



Backstories

Astrology for Aquarius
Sharing our Knowledge

Pisces **and the age of** **mystical astrology**

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Introduction

Life and the knowledge it produces evolves.

New discoveries, better understanding and scientific testing pave the way for more reliable knowledge.

The development and advancement of astrological knowledge follows the same evolutionary course: Deeper comprehension, scientific testing and measurement produce astrological data that is more reliable.

The past provides a story line that explains the evolution of knowledge. It reveals what happened; and to explain the progress of astrological knowledge the astrology of today must be viewed through the lens of the past. And the mystical astrology of the Age of Pisces has now developed into the scientific astrology of the Age of Aquarius as embodied in the Hermetic system of astrology.

The internet is jam-packed with historical astrological data.

It's documented in a way that explains how things were and what happened. Most often it's disjointed and lacking continuity. Few writers have taken the time to logical sequence events and developments in time and space and they all view astrology's past through the lens of the past.

In the Age of Science the astrological knowledge of the past is what's happening now. The astrological community is stuck in a time warp accepting and using old methods and beliefs. Some research-historians have tackled astrology's history but none give the past a proper perspective in the light of current knowledge.

It's only when the astrology that was widely practiced during the Age of Pisces is objectively reviewed in the light of current astrological knowledge that its place in history can be properly acknowledged.

Astrology is the science that studies and reveals the occult influence of the stars and planets. It was the first science, so it has a very long history and when the Age of Pisces commenced in approximately 268BC astrology had been around for thousands of years.

Aristotle (384-322BC) had already proclaimed 'the Earth is bound up in some necessary way with the local motions of the heavens, so that all power that resides in this world is governed by that above'; and the Greeks had already developed elaborate theories explaining the influence of the planets on human destiny.

As Pisces dawned the Greeks were integrating astrology with the natural sciences – chemistry, botany, mineralogy, anatomy and medicine. They believed that everything on Earth had its correspondence in the sky and colors, metals, stones and plants all had their astrological rulerships.

They connected regions of the body and its parts and organs with the planets and zodiac signs, but different schools of thought devised different systems.

And with the human body intimately connected with astrology illness and disease were attributed to the planets, their sign locations or the position of a fixed star.

Astrology, to them, had no boundaries and they were aware that their knowledge was both powerful and sacred. But their belief-based religious motivation – a sign of the times – was not inclined to engage in robust scientific examination. They cast and read horoscopes but had one enormous problem. The charts they calculated were never right.

To investigate the influence of the planets and zodiac signs the astrologer must first construct a map of the heavens and the accuracy of the map is determined by the accuracy of the birth data – the time, date and place of birth – and the accuracy of the astronomical data – the planets and their sign positions. And

during the Age of Pisces the astronomical data and the calendars, clocks and atlases weren't very accurate.

Piscean Age astrology was mystical – not scientific – and while some astrologers, using their psychic hunches and extrasensory perceptions, did make amazingly accurate predictions the charts they calculated and used were always wrong.

Here, often in their own words, is their story.

Pisces and the age of mystical astrology

Curtain up

As the curtain rose on the Age of Pisces astrology swept across the Greco-Roman world. It influenced every area of life and learning and most Roman emperors had their astrologers.

Emperor Hadrian (76-138AD) had his – Hephæstio of Thebes – who observed:

'In this chart Saturn is the Lord of the house of the Moon. Being in his own house he gives death at the age of 56 years. Inasmuch as Venus favors him, she adds another 8 years to his life, making a total of 64. After 61 years and 10 months, however, the ascendant and the Moon move into a square to Saturn, although that does not kill him, because Venus aids him. So his life will endure to about 62 years and 6 months'.

The assessment is best described as astro-babble, but Emperor Hadrian did die when he was 62 years old!

In 135 BC the Greek astrologer-astronomer, Hipparchus, discovered the theory of the precession of the equinoxes – a significant astronomical event.

And in the 2nd-century Claudius Ptolemy, working in Egypt at the Library in Alexandria, summarized astrology's knowledge-base as it existed at that time. His treatise – *Tetrabiblos* – was a massive achievement. In it he documented and brought system and order to the astrological knowledge of the ancients. And *Tetrabiblos* became a standard reference for all astrologers during the Age of Pisces.

About the same time Vitellius Valens who ran an astrological school in Alexandria compiled a chart book with 123 notable nativities, including Emperor Nero. It started a trend that continued well into the twentieth century. And Firmicus Maternus wrote *Ancient Astrology: Theory and Practice*, another very detailed astrological work that still survives.

Firmicus set a very high standard. He wrote: 'If, at birth, the Moon is full and moving away from Mercury towards Saturn by day, the native will have some laborious occupation, such as those who hire out their bodies to carry loads on their shoulders and back. If malefic planets are also in aspect to this combination, he may end condemned in prison, or die in squalor, unkempt and deformed.'

Another Greek astrologer, Marcus Manilius, claimed that astrology allows the true adept to 'eavesdrop on cosmic secrets', but only if the rules are followed with diligent care. In his astrological poem, *Astronomica*, he wrote: 'Fate rules the world, and everything stands firm by law.'

And Lucian of Samosata provided valuable insight when he claimed that astrology 'allows a person to fortify himself against misfortunes in advance.'

But as Rome declined and Europe descended into a Dark Age (around 476AD) astrology suffered a similar fate.

An astrology revival in the Middle East

Then in the 8th-century the lights of learning flickered and Islamic, Jewish, Persian, Greek and Hindu scholars worked together to formulate 'Arabic astrology' – a combination of Greek and Arab astrological knowledge.

The first astrology school in Baghdad was founded in 777 by Jacob ben Tarik and about 850 the scholar Albumasar, professor of astrology at Baghdad University, merged their astrological knowledge into a single system in his book – *The Great Introduction to the Science of Astrology*.

In the 9th-century Baghdad was the intellectual center of the Islamic world and it was here that the astrological wisdom of the ages was studied in a favorable and vibrant intellectual setting that permitted the exchange of astrological ideas and the acquisition of more astrological knowledge.

It was firmly believed that the heavens provided a 24/7 news bulletin that foretold of coming events and important changes and from the 8th to the 12th-centuries astrology's star was on the rise.

At this time astrology grew in influence and stature and in the 12th-century it pervaded European culture. That's when the study of the stars was taught at universities and chairs of astrology were established at the universities in Paris, Milan, Bologna, Florence, Vienna and Oxford. In 1250 Astrology was taught at Cambridge University.

At this time the three most important sciences that formed part of the great European renaissance were astrology, astronomy and mathematics. They were in fact one scientific discipline.

The works of Ptolemy and the great Arab astrologers were translated into Greek and by the 13th-century the greatest human minds were absorbed in its study.

This was when judicial astrology – the art of calculating a horoscope for the purpose of forecasting personal events – developed. Its practitioners believed that the planets and zodiac sign influenced their lives and world affairs.

Kings, Queens, Emperors and popes believed in and practiced astrology and Roger Bacon (c. 1214 – 1294) the greatest scientist of the middle ages, was an expert in judicial and mundane astrology. He claimed that mathematics was essential for the proper practice of astrology.

The earliest surviving English birthchart is that of Edward 11, born April 25, 1284, but it's crudely constructed and lacks astronomical precision.

The works of Dante (1265-1321) are rich in astrology. He wrote: 'Our life, and also the life of every living thing here below is caused by the heavens, (which) according to its stars direct every seed to some end.'

And Pedro Alphonso, physician to King Henry 1 claimed: 'It has been proved by experimental argument that we can truly affirm that the Sun and Moon and other planets exert their influences on earthly affairs... And indeed many other innumerable things happen on Earth in accordance with the course of the stars, and pass unnoticed by the sense of most men, but are discovered and understood by the subtle acumen of learned men who are skilled in this art.'

In the 13th-century Guido Bonatti wrote an impressive text *Liber Astronomicus*. He claimed: 'All things are known to the astrologer. All that has taken place in the past, all that will happen in the future – everything is revealed to him, since he knows the effects of the heavenly motions which have been, those which are, and those which will be, and since he knows at what time they will act, and what effects they ought to produce.'

By now Piscean Age astrologers were matching events on Earth with their heavenly causes. Geoffrey de Meaux in 1348 explained the Black Plague to King Philip VI of France by referring to a conjunction of Saturn, Mars and

Jupiter in Aquarius as exacerbated by a lunar eclipse: 'For when the sun is directly opposite the moon then the power of each of them reaches the Earth in a straight line, and the mingling of influences of sun and moon with that of the superior planets creates a single celestial force.'

A Golden Age of astrology

The 15th and 16th-centuries were a golden age of astrology. By then the astronomical data needed to construct a chart was more precise and the astrological data needed to interpret the chart had been systematically organized. Heredity, environment and education were all factored into the life equation but ultimately the birth time ruled and it was rarely, if ever, right.

At this time Marsilio Ficini translated a number of Hermetic texts – ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus – into Latin. He claimed that astrology 'could only be justified if it provided some means of guidance for the human soul to begin to know itself as an image of God' and provided sage astrological advice to 'go with your astrological strengths'. The soul's task it seems was to align itself with its heavenly blueprint.

Gerolamo Cardona (1501-1576), one the most influential mathematicians of the Renaissance, wrote over two hundred books on science, but his astrological interpretations were typical of the time: 'Mars is seldom joined to Mercury for Good, for he makes people naughty and Impudent, yet industrious in Art, whence it comes to pass that the best Artists are too often the worst men.'

Between 1468 and 1549 many popes supported astrology. They included Sixtus 1v, Julius 11, Leo X and Paul 111.

In 1552 Luca Guarico published a book of celebrity horoscopes including popes, cardinals, princes, noblemen and artists. And in 1603 Johannes Kep-

ler suggested that the Star of Bethlehem that heralded the birth of the great Piscean Age teacher – Jesus Christ – was a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction that occurred in Pisces in 7BC. But the astrology of the time was very imprecise.

Kepler – the astrologer – considered himself incredibly reckless due to ‘Mars square to Mercury and trine Moon’ in his chart, but they weren’t. To him astrology ‘influences a human being as long as he lives...the way the slings a peasant wraps around a pumpkin do, for these do not make the pumpkin grow, but they determine its shape.’ He also thought that the Sun-Saturn trine in his horoscope determined his disposition, inclinations and physical form. But they formed a sextile aspect – not a trine.

Kepler claimed: ‘This character (of the heavens) is not received in the body, which is much too ungainly for that, but rather in the nature of the soul itself, which is like a point’ and ‘the new-born babe is marked for life by the pattern of the stars at the moment it comes into the world, and unconsciously remembers it, and remains sensitive to the return of configurations (progressed aspects) of a similar kind.’

He proposed that astrology ‘derives from experience which can be denied only by people who have not examined it.’ He criticized incompetent astrologers and advised against taking notice of their silly generalizations. He warned the scientists that they would err greatly if ‘while justly rejecting the stargazer’s superstitions, they threw out the baby with the bath.’ Kepler – the astrologer – has become an embarrassment to modern science. The inscription on his tombstone states: ‘the prince of astronomy.’

Astrology and astronomy were originally one and the great astrologers – Hipparchus, Ptolemy and Manilius – were capable astronomers. And Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo and Newton had some contact with astrology.

Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) stated: ‘We cannot deny the influence of the stars without disbelieving in the wisdom of God.’ Then he proved the physical

effect of the planets on the Earth. He also believed that new astronomical events – comets, eclipses and planetary conjunctions – signified momentous events both in the sky and on the Earth.

Astrology marched onwards and in the 17th-century most astrologers went by the book – which meant Ptolemy or Hipparchus. And while the standard texts served up mystical interpretations the underlying message was always the same: Astrology allows you to know yourself and if you don't pay attention to your birth chart, and the astrological messages it is sending, you only have yourself to blame for the mishap or misadventure that might eventuate. And that only fools can doubt astrology.

William Lilly (born May 1, 1602) is still considered one of the foremost astrologers who ever lived. In 1644 he published his first almanac and he continued to publish a new one each year till his death in 1681. It was the most popular of all the predictive bookstall manuals and he made a remarkable number of right predictions.

At this time in England astrology reached new heights of popularity. Kings and Queens took astrological advice.

In 1647 Lilly published *Christian Astrology* – a comprehensive guide to astrological theory and practice. In 1648 he predicted the plague which by 1666 had claimed the lives of some hundred thousand people and in 1665 he foresaw the great fire of London. It started on September 2, 1667 and destroyed 80% of the city. Lilly died on June 9, 1681 following a stroke.

Nicholas Culpepper was born in 1616. Famed for his herbal cures he was also an astrologer who claimed astrology to be 'what the universal Providence mind and the meaning of God toward man is.' He also remarked that 'physic without astrology is like a lamp without oil.' His book *Culpepper's Herbal* has been continuously in print since the 1600s.

Astrology under attack

During the Age of Pisces the birth chart was an uncertain, crude construction and a significant astrological event occurred in 1603 when Placidus de Titus originated the Placidus system of house division.

Then in 1795, the first ephemeris documenting the planets' positions was printed. But by then a rift between astronomy as the science and astrology as the mathematical intuitive art had developed and astrology was in crisis.

Too many charlatans had sullied the art and division developed within the astrological community as established custom – the traditionalists who supported classical astrology – clashed with the progressive reformists.

John Gadbury, who recognized the need for reform, tried to establish astrology as a legitimate science that operated under natural laws – a study of cause and effect. But in the end laws were introduced that classified astrologers as rogues and fortune-tellers and astrology became a subject of contempt and ridicule.

Astrology had always been strongly opposed by the Church, but its real enemies turned out to be the astronomers and when the French Academy of Science was founded in the 17th-century it placed a ban on astrology.

The Church tolerated 'natural astrology' – the influence of the stars and planets on the natural world – but opposed 'judicial astrology' – the influence of the stars and planets on a person's character and destiny.

Then as newly discovered scientific laws explained life and the universe there was no need for God or astrology and its mystical notions became hopelessly obsolete. Astrology and astronomy got divorced and science got obsessed with physical substance and material phenomena. To survive its enemies astrology, the great science, had only one option – to go underground.

Forced into the shadows astrology was preserved by secret societies – the Freemasons, Rosicrucians and the lesser known Hermetic Orders. Science had driven astrology from the public mind, but it continued to survive as a belief system and entertainment.

In the late 18th-century astrologers like Ebenezer Sibly and John Worsdale did their best to dignify the art and traditional practice of astrology. Sibly embraced the new-astrology while Worsdale stayed with Ptolemy – the source of all authentic astrology. The astrology of the time was never disproved and in the 21st-century many fortune-teller type astrologers continue to practice 17th-century type astrology.

In 1824 *The Stragglng Astrologer* hit the newsstands. It was the first magazine to carry weekly prognostications – the forerunner of today’s astrology columns. Its editor Robert Cross Smith – Raphael – was ‘the founder of modern popular astrological journalism.’ He was succeeded by Richard James Morrison – Zadkiel.

In 1830 Zadkiel launched his own magazine *The Herald of Astrology*. Then in 1844 – two years before the discovery of Neptune – he founded the British Association for the Advancement of Astral and other Sciences.

In 1861 Zadkiel made an innocent prediction regarding the prince consort’s health, but when the prince suddenly died at forty-two Rear Admiral Richard Belcher denounced Zadkiel as a fraud. Zadkiel demanded an apology, but Belcher refused and at the trial the judge ridiculed astrology. Zadkiel died in 1875 but his magazine sold well until 1931. Raphael and Zadkiel were the most popular astrologers of their time, but by then the curtain was slowly descending on the Age of Pisces.

In 1858, Luke D Broughton introduced astrology into American life with his manual *The Elements of Astrology* and began publishing his *Monthly Planet Reader and Astrological Journal*. In January 1861 when most people were

expecting a short but nasty civil war Broughton predicted that peace would not come 'before the summer of 1865.'

In October 1864 he accurately predicted Lincoln's reelection but warned: 'Let the President be careful of secret enemies, and also of assassination, during this and the next few months.'

Broughton had noted that Lincoln's progressed Sun had moved to form an opposition aspect with birth chart Mars and Ptolemy had claimed: 'Should either of the luminaries be afflicted by Mars (Lincoln had Moon square Mars) from cardinal signs (Moon was in Capricorn and Mars in Libra) and Mars at the same time be elevated, the native will suffer a violent death.'

In the September 1860 issue of his *Monthly Planet Reader* Broughton wrote: 'Hon Abram Lincoln was born February 12th, 1809. After careful examination of his Nativity, we are of the opinion that he was born near two o'clock in the morning.' And in his 2.00am chart Mars was elevated (above the horizon in house 11 or 12) so he and Ptolemy got it right. Then an angry mob sacked his home in Philadelphia and he moved to New York City. (Eyewitness data puts Lincoln's birth at 'around sun-up'.)

Looking back

In 1881 Pisces did a fade to black but its contribution to the world's astrological knowledge-base was significant. It was a superstitious, fanciful type of astrology that appealed to the people at the time and at times it was very popular and universally accepted.

Roman Emperors, popes, kings and queens all had their personal astrologers or cast their own charts. The Roman Emperor Domitian (51-96 AD) knew from his horoscope the year, date and hour of his death, and although he attempted to defy his fate it occurred right on time.

At the start of Pisces astrology and astronomy were virtually one and the same but by the end they were separated and bitter enemies.

The Chaldeans, Greeks, Egyptians and Arabs all made significant contributions to astrology's knowledge-base and Galileo Galilei, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler were three astrologer-astronomers who made important discoveries about the nature of the universe. Later the Mayans of Central America and the Aztecs developed their own independent systems.

Astrology played an important role in medieval medicine and the diagnosis and cure of disease became an integral part of stellar healing at the time.

The Church at the start of Pisces was astrology's friend and then it became its foe, but the Bible abounds in astrological references and what's condemned is the worship of the planets and stars as gods – not astrology.

Fortunately the enemies of astrology have never been able to get their hands on the stars or erase the messages they are sending.

Pisces proclaimed: 'self-mastery involves mastering your stars.' And St John of the Cross claimed: 'I am made and unmade not by the things that happen to me, but by my reactions to them. And that is all God cares about.'

During the Age of Pisces it was accepted that astrology explained the past, present and future, that you were created by the divine mind and that your life traveled a course set by your personal astrology.

Astrological beliefs permeated the literary work of poets and writers. Shakespeare's plays contain over two hundred astrological references.

At different times attempts were made to regulate the charlatans and their reckless predictions and the back street astrologers were just as bad as today's Sun-sign fortune-tellers in the internet age.

For some – Claudius Ptolemy, Marcus Manilius, Guido Bonatti, William Lilly, Raphael and Zadkiel – the stars held a glorious fascination. They believed that the apparent purposelessness and chaos of life was governed by a glorious and intricate design in the sky.

Piscean Age astrologers made many correct predictions and now modern Aquarian Age astrology understands how they did it. The emotional Piscean setting encouraged extrasensory stimulation and intuitive psychic prediction that very often got it right. And Aquarius knows that extrasensory perception often surpasses rational thought when it comes to assessing the future.

And new discoveries – like Uranus in 1781 and Neptune in 1846 – don't invalidate astrology. It's a self-contained, continually evolving, system of knowledge and there's no reason to presume – at any point in time – that astrologers have learned all there is to know about the science of the soul and stars.

But the superstitious, mystical astrology that existed at the start of Pisces still guides and influences many of the Sun-sign fortune-tellers today. They have no understanding of astrology's role in the soul's consciousness development or the mechanisms by which astrological energies coming from the sky influence behavior and time events. To understand and explain these matters required a dynamic change in circumstance – a new intellectual motivation – a new body of scientific facts – and the genius of Elbert Benjamine.

Reference note

If you have an interest in astrology's past the International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals has many magazines available on its website including all the issues of Luke Broughton's *Monthly Planet Reader*. And Benson Bobrick's *The Fated Sky* is a well researched account of astrology's history, but the writer is not an astrologer.