

The Traditional Revival in Modern Astrology: A Preliminary History

By Dr. Nicholas Campion



Astronomer Copernicus: Conversation with God, by Jan Matejko (1838-1893)

Note. *It is a curious sensation to have been part of a development in astrology that now needs to be documented. It is because I played a part in what is now known as the 'Traditional Revival', that I have referred to myself in the third person throughout. The following has been read by Robert Zoller, Robert Hand and Lee Lehman, all of whom have made comments and corrections. My purpose is not to compile a comprehensive history but to place some developments on the record. Any one of these is open to further development by people who may know more than me.*

In the 1970s the term 'traditional astrology' was generally used to refer to the more conservative form of psychological astrology represented by Charles Carter, as opposed to the more dynamic form represented by Rudhyar's humanistic astrology and Liz Greene's Jungian-inspired astrology.

In 1982 Christina Rose, who followed firmly in the Rudhyarian view of astrology attacked 'the traditional astrological scheme of things' for promoting 'a view... human beings as helpless puppets on cosmic strings' needing to try and maintain a control over, and defence against, what is regarded as a temperamental and unfriendly universe' (Rose 1990: 16). She included as statements typical of this view point the following: 'Watch out, Uranus is crossing your Mars this week so you are liable to have accidents'; 'Yes, well she's got four planets in Pisces so she's confused and over-emotional'; 'You've got Saturn in the seventh house so you won't be happy in marriage'. In this astrology both events and psychological states are subject to a causal, deterministic universe.

Singling out psychological astrology as character-delineation Christina added,

It is by the use of astrology for trite character delineation and hard-and-fast prediction of events that the deeper meanings and understandings this time-honoured study can lead us to are being lost. Today, it is being thrown into sharp relief that astrologers are unlikely, to say the least, to be able to meet the needs of the clients (Rose 1982: 10).

The worst of the traditional astrology, she regarded as taking on a 'character of quite singular stupidity' (Rose 1982: 16). Its interpretations were no better than 'the outpouring of decisions from irrefutable oracle' (1982: 16). This, she considered, was how astrology was largely promoted and understood in public. For Rose, one of the most healthy developments in astrology in recent years had been the

Shift from traditional (and often extremely archaic) views and interpretations, with their talk of benevolent and malevolent stars and precise predictions of what else was in store, to a greater understanding of the fundamental principles or processes of life experience symbolised by planets and zodiacal signs - principles that are formative to all life and present in every human being (Rose 1982: 15).

She went on to delineate the philosophical significance of this new astrology, and its radical astrological consequence:

This has brought in its wake an increased awareness of the essential unity between man and the universe, each as a determinant in and an effect upon the other. More recently has come the growing recognition that the act of interpreting a birth chart is only of limited value unless the client can be involved in that process as well as the astrologer and can be guided into possible ways of utilizing the information derived from the chart once it has been presented to him (Rose 1982: 15).

For Rose, then, the new astrology was based on an understanding of an interdependence between humanity and cosmos in which the former could act on the latter in exactly the same way as the latter can impact on the former. The term co-creator may be appropriate here to describe humanity's role. Three consequences flowed from this unity in turn:

1. the client, astrologer and cosmos are all in a relationship (1982: 15-16, 19-20)
2. the function of astrological counselling is to impart meaning. However, and here is a radical extension of Rudhyar's arguments, she adds that the client should be helped to understand what meaning they have for the universe in the form of the astrological configuration, not just what it has for them (1982: 16).
3. the purpose is to be able to act, to utilize the information (1982: 16)

There was a sense of triumphalism in the new astrology, a feeling that its victory was inevitable because it was the astrology of the New Age. The old astrology was dead. As Stephen Arroyo wrote in 1975:

The consciousness of the times has changed, and astrologers are slowly realizing that most methods of interpretation and practice that were appropriate for people in the 1920s are irrelevant to people living and growing today (Arroyo 1975: xi)

Then, in the 1980s, the so-called 'traditional revival' (Campion 1994: 3) occurred in which first medieval (especially horary) and then classical techniques were rediscovered. The background to this process was described by Rob Hand, who saw it in part as 'a reaction to excessive modernism (Hand 1990: 15). Elsewhere, the development was identified as part of the general spread of post-modernism into popular culture (Campion 1994: 3), Hand took a neutral approach, broadly welcoming the work of Jones, Rudhyar and the development of humanistic astrology but acknowledging that it was in danger of losing much that was important in astrology particularly the precise procedures of traditional interpretation. The pursuit of meaning had become all that mattered and the consequence of relativism was that the symbolic rigour was being abandoned. 'What modern astrology often overlooks', he wrote, 'is that if everything means everything then nothing means anything' (Hand 1990: 16).

As ever with such movements, there is a pre-history. Astrologers had long paid lip-service to their past, mainly to secure authority from the claim that astrology was an ancient discipline. However, there was little serious interest amongst astrologers in either the details of their own history or the ancient practice of the discipline. William Lilly's *Christian Astrology*, which was to become the central text of the traditional revival, was known in Zadkiel's nineteenth-century edition, and referenced in such mainstream texts as Margaret Hone's *A Modern Textbook of Astrology* in 1951, but few people paid any attention to it, even though Derek Parker's 1975 biography of Lilly, *Familiar to All*, presented his life to a modern readership. There were, though, a few notable exceptions. In the USA Robert Zoller was both studying and practicing medieval astrology by 1973 and in 1980 published *The Lost Key To Prediction* (Inner Traditions International, NY), on 'Arabic Parts', while his teacher, Zoltan Mason, had published parts of the works of Morinus, the seventeenth-century French astrologer. The American Federation of Astrologers (AFA) published a translation of one section of Morinus' *Astrologia Gallica* in 1974. Rob Hand published a chapter on the 'dodekatemoria', a way of subdividing zodiac signs in Greek astrology, in his *Essays on Astrology* (Para Research 1982) and aroused very strong interest in Greek astrology in the UK when Nick Campion invited him to lecture at the Astrological Lodge of London in 1985.

Meanwhile, in the UK, Nick Campion and Michael Baigent emphasized the need to study the history of astrology: in 1982 Nick initiated a five week course in the history of astrology for the Faculty of Astrological Studies and in 1984 the Astrological Lodge began its series of seminars on the history of astrology which continues to the present day. March 30-1 1984 also saw a conference on the history of astrology organized by Patrick Curry (following an original proposal by him and Jacques Halbronn) at London University's Warburg Institute which brought in academics from all over the world and galvanized interest in the history of astrology in London: the papers were published in Curry's *Astrology, Science and Society* (Boydell Press 1987) The AFA also published George C. Noonan's *Classical Scientific Astrology* in 1984, a book which had an inspirational effect on the British astrologer Olivia Barclay (1919-2001).

The origins of the traditional revival proper, as an influential movement in late twentieth-century astrology, lie in the UK, chiefly with Olivia Barclay. Olivia's

interest in astrology began in around 1930 but she did not begin her serious studies until 1959-60, when she began taking classes with the Faculty, under Jeff Mayo. She developed an interest in horary astrology, but stopped going to London astrological meetings after a while. When she began attending meetings again in 1978 horary astrology was almost unknown, particularly within the AA. In her own words,

Then I discovered that there was a faction at the Lodge headed by Geoffrey Cornelius who was interested in horary, and I also found a colleague called Mike Edwards whose astrological conclusions were similar to mine, and that he had a friend called Bernard Eccles who talked sense, and was particularly interesting on the subject of Fixed Stars. Perhaps there were evenings when Mr Davison was absent, or perhaps Mr Davison was only present in the first part of the evening, but it became increasingly possible to devote the second half of the evening to horary interpretations (Barclay 1999: 2.37)

In 1980 Olivia purchased a rare copy of William Lilly's *Christian Astrology*, the first ever English language astrology text book, originally published in 1647. She discovered that the available version, edited and published by Zadkiel in the nineteenth-century, had been substantially altered from Lilly's original. In 1982 Olivia issued an edition of a hundred photocopies in London and Nick Campion encouraged her to start writing her own material, arranging for her to begin a series on horary astrology in *Transit*, the AA's newsletter, which she was still revising and republishing at her death. Writing of the difficulty she was having in publishing her material, Olivia wrote,

Nicholas Campion however helped me. At the time Nicholas was a slight young man who looked like Bob Dylan...Anyway he persuaded his friend Mike Harding, the editor of Transit (the AA magazine) to publish a series of my articles called 'A Natal Astrologer's Guide to Horary'. From May 1983-1985 I wrote four a year. These became the basis of the lessons on my course, and were mostly incorporated into my book. (Barclay 1999: 2.39)

The response to this and her copies of Lilly's work encouraged Regulus Publishing (founded by Catriona Mundle and Clive Kavan, two active Astrological Lodge members; Mundle was on the committee in 1982-3, Kavan was Chair in 1986) to publish a properly bound facsimile of *Christian Astrology* in 1985. Already, in 1983, another group of Lodge members lead by the President, Geoffrey Cornelius and the secretary Maggie Hyde founded a school, The Company of Astrologers, in which horary assumed a central role, especially a philosophical one. As interest spread, Olivia founded a course to teach Lilly's horary method (the Qualifying Horary Practitioners course, or QHP). In 1986 she visited the USA and lectured in New York. Her work found a number of enthusiastic students in the USA, notably Lee Lehman, who published *Essential Dignities* (Whitford Press) in 1989, the first book of the revival (excluding Zoller's *The Lost Key to Prediction*) to argue for a modern use of medieval and classical method. Subsequent visits were organized by Lee Lehman in 1989 and 1992 and Olivia found willing allies in Robert Zoller and Robert Hand. The result was a proliferation of 'traditional' (mainly horary) courses and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic with a number of very active participants, including Sue Ward and Deborah Houlding in the UK and Lee Lehman and Carol Wiggers in the USA. Lee Lehman became particularly influential because she expanded her study,

practice and teaching beyond horary into other areas and because she traveled widely. Meanwhile a network of personal relationships was being formed across the Atlantic. Robert Zoller met Nick Campion in New York in April 1987 and presented him with a translation of Bonatti's astrological rules for warfare, which Nick published in *Astrology Quarterly* (the magazine of the Astrological Lodge of London) in 1992-3. Nick later arranged for Zoller's first lecture visit to the UK. Nick Campion and Lee Lehman were introduced by Olivia Barclay at an Astrological Association research conference in London in 1989 and began an informal collaboration which eventually resulted in their collaboration in the teaching of medieval and modern history at Kepler College from 2001 onwards.

The main American contribution to the 'traditional revival', though, was launched at the United Astrology Congress (UAC) in Washington in April 1992. In view of its emphasis on the translation of Greek and Latin texts, we could characterise this, at least in part as the 'classical revival'. According to Robert Zoller, writing to Nick Campion on 31 January 2002,

There, for the first time, at a dinner, Rob Hand, myself, Bob Schmidt, Ken Negus, Lee Lehman, Maggie Meister, Michele McKee, Ellen Black, Pat White and possibly some others I don't remember at the moment [they met with Nick Campion later that evening]. All agreed upon the need for a translation effort to retrieve old astrological works. Rob Hand came up with the name ARHAT - Association [later changed to Archives] for the Retrieval of Historical Astrological Texts). He was to be the editor. We were all to submit lists of books thought worthy of translation to him. He would archive the list and we would get together to decide what texts to translate and who would do what. Schmidt asserted that he was up to doing translations from Greek. I put myself forward for Latin.

ARHAT had no financial base so Robert Schmidt came up with a plan to finance the sale of translated texts on a subscription bases under the name Project Hindsight (a name he had already used in the late 1980s in a project on the history of maths and related subjects). Hand, Schmidt and Zoller met in July 1993 to plan the enterprise and there was an immediate wave of enthusiasm in the astrological community. The work of the 'three Roberts' and the rediscovery of classical astrology were seen by many as opening a glorious new chapter in western astrology, offering a technical accuracy and/or philosophical depth perceived as being absent from modern western astrology. However even though American astrologers were quick to adopt the British traditional revival, welcoming Olivia Barclay with open arms, the American classical revival was at first greeted in Britain with disinterest. Nick Campion arranged for the Astrological Association to mail 1500 ARHAT flyers free of charge but secured about eight subscriptions in response. Liz Greene, though, who was not associated with the traditional revival, brought two subscriptions in order to support the initiative. Another keen supporter was Maurice McCann

In the USA, though, there was huge enthusiasm for a project which seemed to offer a 'lost key' (to borrow the title to Zoller's book) to astrology. As an example, Rob Hand was lecturing on Hellenistic astrology at the 1995 United Astrology Congress (UAC) in Monterey. The organisers, expecting about 30 people to turn up put him in a small

room. When over a hundred arrived they moved him to a larger room. But when several hundred tried to fit in, they moved him to the conventional centre ballroom.

Although the collaboration between Hand, Schmidt and Zoller ceased by the late 1990s, (Zoller left in August 1994, Hand in Spring 1997) the Project Hindsight translation project continues under Schmidt's direction. Schmidt's hypothesis is that Hellenistic astrology was the deliberate creation of either a single individual or a single school in the 2nd c BCE and he is attempting to identify this original astrology through analysis of the extant texts from the 1st-4th c. CE.

Zoller continues with his correspondence course in medieval astrology and Hand has revived ARHAT, republishing old texts, as well as creating the course on Astrology in Ancient Civilisation for Kepler College with Nick Campion and Demetra George.

In 2001 Demetra George was invited to teach the first ever course in Hellenistic astrology at an astrological school - at Joyce Jensen's Astrological Institute. She has also taught this material at Kepler College.

We may distinguish two separate motivations behind astrologers' interest in their past:

1. the primarily astrological project: rediscovery of lost astrological techniques largely on the understanding that they might make up for weaknesses in modern astrology and
2. the primarily historical project: the rediscovery of astrology's past in order to better understand its present, as well as its place in the west's intellectual lineage.

It is clear that the 'traditional revival' occupied a prominent emotional in American and British astrology for just over ten years from around 1985/6 to around 1996/7. It can be divided into two phases: the first began in 1985 with the publication of the Regulus Publishing edition of *Christian Astrology* and the second, which might also be termed the Classical Revival, began in 1992 with the beginning of the Hand-Zoller-Schmidt collaboration under the Project Hindsight banner and came to an end around 1997, by which time the three collaborators had gone their own ways. Its impact and work, though continues to be substantial in that a large number of practitioners and teachers of astrology have become aware of, and use, a range of classical and medieval astrological techniques which had been unknown since the seventeenth-century and, in some cases, since the loss of the Greek texts in the west in the fifth century. It is also ongoing in that the courses and publications emanating from the Olivia Barclay initiative in the UK and the Hand-Zoller-Schmidt collaboration in the USA continue to exert a huge influence, even though they are working separately.

Appendix:

Campion, Nicholas, Editorial, *The Astrological Journal*, January/February 1994, Vol. 36, no 1, p. 3.

Note: The following represents my first attempt to put the traditional revival into a historical context in 1994.

What do we learn from these developments? Well, firstly, they indicate that astrology is a moveable feast, constantly changing and intimately connected to developments elsewhere in society. Is it any coincidence that the traditional revival took place while Britain's past was being repackaged into the Heritage industry, or that supermarkets and petrol stations were being redesigned to look like Tudor cottages. Of course not. All are aspects of Post-Modernism, a vague term which, in the sense that I am using it, means that there is no future, that the modern is at an end, and that the only way forward is to reprocess the past.

In the early eighties, when the traditional revival was still in its infancy, there were astrologers who set up an ideological hierarchy in which whatever was traditional (i.e. medieval or classical) was good, and that psychological (i.e. modern) astrology, was not astrology at all. Actually, a cursory knowledge of the history of astrology reveals that the modern use of the term traditional is precisely that - modern. No one branch of astrology has any more claim to the title traditional than any other. The problem is that the term 'traditional' is now being used to denote a particular modern practice drawing on medieval texts, whereas, of course, all modern astrological practices follow in a tradition of learning. For example, Michel Gauquelin and John Addey, with their rigorous mathematical methods, stood in a line traced back via Johannes Kepler to Pythagoras, while the dynamic and growth oriented astrology of Alan Leo, Dane Rudhyar and Liz Greene, finds its intellectual ancestors in the Renaissance philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and the Greek philosophy of Plato. In addition of course, we frequently find adherents of various of the twentieth century innovations, both philosophical and technical, from followers of Alice Bailey and the Hubers, to advocates of the Uranian system, referring to astrologers of the mainstream 'Margaret Hone' variety as traditional astrologers. The important point here is that the suggestion that any one branch of astrology is superior to any other on historical grounds is one that cannot be sustained. The study of the history of astrology thus achieves a practical purpose, putting modern muddles into context and advising tolerance between astrologers of different persuasions.

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