

Astrology: Is Your Destiny in the Stars?



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Astrology is Very Popular

- Most bookstores have many books on the subject.
- Nearly every newspaper has an astrology column.
- You can get your horoscope through the internet.



Looking at Astrology



We want to think about several topics related to the subject:

- The history of astrology
- Scientific problems for astrology
- What the Bible has to say about astrology

The History of Astrology



Origins of Astrology

- Lost in antiquity
- Perhaps originally related to planting at right season
- Hints of astrology in early civilizations:
 - Newgrange, Ireland
 - ~3000 BC
 - Stonehenge, England
 - 2500-1500 BC



Newgrange, Ireland

- A passage grave inside a mound some 35 feet high and nearly 300 feet across.
- The tunnel & inner chamber total about 75 feet long.
- The inner chamber is illuminated by the sun only at winter solstice.



Stonehenge, England

- A circle of large upright stones, completed about 1500 BC.
- Major sight lines mark the sun's position at the solstices, and the moon at its extreme risings & settings.



Origins of Astrology

- The positions of stars relative to the sun "predict" the agricultural seasons.
- The positions of stars can be used to tell time at night.
- The Babylonians and Egyptians early developed techniques for doing this.



Origins of Astrology

- First clear evidence in Babylonian civilization
- Astrology used to tell future, together with other forms of divination, such as liver-looking
- Idea: gods communicate, if humans use the right techniques



Babylonian Astrology

- Ziggurats: step pyramids where heavenly bodies observed & worshiped
- Stelae: inscribed pillars w/ sun, moon, Venus, constellations
- Menologies: tablets for lucky & unlucky days & months





Babylonian Menology

- For an army in battle or conquering the hostile land:
 - Lucky in Ayar, Elul, Teshrit, Archsamna, Adar
 - Other months unlucky.

Babylonian Astrology

- Strongly connected to polytheism, in which the planets viewed as gods or goddesses
- Typically the predictions were for whole societies or their rulers, rather than individuals



Greek Astrology

- Plato (~375 BC) identified the planets with the gods
- Our astronomical terms typically come from the Greeks via the Romans:
 - Planet names
 - Zodiac



Greek Astrology

- Alexander's conquests united East & West, mixing Greek philosophy & math with Babylonian astrology, 333-323 BC.
- This led to astrology for individuals.
- Today's astrology is Greek with virtually no changes.



Classical Greco-Roman Astrology

- The seven planets:
 - Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn.
- The twelve constellations of the Zodiac:
 - Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra,
 - Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces.
- The twelve houses of a horoscope:
 - Life, riches, kindred, inheritance, children, sickness,
 - Marriage, death, journeys, honor, friends, enemies.
- Various angular relationships:
 - Opposition, square, trine, etc.



A Sample Horoscope

The birth of Philoe. The 10th year of Antoninus Caesar the Lord [AD 150], Phamenoth 15 to 16, 1st hour of the night. Sun in Pisces, Jupiter and Mercury in Aries, Saturn in Cancer, Mars in Leo, Venus and Moon in Aquarius, horoscope Scorpio.

Astrology in Judeo-Christian Circles

- Both Jews & Christians influenced by astrology, which was very popular in ancient society.
- Several ancient synagogue mosaics show the Zodiac symbols & the seasons personified.
- This influence resisted by negative remarks in Bible.



The Renaissance

- Though pictured as a time of enlightenment & escape from superstition, it was a revival for astrology.
- In turning away from Christianity, many went into occultism.
- Some problem separating astrology & astronomy.
- Johann Kepler, discoverer of planetary laws, also cast horoscopes to earn money.



Renaissance Astrology

- Geronimo Cardano cast a horoscope for England's King Edward 6:
 - Illness at age 55
 - But he died at 16!
- Cast own horoscope:
 - Death at 75
 - Fulfilled by suicide!

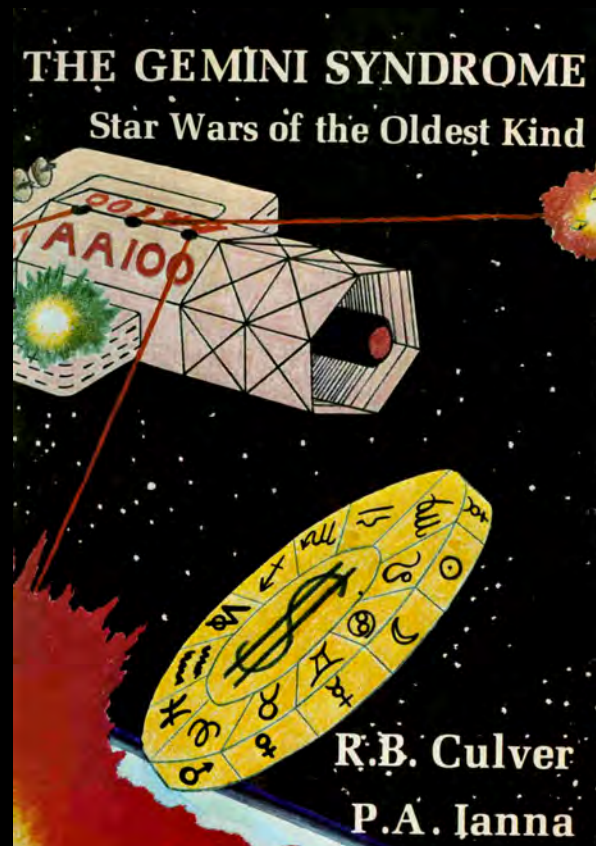


Astrology in the West

- After the Reformation, astrology nearly died out in places where the church was restored to biblical principles.
- Like Halloween, harmless fun in my childhood.
- But since the 1960s, a revival of occultism, including astrology.
- Os Guinness' parable of the campfire.



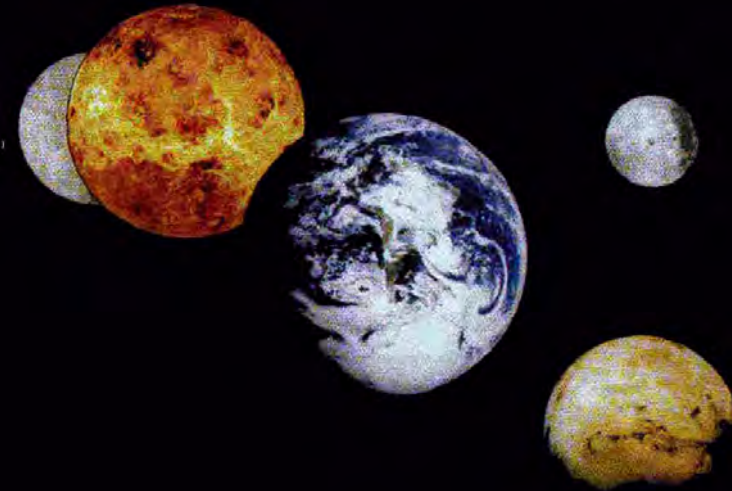
Scientific Problems for Astrology



Culver & Ianna,
The Gemini Syndrome

What are Astronomical Objects?

- Ancient astrology had planets as gods or angels.
- Telescopes & space travel show they are worlds like our Earth.
- Nothing to indicate they are living beings like gods or angels.



What are Astronomical Objects?

- Similarly, stars are burning gas balls like our sun.
- Comets are large, dirty snowballs.
- These discoveries require (at least) a large adjustment in astrology.



Geocentrism

- Ancient astrology was founded on geocentrism, that the Earth is the center around which the heavenly bodies move.
- Copernicus (~1540) showed a great simplification was possible if the sun were in the center instead.
- This was eventually shown to fit the observations far better.

Stars & Constellations

- Using parallax, we now realize that the stars are very distant.
- Using telescopes, that the stars are very numerous.
- The constellations disappear when dimmer stars are taken into account.
- The constellations are also just the result of local perspective.

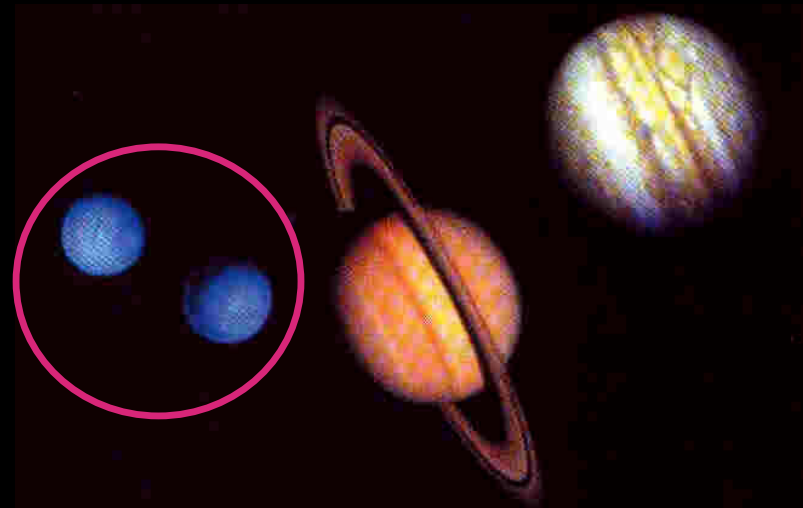


Stellar Influence

- We do not claim that the sun and moon have no effect on earth:
 - Light, heat, tides
- But planets & stars exert negligible forces at a person's birth:
 - Compared to gravity of mother, doctor, hospital
 - Compared to radiation from room lamps
- Astrological successes are probably a combination of luck, fraud, and the occult.

New Planets

- Discovery of Uranus, Neptune & Pluto since 1700s
- How are these taken into account by astrologers?
 - Most ignore them
 - A few include them
 - No evidence the latter have better results



Shift of the Equinox

- Movement of the earth's axis (with a period of 24,000 years) has gradually shifted which sign of the Zodiac the sun is in each month.
- Today the sun is in Pisces from March 5 to April 10.
- But modern astrology columns still give its location 2000 years ago, February 19 to March 20.



Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Your smile wins friends, though a family member might feel left out. Your solid approach and dynamic energy appeal to many — perhaps too many. Prioritize your relationships. Honor only those who are important to you. Tonight: Whatever the Fish wants.

Shift of the Equinox

- Thus modern newspaper astrology columns are about one sign (a month) off from where the sun actually is!
- So you've been reading the wrong sign for years!
- Astrologers who adjust for this seem to have no better success than those who don't.

The Twin Problem

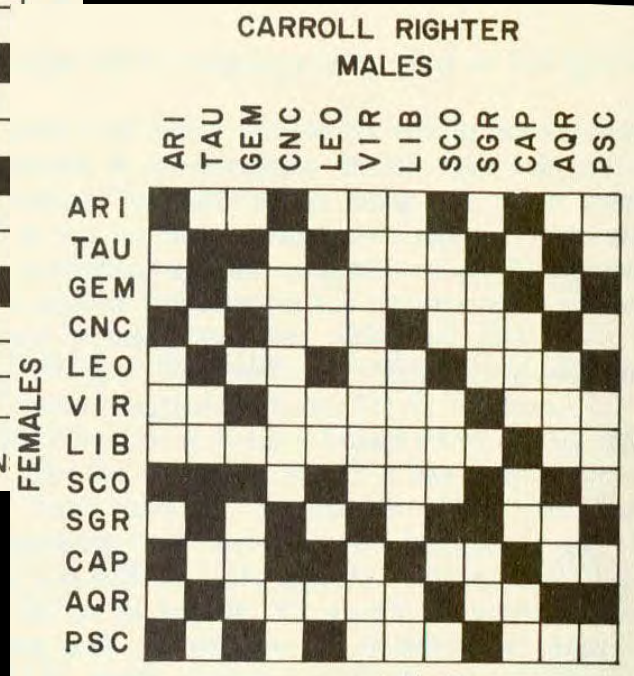
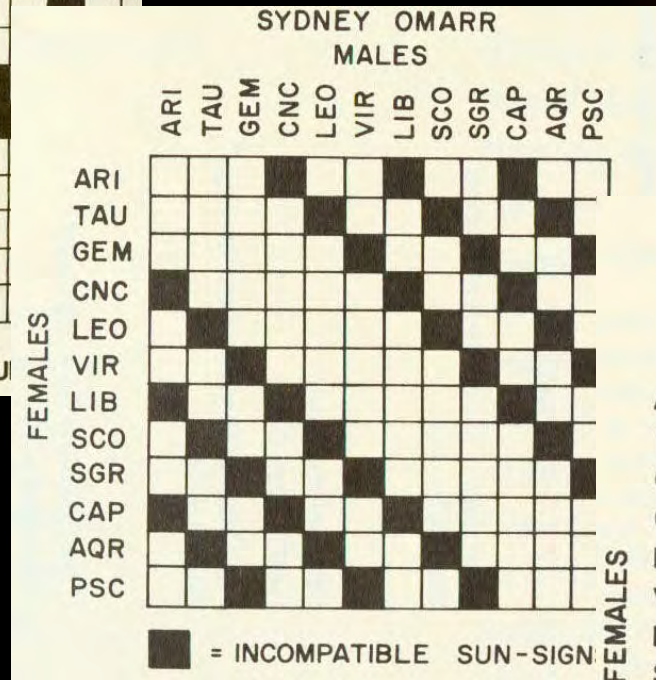
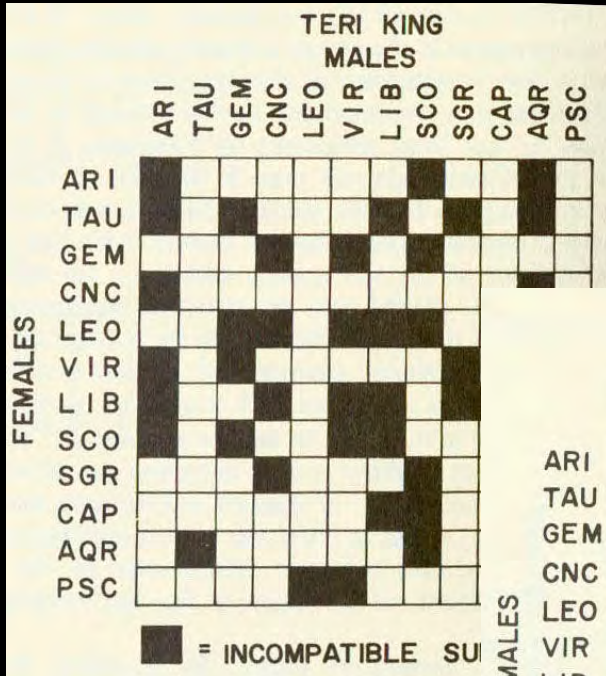
- Astrological horoscopes are based on the position of the planets & Zodiac at a person's birth.
- Though identical twins often have very similar character, they sometimes have very different lives.
- Fraternal twins often have very different character.
- "Time twins" have very few similarities.



Testing Astrology

- See Culver and Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome*, for lots of examples.
- No real correlation between sun-sign and people's talents or occupations.
- Consider marital compatibility charts:
 - Compare those of Teri King, Sydney Omarr, and Carroll Righter.

Testing Astrology



Biblical Problems with Astrology



God forbids divination

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead (Deuteronomy 18:9-11).

It won't work against God

All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame (Isaiah 47:13-14).

An occult connection

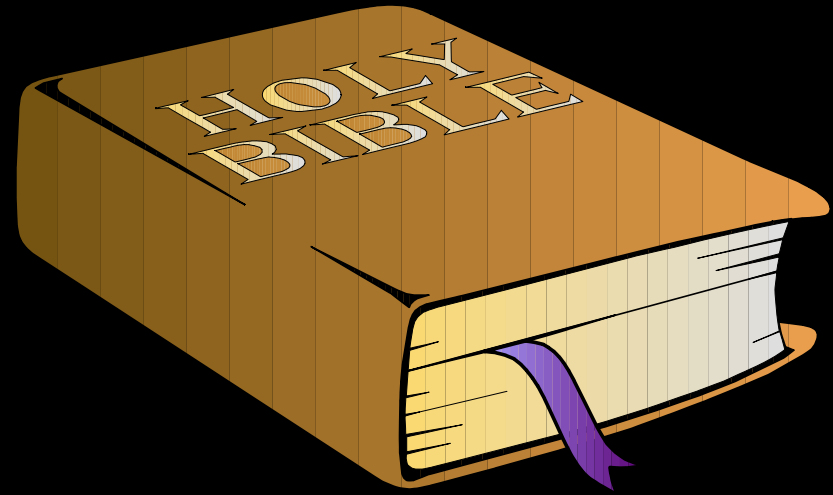
When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn (Isaiah 8:19-20).

God controls the universe

Hear what the LORD says to you, O house of Israel. This is what the LORD says, "Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the sky, though the nations are terrified by them. The customs of the people are worthless" (Jeremiah 10:1-3).

Biblical Problems for Astrology

- God forbids divination.
- It won't work against God anyway.
- It has an occult connection.
- The God of the Bible controls the universe.



Summary on Astrology

- Astrology is historically connected with paganism, polytheism and idolatry.
- Astrology is not supported by scientific evidence and is quite arbitrary.
- Astrology is condemned by the Bible as an attempt to live without dependence on God.



The End

Don't be misled by astrology!