel Gauquelin between planets & professions

Jupiter: actors, playwrights, politicians, military leaders, top executives, journalists

Saturn: scientists, physicians

Mars: physicians, military leaders, sports champions, top executives

Moon: writers, politicians

From: *Neo-astrology: A Copernican Revolution* (1991), by Michel Gauquelin, p. 25

Overhead 3 – Distinction by the 5 researchers between subjective & objective astrology

Subjective

In subjective astrology only subjective values matter. The correctness of a particular statement, or of a chart reading, or even of the chart itself, is of no direct concern. What matters are issues like: Does astrology give a direction and purpose to our life? Does it provide benefit, self-understanding, insight, empowerment...as religion, myth, poetry and fiction do? (p. 129)

Objective

In objective astrology our subjective values do not matter. That millions of people may feel empowered or dismayed by astrology is of no direct concern. What matters are issues like: ... Are Leos more Leonian than non-Leos? Which techniques are the most accurate? (p. 129)

It would no doubt be okay if clients wanted only sympathy or spiritual uplift, but if they wanted something factual then we are back to objective astrology and the dismal emerging picture...Astrology seems unlikely to feel right unless astrologers and clients share a belief in objective astrology. Otherwise why bother with accurate charts? (p. 156)

From: the group of five researchers (**Dean, Mather, Ertel, Kelly, Smit**) interviewed in *Astrology in the Year Zero* (2000), by Garry Phillipson.

Overhead 4 – Reported effect of magnetism on biological clocks during gestation explained by Percy Seymour

Right through the entire nine-month gestation period, the neural network of the fetus may be synchronizing and tuning its biological clock into the Earth's magnetic fluctuations...Perhaps at different stages of development we pick up different magnetic tunes from out of the solar symphony, which later become part of our earliest memories. These preprogrammed magnetic memories may be evoked later in life when similar magnetic tunes are repeated.

From: 'The Magus of Magnetism: An Interview with Dr Percy Seymour' (1998), by Bronwyn Elko, (<http://cura.free.fr/decem/09seym.html>).

Overhead 5 – Summary of how the season, location, light intensity and magnetic intensity at birth reportedly affect not only a newborn but also its consequent development

... the latitude, longitude, and season of birth will determine the relative position of the newborn baby to the sun and the physical factors associated with it such as day-night length, and light intensity. It will also determine the type and degree of radiation – including geomagnetism – the child is exposed to before, during, and immediately after, birth.

... it's well documented how these factors all play a significant role in influencing the development of: the foetus, the newborn child, the young adult, and adults themselves. So it might be considered a strange state of affairs if the month we're born in – whether measured by a conventional calendar or the position of the sun in the Signs of the Zodiac- didn't manifest itself in ways that were evident, rhythmic, and predictable....

From: *Blinded by Starlight: The Pineal Gland and Western Astronomia* (2002), by Frank McGillion, pp. 151-2.

Overhead 6 – Jung's definition of synchronicity

I am ... using the general concept of synchronicity in the special sense of a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or a similar meaning, in contrast to 'synchronism', which simply means the simultaneous occurrence of two events.

Synchronicity therefore means the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state.

From: *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (1955), G.G. Jung, p. 36 (1987 reprint).

Overhead 7 – Astrology as divination vs astrology as objective science

How are we to understand astrology as divination? In other forms of divination such as the Tarot or the I Ching, the diviner throws the coins or cuts the pack, and no-one believes that the bits of metal or the cardboard have some inherent 'quality' on which the divination depends. The diviner's participation as the interpreter of the symbols is readily seen and accepted. It is far trickier, however, to see astrology as divination... The planets are distant and objective and seem entirely beyond any individual's psychic influence... and their objectivity seems to kick in the teeth any notion that astrology works as a form of divination...

So is astrology a science because it deals with an objective correlation of planets and peoples' lives, or is it a symbolic system and an act of divination? The uncomfortable answer is that it seems to be both.'

From: Maggie Hyde, *Jung & Astrology* (1992), pp. 163-4.

Overhead 8 – Astrology as dialogue with the cosmos

... we see the true business of astrology as participation in the greatest dialogue of all, the grand conversation of earth and heaven. Conversation, whether mundane or cosmic, is a learned technique. As individuals, we may well, and profitably, spend a lifetime developing and perfecting our ability to communicate...As for the cosmic dimension, for countless millennia humankind has employed the species-level language of myth to construct a trans-personal and trans-cultural world of the collective imagination.

From: Willis & Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture* (2004), p. 3 (text by Willis & Curry).

Overhead 9 – Humans as co-creators with a living mindful universe

Driven by the dialogical imperative to engage even with the intangible majesty of the starry heavens, humankind narrated the world into existence from the solid, nurturing ground of Mother Earth. Contemplating the multiplicitous wonders of the firmament above while simultaneously aware of the vast invisibility beneath...*Homo sapiens* constructed its own mind as both mirror and moulder of a living, mindful universe. All we now see and know issues from that age-long and unending creative dialogue.

From: Willis & Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture* (2004), p. 133 (text by Willis).

Gauquelin Plus Zones

Also used in the presentation was an image of the Michel Gauquelin Plus Zones. This image can be found at <http://cura.free.fr/decem/09seym.html>.

List of references

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S. Strogatz, *Sync: The Emerging Science of Spontaneous Order*, 2003
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R. Willis & P. Curry, *Astrology, Science & Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, 2004

General

- ☆ *Correlation: Astrological Association Journal of Research in Astrology*
- ☆ Gauquelin database – now restored and available on line at <http://cura.free.fr/>
- ☆ Vast body of research into astrology & science – <http://www.astrology-and-science.com/>

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