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## **A Global History of Astrology: Changes in Astrological Trends Through the Centuries**

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**A Global History of Astrology:  
Changes in Astrological Trends Through the Centuries**

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Acknowledgements to Dr. Sky Michael Johnston

## Introduction

The sky above has been the subject of deep intrigue since the beginning of humanity. Curiosity in celestial objects was just the start of the never-ending search for understanding life. People tracked the rising and setting of the sun, they studied the paths of the planets, they created mathematical calculations to predict an eclipse, and developed countless theories about the shape of the earth and universe. It seems to be a part of human nature to assign meaning to things, so trying to find meaning in the movements of celestial objects should be expected. Astrology is often seen as taboo, many people arguing that the location of the sun at your birth has no effect on your personality or future and that astronomy is the only true study of the sky. But until the Early Modern Era, Astrology and Astronomy were viewed as one, a complete science. Although the practices differed between cultures and with time, the study of the stars was both mathematical and based in belief.

I was inspired to write this paper as a recap of a course I took in Tübingen titled “A Global History of Astrology”; taught by Dr. Sky Michael Johnston. This paper is based on the sources used in that class and follows the same general structure and order of the course, as that seems to be the most cohesive way to approach the subject. By the end of this paper, we should have an idea of the trends in astrological practices over the last few millennia and between different cultures and societies.

## Mesopotamia<sup>1 2</sup>

While today astronomy and astrology are considered to be separate, they started long ago as one and the same. The ancient Mesopotamians began observing the skies and studying them as far back as 5000 BCE and records show that the concept of astrological significance came into effect at least in 2300 BCE, if not earlier. The civilization was massive and thus religion varied from town to town, but when put all together scholars have been able to determine much of Babylonian astrology and astronomy.

In Babylonian religion the three highest gods were Anu, Enlil, and Ea, who were each associated with heaven, earth, and water respectively. Cosmic entities, such as the Sun, Moon, Venus, and constellations were linked with the many other deities of their religion. During the 2300 BCE Akkadian rule, a growth of interest began in omens concerned with the astrological significance the positions and appearance of Venus. Each of these events with Venus were given astrological interpretations relating to outcomes of war, famine, disease, kings, and nations. It was believed that the deities were capable of determining what happens in human matters such as love and war through the celestial behavior of the planets that were associated with them. Religion and astrology went hand in hand at this point in time. In other words, astrology truly started out with the association of gods with planets and then predicting events based on the position of the planets. Later in time, this connection of religion to astrology was lost, changing the idea of astrology to one of predicting human behavior solely based on the sky.

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<sup>1</sup> John North, "Mesopotamia", in *Cosmos: An Illustrated History of Astrology and Cosmology*, (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 36-66.

<sup>2</sup> Hungerm Herrmann and David Pingree, "MUL.APIN", in *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 57-82.

The development of star lists, the precursor to star maps, came about sometime around 1000 BCE in Mesopotamia. Star lists connected the passage of the months with heliacal risings of stars, the most famous of these are the clay tablets known as the MUL.APIN, which date back roughly to the seventh century BCE. The MUL.APIN tablets contain Babylonian astronomical knowledge and celestial omens, including lists of secondary stars and names of constellations.

The MUL.APIN gave the gods who were associated with each constellation and the constellation's name. Different from the modern zodiac, Babylonian constellations were listed in the path of the moon and the sky was divided into eighteen parts. It was not until around 500 BCE that they began dividing their zodiac into twelve signs of equal length. What is fascinating about the star lists is that some of the original names for the constellations have passed down to today, specifically the Bull, the Lion, and the Scorpion. The MUL.APIN show that in that time, people were trying to predict future planetary positions based on past patterns.

The concept of horoscopes came from Mesopotamia as well. Horoscopes are defined as an arrangement of the heavens at a significant moment and their concept took over from the idea of omens, creating a new style of divination. This was cause for more systematic observation of planetary phenomena that continued on without interruption until the late Seleucid times. These recordings of the planets were used increasingly to aid prediction.

Like language, astrology is a concept that developed in a few different parts of the world on its own. But the strongest foundation for modern astrology comes predominantly from Mesopotamia. Throughout history the content and use of astrology has changed because of trends in culture and the development of astronomy, but there are some specifics from the very beginning that are still around in modern astrology.

The Ancient Mediterranean<sup>3 4 5</sup> “It’s all super trippy to think about. Like, woah...” ~Dr. Johnston

As Dr. Johnston eloquently put it, theories of cosmology during the times of Aristotle and later Ptolemy were complicated and frankly quite ‘trippy’. attempting to dissect Aristotle’s words during class was a daunting task and in the end was so complex that our brains hurt.

In Aristotelean cosmology the world was seen as eternal and time as circular. Aristotle’s view was that since circular motion is eternal, the motion of the earth must also be eternal. Time would repeat itself in a never-ending cycle of beginning, middle, and end, in which time is always and never all three concepts at once. In his idea of the cosmos, the earth was within a sphere of imperfection where everything is in flux while the heavens were another sphere where everything is perfect and without fault. Stars and the planets were celestial objects in this sphere of perfection and the human soul was of the heavens; thus, the motions of the cosmos affected the soul through their connection. This belief was the foundation of astrology in the Mediterranean, but scholars debate whether it truly began in Greece or actually much earlier in Mesopotamia.

This was the world view for centuries and continued to be so during the time of Ptolemy. In his book *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy argues in favor of astrology, providing the reader with his reasoning for why it is a feasible practice and offers examples of its uses in daily life. It is immediately clear he supports astrology when he states, “it is so evident that most events of a

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<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, Selections, in *Physics*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 228.

<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy, “I.1 Introduction,” “I.2 That Knowledge by Astronomical means is Attainable and How Far,” “I.3 That It Is also Beneficial,” in *Tetrabiblos*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Campion, “The Possible Survival of Babylonian Astrology in the Fifth Century CE: A Discussion of Historical Sources,” in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 69-92.

general nature draw their causes from the enveloping heavens”.<sup>6</sup> He goes on in the following pages to describe how the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars bring about many complicated changes. Some of these changes are tides and seasons, but others are influences on humans and other aspects of nature.

Ptolemy then goes into the art of the trade and how many people are turned off of astrology because of error and fake practitioners. He talks about the error and inability to accurately predict that is common for people who have no practice in the art. Those who have been incorrectly instructed on the matter will make mistakes that lead to improper predictions or the belief that it was a “lucky guess”. He admits though that mistakes may still occur, not at the fault of the astrologer but because of the great magnitude of the profession and the conjectural nature of it. Predictions will also sometimes fail because the planets will never align back to the same exact configuration during a person’s lifetime. These predictions are based on birth charts that are specific to the location of birth. Still common today, birth charts are a way to make predictions that are specific to an individual.

Astrology is not to be used for knowing everything. Ptolemy suggests that the best thing to do with a prediction is accept that not all answers will be full; one should appreciate what has been provided as an answer. It is a tool that cannot gain wealth and riches within its power. Rather, astrological forecast gives a full view of things human and divine, something Ptolemy says is the most conducive to well-being. Astrology’s purpose, in this case, is for gaining an understanding of life. He believes that people who fault and condemn it have no regard for its importance and greater advantages.

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<sup>6</sup> Ptolemy, “I-1 Introduction,” in *Tetrabiblos*. 5.

Another factor of astrology that he mentions is that not everything is a result of a natural pre-disposition. Although he does say that humans have an unchangeable destiny because of the movement of heavenly bodies eternally performed in accordance with a divine, humans behave based on a natural tendency that is determined by their horoscope. Ptolemy compares astrology to medicine. He explains that when someone is sick, they may choose to use a remedy to cure their illness. While the illness is the work of nature, the remedy is stronger than nature and can oppose natural forces. Here, he is attempting to show that while nature/astrology has shown someone their natural course in life, the person can choose to work against nature and provide their own “remedies”. Additionally, Ptolemy points out that astrology is nature and while the heavens are perfect, nature itself can change. Predictions may be altered but one must continue to believe their astrologer’s work. When the primary natures are concerned, Ptolemy says that “all future events are inevitable and inescapable” and the authority of predictions should always be welcomed.

Scholars have noticed that Babylonian ideas of astrology made their way into astrological practices during the late roman empire. The reading consulted on this topic focused on sources that referenced astrology during the fifth century CE. These texts contained horoscopes that supposedly should have aided two separate men in their rebellions against the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno. These unsuccessful rebellions took place first in 475 and then in 484 CE by generals Basiliscus and Leontius respectively. Both leaders had corresponded with astrologers who used horoscopes and astrological charts to determine when a revolt would be most successful, even planning out the exact moment of their supposed coronation, in the assumption that their revolt would succeed. Prior to both revolts, charts had been consulted and given positive readings with specific points to back up why they would be successful. However, after the failures, astrologers went back to the charts and reanalyzed them to find reasons why the revolts were unsuccessful. In a way it is as



though the astrologers were picking and choosing the “good stuff” in their favor and then coming back with the negative parts of the reading after being blamed for false advertising in order to save themselves. In addition to the horoscopes, the astrologers used eclipses as signs that were bad indications for emperor Zeno, meaning the revolts should have, in their minds, worked.

One way that Babylonian eclipse astrology found its way into the late classical world was through a set of texts adapted in Egypt around the sixth or fifth centuries BCE and then paraphrased into work by Greek astrologer Hephastion. The argument against Babylonian astrology having made its way into the late roman period is that while the Babylonians practiced observational astrology through watching the skies, Hellenistic astrology of Greece used charts and tables, things that led to horoscopic charts like those used when planning the revolts. Over time, there came to be an overlap between the practices of both civilizations and Babylonian astrology lived on through high intellectual academies, especially that of the Platonic Academy.

### East Asia<sup>7</sup>

Tracing the roots of traditions and practices is often a very difficult and, in some cases, impossible task. Because of a lack of written sources, whether that means items were left undocumented or the works somehow vanished, astrological trends throughout Asia are difficult to track. Compared to Western European astrological practices throughout the ages, Asian astrology has a much smaller amount of documentation to help scholars put together a comprehensive history. For the most part, it is hard to trace what Western practices may have shaped those in Eastern Asian, however there are a few instances where influence can be assumed.

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<sup>7</sup> John North, “China and Japan,” in *Cosmos: An Illustrated History of Astrology and Cosmology*, (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 134-160.

It seems that, based on ancient sources that have survived, Chinese astrology developed on its own through Chinese schools of thought and philosophy without influence from the West. It was not until after they had established their own astrological systems that their contact with the West grew and their practices were incorporated in Chinese traditions.

## **China**

The Chinese have carefully studied the cosmos since as early as 1500 BCE, since astrology was considered an important form of ancient Chinese fortune-telling. It was believed that celestial events were tied to the destiny of the emperor and that their behavior corresponded to the politics of the ruler. Their observation of the skies was primarily concerned with the constellations located around the northern celestial pole and celestial equator; western astrology has always differed by focusing on constellations located on the horizon. The stars around the northern celestial pole would not rise and set such as those by the horizon, allowing the Chinese to position celestial objects in opposition of the sun's location when the sun was set. Thus, the Chinese could consistently and accurately pinpoint certain stars.

An important astrological development created by the Chinese was a systematic division of the sky called *hsiu* or *xiu* (referred to as Lunar Mansions in the West). The approximate date of its creation is a subject of debate, as Nicholas Campion argues for an origin around 400 BCE while John North claims it was developed sometime between 1500 and 600 BCE. There are 28 *hsiu* (sections of the sky), each one a section of the equator. By following the moon's path through the *hsiu*, the Chinese created a lunar calendar and a form of a lunar zodiac and horoscopy used for divination. Unfortunately, the foundation of this concept and what may have been the influence in Chinese astrology is still unknown to scholars and a subject of debate.

During the late Zhou and then following Qin dynasties, approximately 300 — 250 BCE, a new school of thought was being created by unifying the many different schools of Chinese philosophy from the previous centuries into one. This new, single system was known as the *Yin and Yang* school of thought. In this system there is one principle that guides the universe, known as the *Tao*. The Tao is divided into two opposing forces and states of existence- the *Yin and Yang*. All opposites can be reduced to this, such as light and darkness, the sun and moon, the cold and heat, night and day, and so forth. Then, through this polarity, yin-yang principles create five phases or elements known as *wu-xing*. The *wu-xing* can be traced back to the third and fourth centuries BCE and explain all phenomena. The elements are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, each ebbing and flowing through each other and changing life on earth. The overall idea in this doctrine is that all things are related to each other and dynamically change through interplay.

Because of the belief that the cosmos was connected to the emperor and his future, there were imperial astronomers and astrologers who observed the planets, the weather, and other seemingly celestial events. A major part of their work was creating calendar systems as tools for prognostications and noting observations. These calendars, symbolic of the dynastic powers, encompassed solar and lunar observations, star tables, and planetary records. By studying the past calendars, the astronomers and astrologers were able to calculate and predict potential cosmological events, such as an eclipse. Additionally, modern scholars can track developments in astronomical theories by examining the surviving calendars.

Star maps are another old tradition from China that developed out of fortune-telling. Certain regions of the stars were associated with specific regions of the earth. So similar to the *hsiu*, events in those regions of the sky would be seen as predictions. Events ranged from solar halos and sunspots to aurora borealis and comets. Along with these maps were three star-

catalogues which date back to the fourth century BCE. When combined, the three lists included 1,464 stars in total. These stars were then divided into groups called “chairs” of which there were 284. (This concept should not be confused with the western idea of constellations which are groups of stars interpreted as patterns or images). These chairs were listed by name and included the number of stars within them, the positions of the lesser stars in relation to the ‘chief star’ of the chair, and contained the coordinates of that chief star. While these maps were important for the later development of astronomical studies of celestial motions, their original purpose was tied to astrological practices in ancient China.

## **Japan**

The Japanese regarded celestial bodies as deities but otherwise practiced nothing of an astrological nature until the arrival of Chinese texts in the eighth century of the common era. Early Japanese astrological texts drew upon these Chinese practices which made their way to Japan through Korea. A rise in Buddhism in Japan, which called for a need to practice astrology, led to this growth of astrological practices. One such practice was making predictions of an individual’s fate and personality based on the position of the Moon at birth. As explained earlier, a form of Chinese astrology developed out of *Yin-Yang* philosophy. This concept spread to Japan and was incorporated in their study of the skies and astrological divination. Little else of astrological nature seems to have made any impact in Japanese society until the arrival of Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century, who used the cosmos as a means for converting people to Christianity.

### South Asia<sup>8</sup>

The Rigveda, composed between 1500 and 1000 BCE, is the oldest text of the Vedic religion. The Vedic religion was the source of modern Hinduism and contained a strong connection between the cosmos and the divine. The text gave rise to an idea in India that the world is inhabited by a “world soul”, personifying the earth and its properties along with those of other celestial objects. While there is no evidence in the Rigveda of mathematical approaches to cosmological study, there is evidence of contact with Mesopotamia. Scholars have determined this by tracing statements in the Vedic texts back to statements in the ancient Babylonian star catalogues known today as the MUL.APIN.

Similar to the *Hsiu* of Chinese astrology, the people of India developed a system of 27 or 28 stars (or groups of stars) that marked the moon’s passage through the sky. Each of these groups, called *Naksatras* was associated with a different deity. The difference between the Naksatras and the Hsiu is that the Naksatras were subdivisions of a twelve-month, lunar based zodiac. The zodiac were used for astrological interpretation, functioning similarly to what we are familiar with today with interpretation based on the relationships between the planets and their location in the zodiac signs. The similarity between the Indian and Hellenistic zodiac suggests that Greek astrological practices had made their way to India and been interwoven with Indian astrology; a theory that is supported by Sanskrit translations of Greek astrological works. Interestingly, the Greeks had created their own modified versions of Babylonian methods of studying the cosmos which then in turn were shared with India through trade. Thus, Indian horoscopic astrology has its roots in Greek changes to early Babylonian cosmology.

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<sup>8</sup> John North, “Indian and Persian Astronomy,” in *Cosmos: An Illustrated History of Astrology and Cosmology*, (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 171-188.

Understanding the formats of Indian and Persian calendars from the first and second millennia BCE can be tricky due to the complexity of period relations. But the basic format of the yearly calendar that was developed by the mid- to late first millennium BCE is similar to the modern Gregorian calendar system used today. The year was divided into twelve months of 30 *tithis* (lunar days) and weeks were divided into seven days. A period of 1,860 *tithis* was equated to five years, and 25 years were equated with 310 synodic months. A synodic month is the name for one cycle of the moon's phases. The seven weekdays were associated each with one of the traditional planets — the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Shrines to the planets were often part of Buddhist and Hindu temples where astrologers could be found performing priest-like duties. The purpose of these calendars was to track astrological trends and predict the timing of major life events. While seemingly mundane, these calendar systems played a key role in astrological divination in the Indian subcontinent starting as early as the first millennium BCE.

### Islamic Societies<sup>9 10</sup>

During the Islamic Golden Age, which began in the 830s in Baghdad, the Arab world discovered, translated, and distributed astrological and astronomical works from the Hellenistic period. Islamic astrology had its roots in this study of Greek texts and Muslim scientists paid close attention to the work of Ptolemy. A particular role known as the *munajjim* was given to someone

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen P Blake, "Introduction," in *Time in Early Modern Islam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-20.

<sup>10</sup> Eva Orthmann, "Circular Motions: Private Pleasures and public Prognostication in the Narratives of the Mughal Emperor Akbar," in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 101-114..

who had extensively trained himself in this astronomy and astrology. The *munaijim* was responsible for charting and interpreting the movements of the heavenly bodies, as well as using the sun and moon to determine proper times for daily prayers and when the month of Ramadan would occur. An astrologer's job was to predict and interpret the influence of the heavenly bodies on the earth and individuals. The *munajjim* would draw up horoscopes in the same fashion as brought about by the Greeks and the twelve houses were even the same as those in Greek astrology and provided the same goal of being interpreted for future predictions.

The astrology in the early modern Islamic world was separated into four parts. The first was general astrology which was predictions of nature and politics based on the horoscope of the first day of the year. It also included predictions of how celestial events in the year will impact states, regions, and religions. The second part was genethliology which was the predicting of significant events in the lives of individuals using their natal chart. These would be events such as marriage, disease, and death. The third part was election and choice astrology. This part related to the use of a horoscope to determine when to best undertake a certain activity. The last and fourth part was called interrogation astrology. In this case horoscopes would be cast when a certain question was asked about decisions to make and thus would reveal a response. Astrology played an important role in Islamic society which is shown in the next part regarding the Mughal Empire.

The Mughal Empire is said to have made extensive use of astrological advice and predictions, with astrologers being present from the moment an emperor was born and providing him with advice throughout his life. At the birth of an emperor, astrologers would pay attention to the exact moment they were born in order to calculate the exact positions of the ascendant (the zodiac sign present on the eastern horizon at the time of birth) and of the planets. With this information they would compute future astronomical data and astronomical predictions. Large,

extensive books called *zāyche* were produced in which the computation tables and calculations lie. At the core of the books was a beautifully decorated copy of the nativity (birth chart). The smaller half of the book, after the calculations, were the astrological prognostications. In the case of Abū I-Fazl's work on Emperor Akbar's birth, there are no calculation tables, only an astrological interpretation of the constellation figures at Akbar's birth. He includes four different horoscopes and provides much interpretation of them. The main interest in drawing up Akbar's horoscopes was not to provide astral positions and astrological houses, rather they were used to create a "link between the new-born and supernatural forces which act with the help of stars"<sup>11</sup> and to prove that the emperor was privileged.

The four horoscope figures included in Abū I-Fazl's book differ in their predictions and content. But notably, the zodiac are comparable to the ones seen today and in past astronomy. The names of the constellations are what we use today: Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Taurus, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Gemini, Aquarius. There are more today but these are the names provided in the horoscopes of Akbar's birth. Prognostications were developed in accordance with the horoscopes, each horoscope providing their own interpretations. The predictions range from the emperor's future endeavors and conquests, to his marriage and riches, and from his later policies to his thoughts on religion. What is important to note is that many of the predictions were vague. The benefit of vagueness in astrology is it leaves room for later reinterpretation. If things do not go the way the prophecy foretells, a vague prediction can offer alternative interpretations. This alteration in prediction has been seen frequently during the history of astrology and will continue to be a trait of the field.

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<sup>11</sup> Orthmann, "Circular Motions," in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*, 110.



The European Renaissance and Reformation<sup>12 13 14 15</sup>

**Renaissance Court Astrology of Italy**

In Renaissance Italy, a majority of people believed that their celestial bodies exerted an influence on Earth and this influence could be interpreted by a professional astrologer. A group of these people went as far as to believe that the configuration of the skies could be interpreted for when to best perform an action. The principles of astrology were applied consistently in many areas of political and civic life, including war and travel. For example, certain military events were to occur at a specific moment determined by astrologers. Even the Duke of Milan had astrological counseling. This is not to say that all people were in favor of astrology. There were of course many skeptics and the most consumers of astrology were Renaissance elites.

Astrologers would write annual prognostications and general forecasts, namely for the weather, harvest, and conflict outcomes. They would however be frequently consulted and provide highly personalized advice to their clients. Client-astrologer relationships varied, some being permanent while other being very occasional. As with any field of practice, the occupation of astrology was a spectrum of highly renown practitioners to locals. Consulting multiple astrologers was normal and a way to “test” if their predictions were comparable. Astrology’s place in society was fairly strong, which can be shown in the amount of court astrologers present throughout the

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<sup>12</sup> Monica Azzolini, “Introduction,” in *The Duke and the Star: Astrology and politics in Renaissance Milan*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1-20.

<sup>13</sup> Andreas Osiander, “Preface,” in *De Revolutionibus erbiium coelestium*, (1543).

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte Methuen, “The German Reformation and the Mathematization of the Created World,” in *Theology and Science*, no. 9, (2011), 35-44.

<sup>15</sup> Günther Oestmann, “J.W.A. Pfaff and the Rediscovery of Astrology in the Age of Romanticism,” in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*, (Berlin: Walter de Grueter, 2005), 241-257.

Renaissance and its place as part of university curriculums, including the practice and teaching of astrological medicine.

There were two prominent types of court astrology: medical and political. In medical astrology, the idea was that the influence of the stars related to the state of health of a patient. It was generally believed that the heavenly bodies influenced human affairs and the state of the human body, a theory that goes back to Greeks and Babylonians. Different parts of the body were associated with different signs of the zodiac and planets, while remedies such as bloodletting and purging were calculated based on the position of the planets and moon in various signs of the zodiac. Treatment of patients were formulated after consulting things such as a patient's birth chart, a chart created when they fell ill, and the position of the stars at different stages in the disease's progression. Although not all physicians would practice the fundamental principles of astrological medicine, it still played a large roll in Italian university curriculums during the Renaissance.

Political astrology, on the other hand, was the application of astrology and astrological practices by rulers and political figures to advance political agendas. All techniques of applying astrology required casting and interpreting the skies. Astrologers would cast charts and predictions of Renaissance elite, using them to prove to the public that astrology's predictive value was real. Politicians of all forms would consult astrologers for advice in political proceedings and decisions. It is clear that astrology had its many uses during the Renaissance in Italy. Its history in this context may often be overlooked in favor of new thinking and scholarship of that era, but astrology's presence was prominent and found its way into most parts of society.

### **Scientific Advances and Pfaff's Rediscovery of Astrology**

With the Renaissance and Reformation came a big change in the world of mathematics and science. New technologies and developments in math led to the increasing accuracy of astronomy. Mathematicians saw math as a key to unravel the universe and understand God's work and the divine, using math as a theological tool. Slowly, math was used to overcome the Aristotelian view of the world, a breakthrough that truly took place when Johannes Kepler took Copernicus's theory of a heliocentric system and used it as a base for all of his work.

Isaac Newton used Kepler's work to explain the planetary orbits using gravity, starting a wave of astronomical advances. The divide between astrology and astronomy was evident and astrology quickly lost its place in society and in science. A century after astrology truly lost its validity, a natural scientist in Germany by the name of Johannes Pfaff attempted to bring astrology back to relevance. Pfaff was a professor of astronomy and used his position to try and spread ideas of astrology. In his most notable work, titled *Astrologie*, Pfaff uses astrological charts and diagrams to claim the legitimacy of astrology. He argues in its favor, quoting Ptolemy and showing horoscopes of emperors to prove its accuracy. A notable feature in Pfaff's work is his inclusion of the zodiac which have been consistent throughout astrology's history. Despite his best efforts, Pfaff lost most credibility in his field due to the criticism of his peers. He spent the rest of his life teaching and writing about it, but his attempt at bringing astrology back into society failed in the end. In the age of science and discovery, astrology lost its home.

The Modern West<sup>16 17</sup>

In an interesting turn of events, astrology found itself a new home during the Weimar Republic through none other than the field of Psychology. During this time, a rise in occult practices brought along with it a rise in astrology. Practitioners argued that there was a divide between the two, stating that astrology was an experiential science or *Erfahrungswissenschaft* in German. Author Oscar Schmitz wrote a major astrological text titled *Der Geist der Astrology* which combined horoscope readings of famous Germans with the discussion of the Great War in terms of astrology. Additionally, he included technical information about the practice of it although the main purpose of his book was for interested parties, not for researchers of astrology. He argued that one must first experience the use of astrology before judging it due to its experiential nature. Schmitz shares his personal story and encounters with astrology for readers to see that experience is key to understanding astrology. He even brings it into the equation of religion, saying that astrology is a way to read the language of God through celestial signs and his will becomes one with God's. Many others offered their views and interpretation of astrology, some even providing statistical data of chart elements an attempt to give astrology a scientific respectability.

Psychologist Dr. Olga von Ungern-Sternberg attached astrology to a psychoanalytic way of practice. She used Jung's theory of archetypes to support her theories of astrological affinities. She said that the positions of the planets at birth reflect the possible expressions of character in a person. Other astrologers and doctors continued in this line of study, with even Jung himself mixing the two fields of astrology and psychology. Astrology during the Weimar Republic was

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Lynn Zahrt, "Oscar Schmitz and Narratives of Astrological Experience," in *The Astrological Imaginary in Early Twentieth-Century German Culture*, PhD Dissertation, (UC Berkeley, 2012), 10-40.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolas Campion, "Introduction: A Million Dollar Business?" in *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-11.

focused much more on the individual scale. While in the past it had been used by and for political leaders, in the modern age it was about each individual person and their experience with the matter. For this reason, it makes sense that the idea was combined with concepts in psychology, for both deal with a person's mind and being.

Astrology is seen in a different light today. While it is practiced by many individuals for their own reasons, it has also become a form of a media-based business. Astrologers provide horoscopes on television, in newspaper columns, and run businesses both online and in-person where they provide readings. Skeptics are very common, claiming it is a form of scientific ignorance and unreliable. They back their claims with examples of false predictions and find its survival into modern society to be problematic. What can be said to it is this: astrology has found itself a new home in the modern world amongst people in all parts of society. At this time, it is fair to say that if people choose to act based on the alignment of the stars, why not? Many people act based on religious beliefs, so the trust that others put in astrology differs very little. Although little to no scientific evidence can prove that astrology is accurate, it is up to the individual to decide if they wish to use it for themselves.

### Conclusion and Future Exploration on the Topic

What makes astrology so fascinating is that it has been present through most of human history. While science developed and astrology changed as it passed between civilizations, the idea that the cosmos can predict human nature and behavior has been consistent since its conception. As I said before, the sky has always been a matter of interest to humans and it seems only natural that we would try to find meaning in planetary movements and celestial motions.

In the future, I hope to expand upon this paper and delve further into the research. Because the astrological history that I cover in this paper is primarily focused on Europe, Mesopotamia, and Asia, the future research that I want to conduct would include studying Indigenous astrological practices in North and South America, Africa, and Australia. Additionally, I would go much deeper into the research, writing a comprehensive history of the subject matter that includes diagrams, charts, and other tools used in astrological practices through the millennia. I believe that a lot can be gained from the history of astrology, whether it is an understanding of how astrology has brought us to our modern science or an appreciation of humanity's attempt to make sense of the world.

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