

NOTES AND DISCUSSION

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THE CONSUMPTION OF ASTROLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

“Look again at the disorder of the heavens...
The courses of these little lights give rise to
the idea of an order. Man has not yet recovered
from it.”

Valéry, *Mon Faust*

“I am filled with thoughts of industrial might,
I hear the voice of human forces.
We’ve had enough of all the stars of heaven!
We can do all that better here on earth.”

Yesenin, *Stansy*

The widespread and increasing vogue of astrology in France offers the spectacle of scientific popularization and esoteric speculation in full swing, with the two frequently intermingling. Disconcerting at first sight, this process must be placed within the framework of the social contradictions that have given rise to the rationalistic

Translated by Chris Becker.

trends of “modernity.” As early as the Age of Enlightenment, occultism, as it spread, associated itself with natural science. In the nineteenth century this association continued, taking on new forms; it was now in connection with the history of religions and with Oriental studies that many magazines gave considerable space to occultism. From the *Revue de Paris*, where Nerval published his *Aurélia*, all the way over to the dignified *Revue des deux mondes*, the current seeped in a little everywhere. In our own day, while *Planète* is in the forefront, one must not lose sight of the outpouring of books and periodicals among which this publication is merely a particularly prominent commercial success. In this regard, astrology takes first place among all similar forms of speculation and occult practice that are merchandised in such fashion, in terms of its mass diffusion.

What are the social contradictions which explain the fact that the gains made by science and communication thus seem somehow to favor the spread of ideas which the scientific Establishment considers to be anti-scientific? Our central hypothesis is that the limitations of scientific knowledge, whether theoretical, practical, or pedagogical, demand an asceticism often experienced as frustration in terms of the felt needs of individuals or groups. The dwindling influence of organized religion aggravates this difficulty, to the extent that a large section of the population now finds itself forced to turn to speculation clothed in secular forms to get answers to the vital questions left open by science. Poorly informed to begin with on the goals of scientific research and its applications, the general public is still less competent to differentiate between rigorously scientific procedures and those which dispense with the niceties of epistemology. In this respect, astrology has something dizzying about it.

Astrology belongs to a large family of divinatory procedures, those based upon structural characteristics resulting from a combination of simple elements. A good example of the *genre* is geomancy, with its constructive mechanisms of even and odd signs; another is fortune-telling with tarot cards. In other words, we are faced here with a fairly general category of thought processes in which classificatory and combinative systems are a basic tool. This granted, it is natural enough that men should seek to establish correspondences between certain types of situa-

tions or happenings in the destinies of individuals or groups, on the one hand, and certain configurations of sign-elements, on the other. The stuff of divination is, in a certain sense, the stock of meaningful signs through the medium of which that which is hidden reveals itself to us.

To this orientation we may oppose that of the systems in which an inspired individual makes available to the world of the unknown another means of declaring itself, a means also based on an essential aspect of human language: the emergence of a dialogue whose current has its source in the mysteries of the conscious and the unconscious, as claimed by Valéry for literary creativity: "O self, it is not you that find your idea; on the contrary, it is an idea that finds you and adopts you" (*Mauvaises pensées et autres*).

Within the combinative *genus* we may distinguish two species: the one characterized by the artificial composition of structures, the other by the verification of combinations that are not subject to the actions of the protagonists. For example, in geomancy or tarot, it is the fortune-teller who manipulates the elements, while in ornithomancy (augury) the augur must observe spatial configurations over which he has no control. In both cases, however, fortune finds its expression to the degree that the constructive techniques employed seek to produce a "fortune" which the operator himself cannot foresee; thus, when the cards are shuffled or when one traces on the ground a number of signs so large that it cannot be immediately obvious whether they are odd or even, the precautions taken effect the utilization as a machine, as it were, for the manufacture of "fortunes." The order of operations and distributions in tarot divination or in geomancy are nothing more than refinements of this procedure, the calculations serving as a screening device which prevents the fortune-teller from substituting his decision for the language of fortune.

In this respect astrology is an extreme case, for its basic elements are not only outside human action, but even pass the bounds of the sublunar world. The material transcendence of the stars, as the cause of earthly happenings, finds adequate expression in the passivity with which the astrologer observes them. We shall see, however, that in practice the astrologer claims that inspiration also plays a part in the horoscope.

A final condition for the establishment of a correspondence between fate and language is that the individual or group on whose behalf the interrogation is carried out must participate in some way in the source—combinative or inspired—of the discourse. This condition, whether it be met by holding the object in one's hand in psychometry, or the gesture of cutting the deck of cards, or by concentrating one's attention on the crystal ball, is universal in divination. Here again, astrology is an extreme case, for the conjunction of the stars at the moment of birth is a highly individualizable concept, attaining a maximum of participation—which results, not from the will of the individual, but from the very fact that the conjunction of the stars seals the fate of the newborn. Here purpose and language are all but absorbed into mechanical causality.

These distinctions have been set forth in order to show that astrology represents some very old and widespread patterns of human attempts to decipher the language of fate, at the same time that it corresponds to some very modern patterns of thought. One might venture the following paradox: Astrology arises from a drive many thousands of years old to find a modern method of carrying out this deciphering. Actually, the idea of letting human events depend upon the paths of the stars represents, in a sense, an admirable belief in the possibility of a materialistic explanation of the universe, and there can be little doubt that it was the study of the heavens which furnished the first model of a physical mechanism subject to fixed laws, made up of a finite number of elements capable of producing an almost infinite number of combinations. However, our analysis is clearly influenced here by our very modernity; past ages blended together their astrology, their religion, and their philosophy in many different ways, so that the characteristics we have just singled out represent first and foremost a catalogue of the elements now prevalent in French astrology.

And, finally, there is a certain discontinuity in the astrological tradition: the waning of geocentrism, the achievements of the natural sciences, the freeing of economic production and of human ecology from their dependence on astronomical observations, all dealt severe blows to astrology, to the point where a historian of occult practices could write, at the close of the nineteenth

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century, that astrology had disappeared once and for all from France.¹

Yet today we are witnessing a renaissance, and a considerable increase, in the consumption of astrology. What has happened? Doubtless a comparison with the considerable vogue enjoyed by phrenology in the first half of the nineteenth century will shed some light on the problem. Following the publication of the works of Gall and Spurzheim (*Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux en général et du cerveau en particulier*, 1810-1819), and propagated notably by the teaching of the famous physician Broussais, a member of the Académie des Sciences, this discipline was born of the shock created by the discovery of brain centers; once discredited, it ended up among the collection of speculations and occult practices of which horoscopes are today one of the most active elements.

Both phrenology and astrology look upon man as a piece of Nature, but from opposite angles; the former insists on a determinism the key to which is the human body, and whose signs are anatomical in nature; the latter directs itself toward the universe, and deciphers the language of fate from the observations of the astronomers. In both cases we see the antithesis of animism, of providentialism, of all visions of a world inhabited by purposes. Perhaps it was the profound impression created by the discovery of great determining mechanisms which led to teachings that broadened the application of these discoveries and placed under their sway the "mystery" of personality and that of destiny.

Of course, scientific investigation is marked by a further step; a total confidence in rational explanation is accompanied by methodical doubt when faced with hypotheses lacking any experimental base. However, while anatomy, physiology, and psychology have since taken over the area once claimed by Gall, astrology has been aided in its resurgence by some very modern techniques: statistics, psychoanalysis, the press, industrially manufactured objects.

We shall first attempt to establish the scope of the phenomenon, then to characterize the consumer public, and finally to analyze its social functions.

¹ Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, Paris, Leroux, 1900.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE PHENOMENON

We shall not attempt an outline of the history of astrology in the modern era. Two quotations will serve to fill in the background of our subject.

“An interesting study remains to be made of the dispute that rose out of the renaissance of classical astrology in the sixteenth century, and continued, while calming down in the face of the indifference of the new humanists, into the seventeenth century.”²

“Astrology condemned in 1666 by an edict of Colbert, had been considered by all sound thinkers, from that time on right up to the end of the nineteenth century, to be a false science unworthy of any attention.

“Apparently it was the occultists, among whom one should mention Christian, Eliphas Levi, Papus, Piobb, etc., who laid the foundations for a renaissance of astrology.

“While Barlet, at the dawn of the present century, was dealing in pleasant thoughts of an esoteric and cabalistic sort, Fomalhaut, 1897, laid down the mathematical and cosmographical rules essential in the formulation of horoscopes, and Jule No gathered together, in a major three-volume work, the theories and aphorisms of Ptolemy.”³

Thus it was learned astrology that presided over the rebirth of this phenomenon, at the very time when Bouché-Leclercq was announcing its disappearance. Fostered by occultism, historical research, soon by statistics (Choisnard, 1898) and eventually by psychoanalysis (Barbault, *De la psychanalyse à l'astrologie*, 1961),⁴ the movement long remained confined to circles of initiates, before finding a popular form whose oversimplifications did not fail to scandalize the devotees of learned astrology; between the two World Wars the fashion for newspaper horoscope columns crossed the Atlantic and found a place in the French popular press. In 1935, we find columns in *Paris-Soir* (April 18) and in *Gringoire*

² Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 625 n.

³ Herbais de Thun, *Encyclopédie du mouvement astrologique de langue française au xx^e siècle*, Brussels, Éd. de la revue *Demain*, 1941, p. 23.

⁴ André Barbault, *De la psychanalyse à l'astrologie*, Paris, Edition du Seuil, 1961.

(January 4). At present, thirty years later, half of the dailies sold in France have horoscope columns, and various opinion samplings indicate that one out of two adults reads his horoscope at least occasionally (15 % do so regularly). The denominational press and the Communist papers are the main bastions of resistance. Magazines without regular columns often compensate for this lack by printing long articles on astrology; cf. the series published on this theme by *Paris-Match* in August of 1960.

Sometimes the predictions offered are overall forecasts for a year or a period; sometimes they may involve only "children born on this day." But the bulk of texts is made up of the regular columns, appearing in every issue and often giving the horoscope in the form of a crosstable: the twelve signs of the zodiac are ranged from top to bottom, while from left to right one locates the spheres of preoccupation (health, money, love, sometimes with regroupings, subdivisions, or added elements). One has only to look for the matters which correspond to his sign, or to the sign of the "loved one."

There is also a spate of specialized magazines: *Horoscope*, *Astral*, *Astres 65*, *Votre Club*, *Astres et destins*, *L'Astrologie*, *Bonheur et réussite*, *Les cahiers astrologiques*, *Le Destin et les astres*, *Votre avenir*, not to mention the *Prédictions astrologiques* by Francesco Waldner, *Votre Destin*, and so on...

Beginning with the press, this phenomenon has moved into the other mass media: on the radio there are various network programs, for example "Une étoile m'a dit..." (Radio Luxembourg); on television, even in the serials such as "Thierry la Fronde" and "Félix;" in the realm of the detective novel (Jacqueline Aimé and Jacques Berger, *Malgré Jupiter*), of science fiction (Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Les sept fils de l'étoile*), in the novel (Raymond Queneau, *Les derniers jours*) not to mention the collections of popularizing works (Edition du Seuil, Marabout, etc.). Finally, astrology is brought up more and more often in songs, interviews, autobiographies, movies, and so forth.

A whole industry is now in the process of development, for the production of personal items with signs of the zodiac or planets: bracelets, medallions, postcards, key-chains, ashtrays, ties, pendants, matchbox covers, engagement books, handkerchiefs, fruit juice glasses, T-shirts,—all these are already widely circulated

astrological items, though many stores hesitate to stocks them because of the necessity of carrying 12 models of each item.

This industrial production has not slowed down—on the contrary—the vogue for direct consultations, advertisements for which often appear next to the horoscopes in the newspapers. In addition, astrological booths have been opened in some of the department stores (Louvre, Samaritaine). Now one even sees horoscope vending machines that make use of I.B.M. punch cards.

This brief picture is not filled in in every detail; but our aim was above all to stress that astrology is constantly consolidating its already strong foothold, and that this phenomenon is taking on more and more of an industrial character. Here we have a striking illustration of one of Karl Marx' remarks: "Up to now it was thought that the Christian myths were able to take shape in the Roman Empire only because printing had not yet been invented. The converse is actually the case. The daily press and the telegraph which spread their stories in an instant throughout the world, fabricate more myths in a day (and the bourgeois herd accepts and diffuses them) than could have been produced in a whole century in earlier times."⁵

II. THE CONSUMERS

After this survey of the production of astrology, we may now proceed to examine its consumption. This is quite widespread, but its diffusion among the different social strata is far from uniform. Consumption of astrology coincides with certain thought patterns which can be analyzed on the basis of precise observations. Finally, it implies a relationship with the astrologer, of which we can get some idea from published testimonials, and from the letters written to horoscope columnists.

The linkage with social traits is known to us mainly through two surveys conducted by the I.F.O.P. (Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, for *France-Soir*⁶ on the basis of a representative sample of 2,000 French adults.

⁵ Karl Marx, *Letter to Kugelmann*, July 27, 1871.

⁶ See *France-Soir*, January 24, 1963. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the newspaper's editors, who were of material assistance in my research, and who permitted me to make use of the findings of the surveys; and to thank

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It should not come as a surprise that more women than men show a favorable attitude toward astrology, whether in terms of being informed (knowing one's sign), or of practice (reading horoscopes, ascertaining the signs of those around them), or of their value judgments (confidence in the predictive value of astrology, or in its ability to read character, high status awarded the astrologer).

More surprising, doubtless, are the indications which confirm our hypothesis of the modern and industrial nature of the phenomenon: a favorable attitude is the more likely the younger the subject, the larger the population center he lives in, and if he is not employed in agriculture. We know, moreover, that the percentage of papers that print horoscopes is higher for the Parisian daily press than for the provincial press.

Astrology is most popular among the employee group; for example, 72 % in this group say they read horoscopes regularly or occasionally, as over against 57 % for those in trade and 37 % for those in agriculture.

The essential facts can be summed up in a table indicating the percentages of those characterized by all three of the following traits: (1) knows own zodiac sign, (2) reads horoscope at least occasionally, (3) believes the character traits ascribed to individuals by astrology contain an element of truth:

	% of total sample:	30 %
SEX:	Male	21
	Female	39
AGE:	20 to 34 years	38
	35 to 49	33
	50 to 64	24
	65 and over	20
PROFESSION:	Liberal professions, executives	34
	Tradespeople	36
	Employees	46
	Workers	29
	Agriculturally employees	15
	No profession, retired	30

also the I.F.O.P., which placed at my disposal the punch cards and statistical tables summarizing the answers received from those questioned.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Less than 2,000	21 %
2,000 to 5,000	27
5,000 to 20,000	37
20,000 to 100,000	34
Above 100,000	40

For most of the questions asked in the two surveys, the responses ran about the same numerically for women, young people (20 to 34), employees, big-city dwellers (more than 100,000) and Catholics practicing only occasionally; the figures were also about the same for men, old people (65 and over), agriculturally employed, rural inhabitants, and those considering themselves non-Catholic or without religious affiliation.

As to the consumer's psychological makeup, the most striking trait, to judge from the content analysis of horoscopes, is the presumable egocentricity of the reader. True, in the holiday season the papers also publish predictions for the coming year in which world happenings are featured. One could also make the objection that in the survey, when asked the question "Do the predictions of astrologers interest you most when they deal with you, with others, or with events influencing the future of the world?" as many chose the first as the last of these alternatives. On the other hand, only 6 % of those polled are interested in predictions focused on "others," while one might very well think of "the future of the world" in an egocentric perspective. Lastly, the answer "when they deal with me" wins out easily among the women and the young people, who are the most dynamic sector of this public.

In any case, one observes objectively that the horoscopes and astrological objects manifestly address themselves to the consumer's ego; other persons are brought in only as a means of satisfying his needs.

More revealing is the degree of interference with religious attitudes. For example, the question "Would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up for you, if you were offered the possibility?" gave the followings percentages of "yes" in the survey:

Regularly practicing Catholics	37 %
Occasionally practicing Catholics	43 %

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Non-practicing Catholics	13 %
Other religions or no religion	12 %

The relative levels are the same for most questions. It would seem that religious sentiment predisposes one toward astrology, but that strong ties to the Church dampen this tendency.

This is important because it shows that the modernity of astrology lies not in a rationality of the scientific type, but rather in the sphere of offsets to rationality,—the watering down of rationality by interpretative or practically self-justifying “short-cuts” not grounded in systematic experimentation.

In the bulk of horoscopes, the editorial personality appears but seldom; generally the signature is a pseudonym. On the other hand, the annual predictions and articles on astrology often allow the personality of the astrologer to emerge. Obviously in oral consultations the element of personal *rapport* comes to the fore. But the most revealing information on this subject is that to be found in readers’ letters. The author has analyzed several hundred. They manifest a high degree of confidence in the astrologer precisely as an individual.

Clearly those who do write are usually fervent believers in astrology. At the same time, if astrology were an applied science, one would have only to follow to the letter the necessary techniques of deduction in order to make correct predictions. However, the astrologers contradict one another quite vigorously. Thus we compared the indications offered by 25 papers for “Sagittarians” for the week of December 6-12, 1959; there is no correlation whatsoever and the various advices obviously follow a random pattern. The result is the same when one analyses the predictions of 14 publications for the year 1960, and in this case we can affirm that Dame Reality did not show up for the rendezvous.

Faced with these discrepancies, each astrologer answers that his own system is the best and that the interpretation of the heavens demands inspiration, and cannot be pure calculation. Under the circumstances it is only natural that the public should express its confidence in terms of the personality of the astrologer.

In addition, a horoscope constitutes a sort of personal message for the reader. He looks in the tables for the cases that involve his sign; he projects on the text his own traits and preoccupations,

thus putting a quite specific interpretation on phrases which are objectively extremely vague. This is one of the virtues of astrology as a classificatory system; the correspondence between sign and destiny is heavily weighted down by the load placed upon it by the consumer.

Some editors of major dailies which publish horoscopes believe that the desire to find a personal message in the paper is one of the basic reasons for the success of the columns.

III. SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF ASTROLOGY

Whatever the predictive value of astrology, this method of divination serves certain functions within our society which correspond to certain needs. Not only are astrologers unimpressed with the statistical arguments in favor of horoscopes,⁷ but only 23 % of the persons interviewed by the I.F.O.P. claim to have already found that some astrological predictions came true in remarkable fashion. Compare this with 37 % who say that there is a degree of truth in the character traits astrology ascribes to individuals according to their signs, and the 43 % who put the astrologer in the same class as the scholar (rather than with the charlatan, the magician, the "healer," or the doctor). Clearly the favorable attitude is due less to successful predictions than to the difficulties involved in adapting to industrial civilization.

The social functions which we have singled out in our researches on astrology can be summed up in terms of five effects: the exorcising of change, the unriddling of fate, the furnishing of a mediator, the popularization of psychology and of the art of living, and finally the effect of putting into practice the nebula of heterodoxy sometimes given the name of "secular religiosity."

Industrial civilization has repressed a certain number of traditional hazards; for instance, in reducing infant mortality it has obtained techniques of contending with its consequences, as is the case with insurance against various risks. At the same time the churches have progressively renounced a large part of their protective functions, once ensured them by "free" religious observances now largely discontinued, and frowned upon as

⁷ Couderc, *L'Astrologie*, Paris, P.U.F., 1951.

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suspect by the clergy. Between the ground gained by technology and that lost by religion, there remains a no man's land all the larger because the new ways of life in turn engender new hazards (accidents, financial speculation) and allow certain traditional forms of risk to loom larger (the perils of romantic love). The phenomenon is accentuated by the fact that those with strong religious ties nevertheless do not feel protected by Providence to the extent they would have in the past, and that people are less disposed to "play the game" of effective techniques than to rely on chance. Actually, we experience in the face of chance a vertigo which lends it the quality claimed for the sacred by Rudolf Otto: that of being terrifying and fascinating at one and the same time. So the racing fan who looks in his horoscope to help him pick a horse is looking for risk and trying to avoid it at the same time.

Astrology is even "ultra-modern" in regard to certain specific traits of the contemporary psyche: the need for security, the proliferation of assurances, the thirst for information, the attraction toward "what the future may bring." The content of the columns documents these traits quite well.

The favorite subjects of the horoscopes are: health, money, and love. But it is always the element of risk they involve which determines the approach. Health seen in terms of accidents, sickness, or the wish for a seductive body: in these three cases, neither the causes supposed nor the means proposed are of a technical nature. What comes to the fore is the well-known psychology of chance: one desires an effect which is inseparable from certain causal factors, the point of whose occurrence is therefore unpredictable. The short-cut of stellar causality comes as a ray in the darkness, offering the cure at the same time; most often one is able to abstain from action, or at most act prudently, at unfavorable moments, while throwing oneself into action when the moment is ripe—but also, depending on which paper one reads, one has recourse to charms of all kinds.

Clearly this does not imply the rejection of technique. We may repeat here what Malinowski said of magic: "The effects of magic are something superimposed on all other effects resulting from human effort... One expects of magical operations what a man

expects of luck, of a turn of fortune. To exercise magical powers is to win chance over to one's side."

The impenetrability of the tangled skein of causality is most palpable on the level of the individual: Why does something happen to a particular person at a particular moment? Why do I have this physique and this temperament? The thing which, to the scholar, remains a conjecture or something to be studied in series according to the theory of probability, becomes vital to the individual: the uniqueness of fate. In unpeopling nature of the purposes with which our ancestors peopled it, science takes away from many of our contemporaries the means of coping with the subjective aspect of human events. Astrology goes along only halfway, for it does not fall back on spirits to explain events, while at the same time it does not endorse the asceticism that forces us to abandon the idea that all the happenings that impinge on a life from the outside are "all of a piece"—a piece with its own built-in vector of determination. In the same way that astrology, on the pretext of placing our planet in dependence on the universe, remains geocentric, it also pretends that the meaning of the series of external determinations that impinge on a single biography is to be found in a determinism whose objective "conducting wire" is one's initial personalization (the stars under which one was born). One can observe quite well here the way in which the ego submits itself to determinism.

A corollary: Astrology offers to its consumers the mediating offices of a person who can interpret the signs of stellar destiny. We have already made this point above (heading II) in connection with the attitudes of the public.

Serge Moscovici has noted the link established by the press between psychoanalysis and astrology,⁸ and André Barbault has offered a synthesis of these two elements (Barbault, *op. cit.*). The mechanism of the *rapprochement* is extremely indicative. On the one hand, psychoanalysis offers a method of exploration, actually of interpretation, of the personality as such. On the other hand, it opens the way for an art of learning to live rationally with one's temperament and drives. In a more general way, modern psychology, as represented not only by psychoanalysis, but also

⁸ *La psychanalyse, son image et son public*, Paris, P.U.F., 1961.

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by characterology and practical counselling, offers precisely a way to meet certain of the subjective needs we have already discussed. In astrology as taken by the average consumer, this sphere (psychology) reappears in effaced, debased, introverted form,—but one in which it is more accessible to the public than it is in its scientific form; the analogy with the “personal advice” columns suggests itself.

For instance, the wish to “understand” the persons with whom one lives, and to get along with them, is satisfied to some extent in the framework of analysis offered by the zodiacal signs and the advice contained in the horoscopes. Consider the following quotations in this context:

Children born on this day will be impressionable, eager to learn, emotional but enough masters of their emotions to seem to have colder personalities. Very generous and idealistic, they will be easily enlisted in causes rising above their own narrow interests.

Y^our only way to avoid the risk of a break is to show understanding. Don't rake over the coals of past misunderstandings. Don't conceal from each other your own faults, your own errors. Start from scratch, leaning on the present in order to build the future.

Let us note, furthermore, that the collection of disciplines that accompany astrology in the special periodicals includes a series of methods of character analysis: physiognomy, phrenology, iriscopy, chiromy, morphopsychology—even graphology, although that has succeeded in establishing itself on a more objective footing, often falls back to this level, because its validity was challenged for such a long period. One sees that here divination is gravitating toward forms which have to some degree the appearance of science, and is aiming more at the exploration of the personality than at the prediction of the future.

But there is another side to the context in which modern horoscopes appear. In the newspapers which carry it, and in the psychological makeup of its consumers, astrology appears amid a nebula of deconfessionalized religiosity. The horoscope columns are frequently surrounded by advertisements for spiritual and magical seances, for talismans, for faith healers and for methods of achieving domination over oneself and others. In astrological

magazines, one notes a syncretic fusion of occultism, the various divinatory traditions, the movie star cult, spiritualism, yoga, “parapsychology”, non-scientific cures, radioaesthesia, graphology, etc. Certain magazines such as *Ici-Paris* or *France-Dimanche*, or, at a more ambitious cultural level, reviews such as *Planète*, offer a blend, the ingredients of which are similar but more diffuse. Lastly, a large sector of the daily and weekly press offers up odds and ends of this collection, most notably astrology.

CONCLUSION

Why is it astrology that has taken preference among industrially produced forms of divination? Basically because of the audience it has found in the popular press, for it seems that fortunetelling salons, tarot, other forms of card divination, palm-reading, and various forms of seance are at least as popular as astrology. Actually, “establishing the natal heavens” of a person is a rather long undertaking, the price makes for a limited *clientele*, and in any case it is rather impractical to carry out this undertaking in the limited time the consumer can be present: even the pure charlatans find this slightly difficult. Conversely, the horoscope fits in with market conditions within the press, since it deals with individual cases in terms of categories, which is necessary if the predictions are to relate to the readers and not to some unique individual; furthermore, its structuring in terms of the calendar is nicely suited to the periodic appearance of newspapers.

Whatever the advantages astrology offers the press, one must also go a little deeper. First, it seems that the special modes of astrological categorization (combination) are suited to industrial production, because only twelve categories are needed to give the individual the impression of finding “his” fortune; take, for instance, the collections of works made up of one volume per sign of the zodiac, or the objects that can be adequately personalized by this sign, and so forth. Perhaps there is also a need for astrology to offer everyone a means of classifying those who surround him, in a civilization where other social distinctions are perceived less strongly than was formerly the case. Doubtless also the manner in which its symbolic representation has advertised its classifying and combinative character, from the iconography left us by the

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Renaissance down to the double-entry tables of our own newspapers, has contributed handsomely to the seductiveness of this divinatory technique.

Going deeper still, we see the effectiveness of the appeal of a method which takes the shortest route to establish an apparent hyper-rationality, while doing away with the unpleasant aspects of the scientific endeavor: the admission of one's areas of ignorance, the giving up of the attempt to calculate the sum of the determinants weighing on a single event, giving up having the universe revolve around man, taking oneself out of the center of individual and group existence.

In his works on the genesis of epistemology in the individual, Piaget shows that technology is born of this decentralization as regards the individual, while science comes out of the effort to move out of the center of the group. In this respect astrology is a profound regression, since the individual is the axis upon which turns the interpretation of events impinging from the outside in the course of a biography.

Finally, if we look upon astrology as one of the elements going to make up the "nebula of heterodoxy" mentioned above, one must refer back to the social organization behind it. This sector is in fact heterodox in reference to the scientific culture distributed in the educational system, and in reference to the religious systems, indoctrination in which is the work of the churches; its propagation is the work of the techniques of mass communication, among which the role of the press is essential. Its ingredients are drawn from heterodox traditions—including those which have become heterodox through the further development of knowledge and its application—and are brought together in response to the difficulties many persons experience when faced with the asceticism inherent in the scientific spirit. In a time when even organized religion is making a considerable effort in the direction of rationalization, the nebula develops through a pseudo-rationality which unsettles scientific culture by introducing into it a mythology which disregards all experimental and critical controls. In becoming merchandise, heterodoxy has developed vast resources of propaganda, and it is considerably enlarging upon the "needs" it claims to satisfy.