**Astrology, Patriarchy and Postmodernism by Bill Sheeran**

Introduction
There was a time in the not too distant past when astrology stopped making sense. After two thousand years, a whole cosmology unravelled in the space of a couple of life times. Astrology was ejected from its safe cocoon, supplanted by cold metallic Reason and the new occult force of Gravity. In the academic institutions of the West it became a subject unfit for study, and over three centuries later, the situation still holds. But despite this prolonged exclusion from the officially sanctioned world view, astrology is still alive within the culture, albeit in a somewhat malnourished state. Restricted access to a wide range of resources and facilities over a prolonged period of time has had its effects, particularly in terms of research and the establishment of solid institutions. Counterbalancing this is the unprecedented amount of astrology-related activity evident today, whether in terms of client work, book and journal publishing, or presence on the Internet. Even so, in the context of western society, astrology exists in a kind of ghetto, ostracised, misrepresented and on the margins.

Although efforts have been made to validate astrology in objective terms using the methods of science (thereby rendering it generally acceptable), they have not been very successful so far. As an interpretative craft, the practice of astrology entails a high degree of subjective evaluation. The literalism of scientific objectivity is not well suited to modelling symbol systems such as astrology. From a conventional scientific perspective, it is almost impossible for astrology to fulfil the criteria which would attest to its reality. And yet astrology is a very resilient feature of humanity's subjective experience. An alternative approach would be to attempt to formulate a theoretical or philosophical understanding of the nature of astrology uncoupled from the literalism of science, and based on the evidence of that subjective experience (i.e. on its own terms). The manifestations of astrology in the past as well as the present, in both western and non-western cultures, provide a huge amount of material from which to distil conceptual models.

The Value of Conceptual Models
Why bother with conceptual models? After all, astrology is a craft whose value and application does not hinge on its rationalisation. One answer to that question is that we live in a culture and time when blind faith is not enough - we like things to make sense. This does not mean that astrology has to be explained according to universal laws defined by orthodoxy. There is a middle way between rational objectivity and individual subjective fancy. It is possible for something to make sense non-rationally, for it to feel OK in terms of the logic of imagination. From this point of view, conceptual models are not literal representations of phenomena, but instead act as metaphors which carry explanatory power. Such metaphorical models mediate understanding, and evolve through experience, becoming consolidated through consensus. Most importantly they also facilitate the communication of astrology's nature in a way that makes sense to the imagination - it becomes conceivable. There are aspects of life (and astrology) which are impervious to reason, but which assume a degree of clarity when considered non-rationally.

Another reason for developing conceptual models is that they provide a framework within which astrologers can discuss and debate the merits of approaches or techniques (both old and new) as a complement to empirical observation. With the possible exception of Jungian ideas about synchronicity and divination, which have proved to be very useful for psychological astrology in particular, such theoretical constructions are thin on the ground. The absence of conceptual frameworks puts astrologers on the defensive when challenged, inducing an insecurity which becomes globally visible as flame wars on the Internet discussion groups, or locally as the frequent animosity which can erupt between individual astrologers who embrace different and seemingly mutually exclusive approaches. And of course such an absence provides critics of astrology with all the fun of a turkey shoot. It is also intellectually dissatisfying to have to live with a situation where internal inconsistencies such as the myriad of house systems, a handful of zodiacs, or the question of hypothetical planets remain unaddressed simply for want of a framework within which they can be usefully debated. At this stage it is pretty clear that quantitative science alone cannot provide that framework, and other strategies need to be developed.

Questioning Absolutes
As it happens, in this century the aspiration of achieving an absolute and objective scientific definition of reality has been severely dented [[1]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost.html#1). Increasingly, it is being recognised that it is impossible to escape the "contaminating" influence of subjectivity and imagination, and that the conceptual modelling of reality is rooted in a wide range of variables which together constitute the "cognitive landscape" of our culture. Today, the pole position is still given to rational logic and scientific methodology, which of course has a potent value. However, these are nevertheless bound to cultural determinants (such as physical embodiment, language, history, mythology, religion, philosophy, climate, geographical location, etc.) which at the very least modulate which questions will be asked and which answers are acceptable. The modelling of reality does not happen in a cultural vacuum [[2]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost.html#2).

More generally, the current expanding post-modern sensibility promotes a liberation from the constraints of absolutes and certainty. Central to the Modern world view is the idea that there are authoritative over-arching theories which provide universal explanations (e.g. Marxism, religions, scientific "theories of everything", etc.). This is being seriously questioned by post-modern philosophers. One of the problems highlighted is the extent of exclusion, intolerance and cultural bias implicit in such authoritarian perspectives. This has been as much an issue for astrology as it has for the barely tolerated world views which have emerged from non-western cultures. The shift away from attachment to universal absolutes is in its infancy, and creates many problems which are ably highlighted by critics of postmodernism. It is beyond the scope of this article to enter into the various arguments. However, the genie is out of the bottle, and certain conceptual bridges have been crossed which set the scene for cultural evolution during the next century [[3]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost.html#3).

Astrology is a Social Activity
This destabilisation has implications for astrology. First of all, it promises to absolve astrologers from feeling driven to validate astrology in terms of the current dogmas of orthodox thinking, which are largely defined by science. On the other hand, it puts pressure on astrologers to develop their own theories, ones which makes sense both internally and within a broad cultural context that can embrace diversity. It also implies that astrology itself is not necessarily the expression of a closed set of fixed and timeless truths. The form it takes in any given era and culture is grounded in the appropriate cognitive landscape. In other words, what astrology means, its structural elements, the way it is practised, its social function, etc., are open to evolution. Obviously, this does not mean that it can be re-invented willy-nilly - it has a lineage and tradition which sustains it like the roots of a tree, and which has substantial and lasting value. On the other hand, astrology is first and foremost a human societal activity, and is not to be literally equated with the phenomena it studies. It could perhaps be partially defined as the evolving record of humanity's efforts to model a subjectively experienced phenomenon - the correlation between celestial rhythms and the rhythms of life on Earth. If the shift towards a post-modern perspective becomes further consolidated in the next century, what forms will astrology take on as it evolves in response to the profound cultural changes we have witnessed during this one?

Cultural Bifurcations
This is a big question. In beginning to address it, it makes sense to start with a highly simplistic overview. In relation to the history of astrology, I'd like to propose three major periods of transition, or cultural bifurcations. They coincide with the invention of the wheel (circa 4000-3000 B.C.E.) [[4]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost2.html#4), the beginning of the scientific revolution (circa 16th-17th centuries), and the latter half of the 20th century, correlating with the Pre-Modern, the Modern and the Post-Modern eras respectively. Each period represents a broad cultural backdrop within which astrology has had an evolving social presence. A key point I wish to make below is that despite the crisis which the Modern era has created for astrology, it nevertheless shares common ground with the Pre-Modern era in that both give a dominant expression to the desire for order, combined with a positive rejection of chaos (the formless, unfathomable well spring from which order emerges). In the current Post-Modern era this symmetry seems to be breaking in significant ways, which has implications for the astrology of the future.

Astrology and the Pre-Modern Era
The investing of meaning and power in celestial bodies goes back beyond the time of the earliest written mythologies of Sumer (circa 3,000 BCE) into the mists of prehistory. The discovery of the wheel (and the consequent ability to transport large amounts of foodstuffs to central storage points) facilitated an agrarian revolution and the beginnings of urbanisation. This helped to nurture the emergence of what is called patriarchy, a process which slowly got underway in the general period of 5000-3000B.C.E. in the region of what is now Iraq and its surrounding territory, maturing fully during the following two millennia [[5]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost2.html#5). Patriarchy was originally a social system geared towards the creation of stable societies, uniform social ideals and cultural traditions, economic growth, the protection of the communal harvest, etc.. In such a social context, order becomes a primary virtue. In keeping with the premise that the form which astrology takes is to a degree culturally determined, one can imagine that the shift from nomadic to agrarian to urban life styles would have an impact in this regard. Without wishing to deny its earlier manifestations, the recognisable form of the astrology we practice is largely based on the blending of Mesopotamian astral divination with Greek mathematics and astronomy from approximately the 6th century B.C.E onwards in the Pre-Modern era. This places its roots firmly in the period when patriarchy already held sway in the Mediterranean region.

For 2000 years, astrology featured as an integral part of the European cultural map. As a system it mediated understanding on a cosmological level, and in relation to climate, health, politics, relationships, etc. It was consistent to one extent or another with the philosophies of major figures such as Plato and Aristotle, and their later champions such as Thomas Aquinas in the medieval period. Naturally, it provoked argument, whether along populist vs esoteric or judicial vs. natural astrology lines, etc. The encroachment of blatant superstition into astrology has also been a perennial focus for criticism, and still is today. However, the outcome of such debates rarely entailed a complete denial of astrology. Instead a serious critique of underlying suppositions and some of the practical applications of astrology ensued (especially in relation to divinatory astrology). Nonetheless, a precursor to astrology's fall from grace and the birth of modern astronomy was the division during the Renaissance between those who perceived astrology in more objective terms ("mathematical or scientific astrology"), and those who had strong subjectivist leanings [[6]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost2.html#6).

This division became more polarised during the cultural bifurcation that separated the Modern from the Pre-Modern era, and which saw the launch of two highly significant and characteristic developments. One of these was the formulation of scientific method, a logical approach to experimentation with a view to establishing objective truth. The other was the emergence of the doctrine of materialism. This held that whatever exists is either matter, or entirely dependant on matter for its existence. Astrology wilted in the face of these new truth criteria. It became stranded on the receding cliffs of the Pre-Modern worldview, submitting without a murmur in a strikingly short period of time. Astrology stopped making sense, inducing a "cognitive dissonance" among those embracing the new perspectives. This mutual alienation has created the illusion of complete separation between the old and the new.

Astrology and the Modern Era
Astrology in the west had a pretty rough ride during the 18th and 19th centuries [[7]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost2.html#7). Enlightenment thinking sought to subject all received wisdom to the gaze of reason, and to banish the darkness of superstition or enslavement to belief. Astrology could not withstand the interrogation. The ideology of individual freedom paradoxically resided alongside the mechanistic determinism of Newtonian physics, to the detriment of older concepts of astral determinism. The concept of linear progress took hold, prompting an conscious distancing from the traditions of the past. Initially, those who continued to practice astrology adopted a resolutely anti-Modern stance. The dehumanising impact of the industrial revolution, materialism and rationalism, eventually provoked a Romantic reaction in the 19th century. Apart from the outpourings from artists, poets, writers, musicians, etc., an interest in the esoteric and sublime took hold. The quest for "higher truths" counter-balanced the search for material truths. This quintessentially Neptunian response to the excesses of the Uranian Enlightenment produced the Theosophical movement. Its doctrinal blend of Hindu and Neo-Platonic elements provided a fertile ground for the re-emergence of astrology in the Modern era.

However, the new shift in the cognitive landscape during those centuries had an impact, and debates between the more objectively oriented astrologers influenced by Modern ideas and those who operated within the confines of Theosophy started to flow. Typical examples of objectively inclined practitioners include 19th century astrologers A.J.Pearce and Richard Garnett [[8]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost2.html#8). They attempted to assimilate Enlightenment thinking by advancing the notion of astrology as an applied mathematical science. Both were avid critics of theosophical astrology. They were in the minority though, and the more esoterically toned astrology was the one which asserted itself in the early years of this century. Since the 1940s, the Modern impulse has made a greater impression, whether it be through the work of cosmobiologists such as Rheinhold Ebertin, the beginnings of research as encapsulated by projects such Cyril Fagan's elaboration of siderealism, the statistical research of the Gauquelins, etc.

The Common Ground between Astrology and Science
Although astrology fell from favour during the Modern era, it has been influenced by the currents of the period. Apart from the practical and psychological effects of exclusion and rejection (which in my opinion still echo in the form of an inferiority complex and a difficulty in engaging in the process of self-criticism), the influence of scientific thinking on the one hand, and the reactionary subjectivism of Theosophy on the other, are both evident in 20th century astrology. One could also argue that the lack of a tradition of theoretical or conceptual modelling in contemporary astrology is a legacy of Enlightenment exclusion. However, on probing beneath the surface, it soon becomes clear that despite the crisis of transition between the Pre-Modern and Modern eras, some things remained unchanged.

There is a bridge between the Pre-modern and Modern worlds, constructed from the highly influential philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. The impact of these two philosophers on the evolution of ideas in the west is hard to overestimate, and they provide the twin pillars upon which science and mathematics rest. Astrology is also compatible with these same philosophies. Although they may have engaged on the battlefield 350 years ago, astrology and Modern science are bonded on a deep philosophical level, one which relates to giving primacy to order and structure over evolution and process.

From a Platonic point of view, celestial movements were considered the perfect example of uniform motion, absolutely orderly, predictable, and unchanging within a permanent cosmos. Astrology was the expression of a temporal bridge between the ideal and harmonious planetary spheres and the phenomenal world of discord and cyclic change here on earth. It was a "rational" means of revealing the hidden order underlying the imperfect world of illusory appearances and change perceived through our deceptive senses [[9]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#9).

According to the perceptions of Newtonian physics, nature and the cosmos are machine-like - totally determined physical systems which are understandable using the logic and methodology of mathematics and science. We only have to find out what the Laws are to bring Plato's ideal cosmos into light.

The cosmological models may have changed in the wake of the Copernican Revolution, but the essential message stayed the same - the cosmos is stable and orderly. As a consequence, astrology and science thus share one striking feature in common. They are both predictive disciplines; because orderliness implies predictability. On the other hand, the natural world of the senses is anything but orderly. For both astrology and science, Nature is the realm of chaos, the perceived enemy of cosmos. Revealing the hidden order amidst the chaos was the goal, and Reason was the tool for the job (combined in the Modern era with experimentation). Whether dressed in the garb of astrological or scientific logic, the goal was the shared.

Patriarchy and Order
It has been argued by Riane Eisler (among others) that patriarchy rose to prominence at the expense of pre-patriarchal culture from about 4,000B.C.E. onwards [[10](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html%22%20%5Cl%20%2210)]. What was once a "partnership" society (agricultural, goddess worshipping, and in partnership with nature) was gradually replaced by a "dominator" society (more warlike, god worshipping and dedicated to dominating and controlling nature). By the time Babylon began to flourish, the newer patriarchal mindset was firmly entrenched and the striving for order and predictability to the exclusion of chaos and the unpredictable assumed significance. The goal of dominating Nature and exploiting her resources (still a key aspect of science and technology) unfolded. This is represented in the myths from the time. In the period of transition between matrifocal and patriarchal culture, the Babylonian story of the defeat of Tiamat (representing the forces of chaos and the unpredictable) by Marduk (representing the forces of order and the predictable) assumed its form. Apart from reflecting the emerging supremacy of patriarchy, this myth could also be interpreted as mirroring a deep seated psychological preference for order, born out of an existential fear or anxiety in the face of the wild forces of Nature. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this anxiety is a consequence of the human capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness. As described in the biblical myth of the Fall, we are chronically aware of mortality, suffering, the possibility of illness, the threat posed by elemental forces, etc., none of which induces a sense of ease. The notion that this might generate an anticipatory consciousness with a view to avoiding such possibilities is reasonable. I would suggest that astrology and science are both legacies from this drive. The self-reflective aspects of consciousness not only fostered an existential anxiety, but also facilitated experientially based learning. The project of exploiting nature's resources, of imposing order on her, slowly gathered momentum, complementing the urge to anticipate the future. One could argue that an amplifiying feedback loop between these two consequences of self-consciousness contributed significantly to the eventual emergence of patriarchy.

What I am suggesting here is that contemporary astrology and science, for all their differences, are branches on the same tree, one which has its roots in patriarchy. Both emphasise order, structure and predictability, and both feel uncomfortable with the unpredictable and the unfathomable. Whether it is astrology or science (or for that matter western religion), the underlying motive is shared - salvation from the forces of chaos. They describe differing approaches to conceptualising the desire for order. Ultimately the quest is the same - the alleviation of existential anxiety through the identification of universal and absolute principles which act in a "law-like" predictable fashion. When the cultural bifurcation happened in the 16th and 17th centuries, to whatever extent astrology was a primary vehicle for predicting and attuning to cosmic law and order, in her demise she surrendered her baton to classical science.

Separation from Nature
Astrology gave primacy to celestial movements - the heavens above were the paragon of perfection, the residence of the deities, while the realm of life was one of corruption and decay. What we do not have here is an equality between above and below. Nature was seen in a negative light. Although Modern philosophy and science brought the focus back down to earth, putting the human back in the centre, the consequence has paradoxically been an even greater alienation from Nature. It became an "object" - inert, lifeless matter to be tamed, conquered, exploited, etc. The unpredictability evident in the natural world was seen as aberrant, and merely in need of clarification. The rational abstractions of the laws of physics, the DNA code, or astrological patterns provide the keys to clarity.

In recent times, it has become increasingly clear that the unpredictability in the natural world may be innate. The paradigm of clockwork predictability has virtually disintegrated. The concept of an orderly, stable and predictable cosmos which has reflected the desires of humanity for over 3000 years no longer holds water. This is appropriately represented by the changing perceptions of the solar system from Ptolemy to the present (Fig 1)

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| Fig.1 The changing perception of the solar system |
| Ptolemy | earth-centred | perfect | stable | predictable | pre-modern |
| Copernicus | sun-centred | perfect | stable | predictable | pre-modern/modern |
| Galileo [(11)](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#t) | sun-centred | imperfect | stable | predictable | modern |
| Newton [(12)](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#t) | sun-centred | imperfect | stable? | predictable? | modern |
| Einstein [(13)](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#t) | no centre | imperfect | stable? | predictable? | modern/post-modern |
| Hubble [(14)](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#t) | no centre | imperfect | expanding | predictable? | modern/post-modern |
| 1998 [(15)](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost3.html#t) | no centre | imperfect | expanding? | unpredictable | post-modern |

Today, stars die just like humans. Instability, unpredictability, and decay are as much a feature of the cosmos as they are of life on Earth. As below, so above. This new sense of equality born out of science cracks Platonic idealism wide open, and by a kind of ironic default reinstates Nature to a position equivalent to that which it held in pre-patriarchal days. One of partnership. At least this would seem to be the implication, one which is given support by the emergence for the first time of a conscious environmental awareness focused on care and protection rather than dominance and exploitation. We are living through a radical change in the cognitive landscape of our culture, the reverberations of which will affect astrology as much as anything else.

Order and predictability in the Post-Modern Era
In considering the evolution of astrology into the next century, it seems we have a key here to exploring possible conceptual models. Two factors present themselves for re-appraisal - prediction and the importance of context. In fact, these are both inter-related.

In the past, the prevailing mechanistic paradigm promoted the notion that understanding the behaviour of a system was solely dependant on analysing its structure and applying the known laws of physics. The whole is no more than the sum of its parts, and the context which the system operates in is unimportant. This is true for a machine, but it doesn't work very well for organisms, which interact with (and are dependant on) their context or environment. This machine metaphor once so important to science can also be recognised within astrological practice, although it has fluctuated in strength over the last few decades. It is present in the idea that analysing the structure of the horoscope is the sole key to understanding the behaviour and experience of the native. It is implicit in the rules of horary as traditionally applied, and is enjoying a degree of revival among those who are interested in predicting the moment of death, for example.

In the new post-mechanistic (and holistic) paradigm, equal weight is given to the context as to the structure. To use an analogy from science, one will look in vain for the genetic pattern indicating a predisposition to malnutrition in the chromosomes of a starving child in the Sudan. It is the dynamics of the context which play the major determining role. Similarly, from an astrological point of view, the static structure of the horoscope cannot be isolated from the context to which it refers. This may seem obvious to many astrologers, but it has several major implications (not least the fact that when an astrologer interprets a chart, he or she becomes part of the context).

Prediction also comes under scrutiny. The uniform motion of the planets may be predictable to all intents and purposes, but the dynamic processes in life (i.e. the dynamics of the context) are not. This has become quite clear from the models and insights which have emerged from non-linear science [[16]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost4.html#16). As these become more established in western conceptualisations of reality, astrology could do worse than look for cues from that direction, especially as astrology's predictive record leaves much to be desired. The fundamental point in this regard is that Nature is the matrix through which astrological potential manifests as opposed to that which it acts upon - structure (i.e. information potential implicit in the horoscope) is subordinated to process. In order to understand prediction, one has to embrace the innate unpredictability vested in the dynamics of the context. This shifts the perspective from predicting final "event states" independent of context to predicting behaviour based on an understanding of contextual dynamics. Two complementary but opposing themes inter-penetrate. Predictive power decreases with the degree of specificity one wishes to attain, but increases in proportion to the amount of contextual information at hand. The bottom line would seem to be that predictive certainty is unattainable. There is a lot to be said for formulating an "unpredictability principle" in astrology, for seeing predictive potential as a spectrum that runs from strong to weak, or establishing the concept of a "predictability horizon" beyond which predictive hopelessness sets in.

Postmodernity and 21st Century Astrology
One of the ironies of the Modern era, so enamoured with structure and order, is that its apotheosis as Modernism resulted in increased abstraction, and eventually the disintegration of structure. In science, the smashing of the atom, relativity and quantum theories; in literature, Joycean streams of consciousness and free form poetry; in art, abstract expressionism and the blank white canvas; in music, John Cage's silent piano piece or the "atonal noise" of modern compositions, etc. In some respects this can be seen as a logical consequence of the pursuit of objectivity combined with the ideology of linear progress (Enlightenment ideals), which together require continual separation from both the influence of the past and of context. The fact that no one can actually listen to the music is unimportant, the fact that modernist architecture is ugly and unsuitable for living or working in is unimportant, etc. The selection pressure for reaction against the excesses of soul-less modernism eventually reached breaking point.

Paralleling this retreat from soul-fullness (receptivity to context) has been the gradual emergence of its opposite. This is most obvious in the re-appraisal of the feminine which has gathered momentum throughout the century; the evolution of ecological and environmental consciousness; the development of process thinking and systems theory, which necessitates the addressing of context; and the new mathematics and science of complexity and chaos. The communications and information revolution has broken down barriers which once helped to sustain cultural exclusion of the "Other", the foreign, the unfamiliar. Postmodernity is the name given to the cultural expression of the consequences of these developments. Key features include the abandoning of the quest for universal truths and absolutes, the dissolving of value hierarchies (whereby, for example, western cultural perspectives are seen as superior to others), the embracing of cultural diversity, media phenomena such as the Internet, non-linear storylines in literature and film, a re-appraisal of the past, and on. [[17]](http://www.radical-astrology.com/articles/articles/philosophy/astpatpost4.html#17)

Astrology is hardly likely to remain unaffected by these changes, and already shows many signs of the influence of postmodernism. Most clearly, this manifests as the ease with which astrologers engage in the use of new techniques in the absence of any "traditional" rationale, the assumption of symbolic significance for every new rock discovered circling the Sun, the eclectic blending of astrological techniques from different cultures, the vitality of astrology's presence on the Internet, etc. Even the many valuable translations of ancient texts currently underway indicate a movement beyond Modernism, which characteristically belittled the value of the past.

While this is likely to have a vitalising impact on astrology, there are problems to be negotiated. First and foremost is the question of relativism. Critics of postmodernism argue that if the pursuit of absolute objectivity is abandoned, then the situation disintegrates into a subjective fog. In other words, a situation pertains where truths become distilled down to whatever one feels subjectively to be the case. From this point of view, truths have no core, no inertia, no collective dimension. There are counter-arguments which one can put forward against this view, and which also surmount the dilemmas of relativism, but they are beyond the scope of this article. What is clear is that a re-evaluation of the nature of truth is underway, and what is important is that astrologers start thinking about these issues.

Conclusion
The post-modern sensibility reflects a radical shift in the collective psyche, or cognitive landscape. To my mind it highlights a symmetry breaking process in relation to the urges underlying patriarchally based thinking. Post-modern commentators are fond of writing articles with titles like "The Death of the Author", "The End of History", etc., which reflect this cathartic transformation. Given contemporary astrology's patriarchal roots, perhaps we are witnessing the Death of Astrology. But of course, this is a precursor phase in the process of rebirth. The onus is on astrologers to take on the difficult task of re-visioning its conceptual basis and to construct models which can flourish rather than wither in the emerging cognitive ground. This does not mean throwing out techniques, abandoning the experience of millennia, etc.. It's not the application that is the primary problem. It is the conceptual framework or theoretical/philosophical foundation on which the applied craft is based which needs to be addressed. The psychologically comforting and orderly "closure" promised in the past by Saturn in the form of Law and structured inevitability now has to bend to the opposing current of freedom, change and insecurity, as symbolised by the outer planets. Structure (being) is subordinated to process (becoming), a reversal of the previous norm, allowing an evolutionary potential into the system.

In a mythological sense, we are witnessing the resurrection of Tiamat. The cultural re-embracing of chaos and the unknowable currently underway presents an imperative to consciously re-negotiate the form our astrology takes within the new post-patriarchal framework. Unless this happens, astrology will make even less sense in the future than it does in the present.

Notes

[1] An accessible overview of various philosophical perspectives on science's claims to objectivity can be found in What is this thing called Science?, A.F.Chalmers, The Open University Press, Milton Keynes, England, 1978. For a classic critique of the supposed rational objectivity of science, see The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas S.Kuhn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970.

[2] In Metaphors We Live By, G.Lakoff, M.Johnson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980 forceful arguments are made promoting the idea that truth is always relative to a conceptual system defined by metaphors, which themselves are culturally determined. The concept of absolute and objective truth is considered as a western cultural myth.

[3] For a good and readable introduction to postmodernism, see The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought, edited by Stuart Sim, Icon Books, Cambridge, England, 1998.

[4] Chaos Gaia Eros, Ralph Abraham, Harper Collins, New York, 1994 chapter 13, pp 157-167 gives a chronology of the wheel.

[5] See The Chalice and the Blade, by Riane Eisler, Harper & Row, New York, 1987

[6] Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life, Eugenio Garin, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1983 presents arguments from the Renaissance period.

[7] For an informative and entertaining discussion of astrology and astrologers in Britain during the Victorian and Edwardian period, see A Confusion of Prophets, Patrick Curry, Collins & Brown, London, 1992

[8] A Confusion of Prophets, pp 109-121

[9] Time in History, G.J.Whitrow Oxford University Press, England, 1989, pp 41-42

[10] The Chalice and the Blade, by Riane Eisler, Harper & Row, New York, 1987

[11] The use of the telescope rapidly made clear that the solar system did not conform to the Platonic ideal of perfection.

[12] In the wake of the discovery of Newton's laws of motion, much effort was expended trying to mathematically prove that the solar system was stable, and therefore predictable. This proved to be impossible. See Newton's Clock: Chaos in the Solar System, Ivars Peterson, W.H.Freeman & Co. New York 1993, pp 143 -169

[13] Einstein's theories raise questions about privileged positions such as fixed centres.

[14] Hubble demonstrated that the universe was expanding

[15] The solar system exhibits chaotic dynamics over long time frames. See Newton's Clock: Chaos in the Solar System, chapter 11 pp247-270

[16] See In the Wake of Chaos: Unpredictable Order in Dynamical Systems, Stephen H.Kellern, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994

[17] See The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought, ed. Stuart Sims

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