



ABOUT ASTROLOGY: HISTORICAL FACTS

BY BARBARA SCHERMER

Fifteen years ago, a 1996 Roper-Starch worldwide survey reported that one out of every four adult Americans, then roughly 50 Million people, believed in the efficacy of astrology—and that the fastest-growing class of believers is made up of executives and professionals. That number has vastly increased now.

- ❖ *Astrologia* was the job title for both astronomers and astrologers until 700 AD. Astrology and astronomy were virtually the same until 300 years ago.
- ❖ The Zodiac was originally a natural agricultural calendar that dated the sowing of crops, and all-important activities, by the rising and setting of the stars (especially Sirius), and the Pleiades or other recognizable constellations.
- ❖ Astrology came to Greece around 250 BC via the Chaldean astrologer Berosus, who opened a school of astrology on the island of Cos—also the home of the Hippocratic School of medicine. Thus, there have been connections between astrology and medicine since ancient

times. Hippocrates, the "Father of Modern Medicine," advised that no physician be allowed to practice before he had studied the moon, stars, and planets.

- ❖ The Greeks believed in a rational and structured universe, a *cosmos* (the Greek word for "order"). And since order and beauty were nearly synonymous to the Greek mind, the verb formed from *cosmos* meant to "make beautiful"—hence our modern word "cosmetic."
- ❖ All major universities in the Middle Ages had Chairs in Astrology, including, since 1125, the University of Bologna, where Dante and Petrarch studied. This tradition is currently being revived in the form of the Kepler College of Astrological Arts and Sciences (Seattle). The school has recently been authorized to operate in the state of Washington, and the Bachelor of Arts program has graduated its first students. (Barbara is an Advisory Board member.)
- ❖ A number of Catholic popes were intimately familiar with astrology: Sixtus IV was the first pope to draw and interpret a horoscope, Julius II choose his coronation date astrologically, and Leo X and Paul III relied heavily on astrologers for advice.
- ❖ Astrology was first for kings and courtiers. By the fourteenth century popes, bishops, and all the Courts of Europe all had their official astrologers. The first popular horoscopes for the masses were published in 1493 as an almanac, the *Kalendar and Compost of Shepards*.
- ❖ Newspaper daily horoscopes were created 80 years ago for the express purpose of selling newspapers: In 1930, the *London Sunday Express* published an astrological article on the birth of Princess Margaret. The public response was enormous, leading to a commission for astrologer R.H. Naylor to write a series. Circulation soared and newspapers in England, France, Germany, and America began publishing columns of astrological predictions.
- ❖ The Christmas "Star of Bethlehem" is likely to have been a conjunction of the planets Venus and Jupiter in 2 AD. The *magi*

(which means astrologer in Arabic) supposedly pursued this alignment across the sky toward Bethlehem.

- ❖ Benjamin Franklin was a dedicated astrologer, publishing a series of almanacs under the pseudonym "Richard Saunders." In Franklin's almanac for 1732 he predicts the death of his friend, Titan Leeds: "He dies by my calculation made at his request on October 17, 1733 at 3:29 PM at the conjunction of the Sun and Mercury." Whether Leeds obliged is unknown.
- ❖ Winston Churchill and the British High Command employed Louis De Wohl as a one-man astrological agency, giving him the rank of Captain. Throughout WWII De Wohl attempted to advise the High Command on the moves Hitler might make according to astrological interpretation (based on the rumor that Hitler was using Swiss astrologer, K. E. Kraft to help him plot his military strategy).
- ❖ The influence of the Moon has often been documented: A fifteen-year study by the Dade County Police Department and the University of Florida at Gainesville documented the increase of crimes of passion at the culminating full moon. Plastic surgeons in India do not operate during full moons (the demand for blood transfusions is highest at the full moon and two days after) and they postpone all surgery when the moon is waning. It is considered simply proper medical procedure.
- ❖ In the 1950's French statistician Michel Gauquelin set out to disprove the claims of astrologers. Working with sophisticated statistical methods, he soon uncovered correlations between planets and professions that were inexplicable by any means other than astrology. Most renowned is his study of 25,000 sports champions and the strong position of Mars in their personal horoscopes—a position that astrologers would have predicted. Respected psychology researcher Hans Eysenck has said, "The Gauquelin work stands up to a careful degree of scrutiny and compares favorably with the best that has been done in psychology, psychiatry, sociology, or any of the social sciences." The studies have been independently replicated.

Sources: Jim Tester, *The History of Astrology*; John Anthony West & Jan G. Toonder, *The Case for Astrology*; Paul Katzeff, *Full Moons*; Derek & Julia Parker, *The Compleat Astrologer*; Michel Gauquelin, *Written in the Stars*.