

## Changing Attitudes Towards Astrology Over The Years

People of all generations, from the beginning of time, want to survive. In order to survive, strength is needed to meet the challenges that life brings. This needed strength can be either personal strength acquired through knowledge and skill development, or it can be strength gained through association with strong allies, the strongest ally being God.

The earliest attempts to investigate and understand the relationship between a given event and possible causes of that event, is the birth of science. Science is based on observation and the acquiring of knowledge.

The earliest attempts to form organized thoughts about relationship between human life and that which is greater than human experience, is the birth of religion. Religious experience is centered on the spiritual journey -- i.e. actively growing a more and more conscious relationship with God. For any reader who might be uncomfortable with the word God, try thinking about the religious experience as cuddling up to the unknowingness of the unknown.

The earliest attempts at noticing correspondences between patterns of stars in the night sky and important events on the Earth, is the birth of astrology. The earliest reference to any astrological information that I found described markings on cave walls depicting phases of the moon, thought to be carved into the stone in 25,000 BC (see Wikipedia).

Astrology, as we know it, comes originally from works written by Ptolemy, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Alexandria is the city conquered by, and named in honor of, Alexander the Great. According to Wikipedia, Ptolemy was born in the year 90, and lived to the age of 78. He apparently wrote several major works, including books about mathematics, geography (delineating the Greco-Roman world), and astrology.

During Ptolemy's time a new need arose: how can it be known if a particular baby/child has the necessary abilities to become a great king? It seems that this is the driving force motivating Ptolemy's work in the field of astrology. This is a turning point in the role of astrology; prior to this astrology was used to gather information about natural events (ex. earthquakes) and group dynamics (ex. possible wars), but not about individuals.

Astrology continued to be considered a scholarly pursuit well into the Renaissance (1300 – 1600 AD). The next turning point in changing attitudes towards astrology happened as a result of the work of both Kepler (12/27/1571 – 11/15/1630) and Galileo (2/15/1564 – 1/8/1642). Both men were astronomers and mathematicians. Kepler did significant work describing the orbits of the planets in our solar system. Galileo, with the aid of a new and more powerful telescope, established that the center of our solar system is the Sun and not the Earth, as had been previously thought.

So long as the Earth was thought to be the center of the universe, the king, and upper echelon political structures, could more easily claim divine guidance. If the Earth is demoted to just another planet circling around the Sun, so too is the king demoted to just another ruler of an outlying territory.

As you might expect, the politically ambitious came out fighting. Church and state and science and astrology were still all one jumble. Keep in mind that the Spanish Inquisition was fully under way at this point in history. Events like the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition were, in the opinion of this writer, pure political opportunism under the assumed banner of religion. Like all zealots, the destruction was devastating, and the identified 'enemy,' THEM, included any who appeared easy to defeat.

Astrology took a hit. Galileo was arrested for heresy. Astrology was used as part of the case against Galileo, and astrology was quite conveniently moved from the science category to the divination and witchcraft category. ('Spin' is ever-present.) The church claimed that divination (fortune telling) is contrary to the doctrine of free-will. Astrology was claimed to be divination. Thus, astrology became associated with Satan and not with God. Astrology continued to be accepted as a useful source of information by many, but, I assume, much more quietly.

Up until this time there seems to be no differentiation between astrology and astronomy. The denouncing of astrology by the politically motivated arm of the then existing church started two separate lines of development. Astrology moved in the direction of clarifying how the cyclic nature of various universal

energies could be used to support human effort and human behavior; astronomy moved in the direction of more profoundly investigating the physical and energetic nature of the universe itself.

It is interesting to note that all the early popes had personal astrologers (see Wikipedia) and that the Vatican, today, has an observatory as well as an extensive collection of astrology texts in the Vatican Library. On a more personal level, I can report that the first 3 professional astrology readings that I did were for members of the clergy, and there have been others since.

Well, time rolled on. And the years became filled with scientific applications aimed at making life more convenient. By the late 1700s the industrial revolution was getting under way. By the mid 1800s Clerk Maxwell (1831 – 1879) presented his entire theory of electromagnetic energy. Tesla (1856 – 1943) presented patent after patent for early communication devices, among many other applications. In the early 1900s Einstein (3/14/1879 - 4/18/1955) presented the theory of relativity and the atomic theory of energy. These were the under-pinnings for the age of technology that followed and continues to the present time.

As I write this article, advances in technology are increasing at a brisk pace -- new methods for surgical procedures, new methods for storing vast amounts of information digitally, new methods (perhaps less desirable) for increasing the shelf-life of fruits and vegetables, and on, and on. Science includes more than technology; science is the investigation of every known and unknown aspect of the universe, including investigation of the limits of possible human experience. But technology, especially the development of new products and techniques that others want to purchase, is where the money is (i.e. where the funding is).

In our present world science and religion are often seen as alien or separate pursuits. It seems to me that all sufficiently deep searching, using either the approach route of science, or the approach route of religion, leads to the same truth and reality. After all, what is, IS. On a more surface level, however, people are often pressed to choose between the two -- do you believe in science or do you believe in religion? So, where does that leave astrology?

You are not one of us, cries science! You are not one of us, cries religion!

The chief problem that science has with astrology is the apparent lack of any rational basis for 'knowing' that what an astrologer is basing a judgement on is in any way true. For example, when an astrologer notices that the Sun and Moon in a natal chart are 90 degrees apart (a square), then that astrologer will be looking for other signs indicating that that person's image of their own path in life, and their emotional needs, are somehow not in sync. Science asks why two planets that are 90 degrees apart represent some kind of "out of sync-ness" in a person's life. Astrology simply says this is what a square aspect means, but it doesn't say WHY this is what it means. And therein lies the problem.

Science demands clinical trials, or laboratory experiments, that will establish a single, consistent, result. i.e. Science demands the ability to cite clinical trials that prove two planets 90 degrees apart always demonstrate a similar type of "out of sync-ness". Astrology cannot produce these clinical trials -- one reason being that there is no funding for astrological research capable of meeting scientific standards. (A familiar example of a scientifically acceptable clinical trial would be the procedures put in place to determine the safety and effectiveness of a new pharmaceutical being developed.)

What actually happened is that early astrologers carefully catalogued correspondences between relative positions of planets in the sky and human behaviors over a long period of time, and eventually wrote down their conclusions based on these observations. That is what Ptolemy wrote down, and that is what modern day astrology uses as a base. Thus a modern day astrologer might point out some type of "out of sync-ness" when looking at two planets in a chart that are square to each other (90 degrees apart).

To complicate matters further, astrology is most often presented to the general public as an entertainment, or party game, and not as anything more substantive than that. For example, a daily online horoscope often tends to read like a string of fortune-cookie slogans -- each piece of daily advise is universally innocuous and applicable to just about anyone. The popularity of daily horoscopes seems to depend on the reader feeling pampered -- this is about ME. For whatever reason, many people find superstition and the power of suggestion very entertaining.

Finally, it often happens that in astrology books or lectures, sample charts that backup a particular conclusion are exhibited and discussed, with the implication being that the interpretation of the astrological patterns in the sample charts should hold true everywhere. But this is not necessarily correct; a limited sample of perhaps 5 or 6 natal charts does not prove that for different people, who have the same astrological configurations in their own charts, life will necessarily work out in a similar way.

The problem that religion has with astrology is the possibility that an astrologer would “look into the future” and claim to see future events. Fortune telling and free-will are mutually exclusive -- we cannot know the future (fortune telling) and also have the ability to create a different future (free-will).

The first part of this problem is a general public impression, often promoted by media entertainment, offering misinformation about the astrologer’s task. Micro-managing another person’s choices and actions is NOT an astrologer’s job description. An astrologer is trained to recognize the changing cycles of various, and many, universal energies. Telling any person seeking help when it will be easier, and when it will be more difficult, for that person to tap into and use each specific energy, is the astrologer’s task. Providing general information about the nature of these energies, as well as ways to interact with these energies, is also appropriate.

The astrologer should present clear information that the client may, or may not, choose to use so that that person can then make a better personal decision -- all on their own. Note: Astrological charts show which energies are most actively playing out, at a given time, in a particular individual’s life. These charts do not limit the way in which the energies play out to one scenario only. The energies themselves are simply there -- how an individual uses, abuses, or ignores any specific energy is what produces a result.

The second part of the problem that religion seems to have with astrology stems from misinformation about the relationship between free-will and astrology.

Free-will is a game changer. But free-will is not automatic. Many people seem to think that any choice a person makes is evidence of free-will. Not so. What, exactly, is free-will? Let’s look at some ‘choices’ that do not qualify as free-will:

- People in my house expect to eat breakfast every day, and it is my job to do the food shopping. I’m walking down the aisle in the supermarket and put a box of granola in the cart instead of the dreaded Fruit Loops. I did make a choice, but it is not a free-will choice. My choice was determined by need, taste and nutrition preferences, allergies, costs, and availability (brands of cereal on the shelf). In other words, there was a definite agenda that I accepted and had to fulfill -- and I did the best that I could. Free-will is not motivated by agenda.
- Each evening I plug my cell phone into its charger. Yes, I am making a choice to do this. But it is not a free-will choice. It is a best response to a personal need; again I am fulfilling an agenda to the best of my ability. In addition, this action is also habitual -- I do the same thing every evening. Free-will requires alertness and conscious participation; habits do not. It would be more of a free-will choice if I charged my cell phone at a different time of day, or even if I used a different wall socket.

So what is free-will? And how could activating free-will enable the information in an astrological chart to be used differently?

Free-will is the ability to be present in the moment, to have the alertness to recognize any need arising in that moment, to have (or to be able to tap into) the strength needed to meet the challenge in that moment, and to rise to the occasion of actually doing whatever needs to be done (or making every effort to do so). When that moment passes, so too do the emotional associations with that moment. i.e. Doing what needs to be done and moving on, is different from doing something, and then replaying that event over and over again in imagination, either in a self-congratulatory scenario or in a self-deprecating scenario.

Let’s look at an example. Suppose I am driving a car with a baby in a car-seat and several bags of groceries in the trunk. While we are driving along the baby throws up all over herself, the car-seat, and anything else within reach. Although I have thoughts of rushing home to prevent frozen food from becoming its own mess, I pull into the nearest parking area, clean up the baby plus mess (as well as possible), make sure the baby is comfortable and safely secured in the car-seat, and then continue driving home. If that is the end of it, all is well.

But if I start creating story lines about the amazing super-mom efficiency that I just displayed (worthy of many reruns in my imagination), or story lines about my weakness and inability to save child, car, frozen veggies, and sanity (also worthy of many reruns), all is not well -- I am attaching myself (emotionally) to a daydream and I am not free -- i.e. I am no longer fully alert to (or particularly interested in) new demands that might arise in the next new moment.

Being present in the current moment is amazingly difficult for so many people so much of the time. Moments are filled with dreams, day-dreams, remembering, working out 'what if' scenarios, planning future events, ..... Even when driving a car, so many drive with only part of their attention. Being present in the moment requires full attention. Relaxed, alert, and FULL attention.

Letting go of time filler agendas (ex. if nothing else is critical I think I'll worry about my broken coffee filter) is also amazingly difficult for so many people so much of the time. We tend to see things and events relative to our own needs, wants, maybe too often convenience, ..... The judging never stops. And the judging undermines the 'free' part of free-will.

Well, to make any sense out of free-will we need to stop pretending that free-will is a foregone conclusion, and we need to learn how to recognize, and activate, free-will in our own lives. (Perhaps another article is in the offing, although I'm not sure of the venue.) Then and only then, is it time to answer the question about using astrological information in a new way.

Religion and science and astrology are all exciting avenues of exploration available to any individual. Using all three in harmonious fashion is especially rewarding. If you have any questions or comments please contact:

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