

# Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

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**Abstract.** Twentieth century psychological astrology was the dominant strand in the English-speaking world. It has been argued that this form of astrology attempted to become more psychological as a strategy for legitimisation in the modern world. This paper argues that an examination of the astrological texts of three key twentieth-century astrologers – Alan Leo (1860–1917), Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985) and Liz Greene (1946– ) – suggests that psychology was embraced not for reasons of legitimisation. Instead, psychology was adopted primarily for philosophical reasons, that is to increase the freedom of the individual and because, for Greene in particular, astrology is regarded as fundamentally psychological in nature.

## Introduction

Astrology may broadly be defined as ‘... the practical implementation of cosmological ideas in order to understand the past, manage the present, and forecast the future, in a range of cultures, past and present’.<sup>1</sup> It remains a popular subject of interest in contemporary society, particularly its ‘psychological’ form, psychological astrology, which developed into the dominant strand in the twentieth-century.<sup>2</sup> This is a form of astrology primarily focused on reading the natal chart (a horoscope set for the date, time and place of birth, also known as the birth-chart) of an individual.<sup>3</sup> Astrology is, however, a contested subject, with its validity in the modern world questioned by some, it being seen as part of a magical worldview

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions* (London: New York University Press, 2012), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West* (Fareham: Ashgate, 2012), p.3; Patrick Curry in Patrick Curry and Roy Willis, *Astrology, Science and Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p.73.

<sup>3</sup> Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture*, pp.72–73.

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which has no place in modernity.<sup>4</sup> The idea that astrology and related subjects such as magic are problematic has led some scholars to consider how it is that they have survived into the modern world, with the embrace of psychology for reasons of legitimisation proposed as the answer.<sup>5</sup>

This paper will consider three key psychological astrologers of the twentieth century, examining whether their embrace of psychology was for reasons of legitimisation. The astrologers considered will be Alan Leo (1860–1917), Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985) and Liz Greene (1946–). It will discuss psychological astrology in the context of the wider rise of psychology before examining literature to date on subjects of a magical nature adopting psychology for the purpose of legitimisation. I will then consider the work of the three astrologers in relation to the reasons for them adopting psychology, prior to concluding.

### **Psychology and psychological astrology**

The rise of psychology as a discipline in its own right in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been discussed by Sonu Shamdasani. He argues that the ‘dream’ to make psychology a science ushered in a new age for the subject, with the first chair of psychology being awarded in 1892 to Theodore Flournoy (1854–1920) at the University of Geneva.<sup>6</sup> This was symbolic of a period of rapid development for the fledgling science, as can be seen by data from the United States: whilst in 1800 there was no discipline of psychology or recognised profession of psychologist, by 1903 the US could claim at least 30 psychology laboratories, a professional society – the American Psychological Association (APA), founded 1892 – and specialist psychological journals.<sup>7</sup> According to Shamdasani, advocates of the new psychology saw what they were doing as the final step in the Scientific Revolution and wished to emulate the methods of the most respected sciences: physics and chemistry.<sup>8</sup>

Since its nineteenth-century beginnings, psychology has become increasingly significant in Western societies. In 1978 Martin Gross coined

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Bart J. Bok et al., *Objections to Astrology* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Notably, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘How magic survived the disenchantment of the world’ *Religion* 33 (2003): pp.357–80.

<sup>6</sup> Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.4.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Smith, *Between Mind and Nature* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p.72.

<sup>8</sup> Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making*, p.4.

the term the 'Psychological Society' to describe the extent to which psychology '... sits at the very center of contemporary society as an international colossus whose professional minions number in the hundreds of thousands.'<sup>9</sup> He compares the situation in the late 1970s with that in 1909 when Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) visited Clark University in America, noting the huge increase in the influence of psychological ideas on culture. Gross argues that, for many, the Psychological Society fulfils the role that formal religion used to play; psychology and psychiatry offer:

... mass belief, a promise of a better future, opportunity for confession, unseen mystical workings and a trained priesthood of helping professionals devoted to servicing the paying-by-the-hour communicants.<sup>10</sup>

Just as Gross refers to the Psychological Society, so Ellenberger refers to 'the psychological revolution' in which psychology developed rapidly and invaded all fields of life.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most culturally important and influential forms of early psychology that arose around the turn of the twentieth century was psychoanalysis. Such an approach is principally associated with the work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), both of whose work centres on the concept of the unconscious.<sup>12</sup>

The rise of psychology and psychoanalysis forms the backdrop to the claim that the twentieth century brought a new form of Western astrology to the English-speaking world, which has been labelled 'psychological astrology'. Curry identifies psychological astrology as a new development, but one that is '... the dominant kind of astrology among contemporary practitioners.'<sup>13</sup>

Scholars are united in their view that Alan Leo (1860–1917) was exceptionally important to the development of twentieth-century psychological astrology. Leo set out to reform astrology, and to integrate

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<sup>9</sup> Martin L. Gross, *The Psychological Society* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Gross, *The Psychological Society*, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: BasicBooks, 1970), p.843.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Homans, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology, Second Edition* (London: University of Chicago, 1995), p.xxix.

<sup>13</sup> Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture*, p.73.

it with his theosophical beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Campion describes him as ‘the creative powerhouse’ of a new way of thinking that saw the cosmos as a spiritual entity, with theosophical astrology a means to interpret it.<sup>15</sup> Kim Farnell argues that ‘Alan Leo is commonly thought of as being the first modern astrologer and is revered by astrologers the world over’.<sup>16</sup> For Cornelius, Leo stands ‘... at the centre of the modern European revival of astrology’, whilst for Howe, Leo is ‘the most important’ of the pioneers who developed astrology from their theosophical backgrounds.<sup>17</sup> Leo wrote seven substantial books on astrology, still available in print today, and founded a new lodge of the Theosophical Society in 1914 to teach both astrology and theosophy.<sup>18</sup> Several astrological organisations grew from this lodge, which represent ‘almost every major English astrological organization’.<sup>19</sup>

Scholarly literature identifies Dane Rudhyar as the second essential pioneer to the development of psychological astrology, and as the first to integrate psychoanalytic thinking, through drawing on Jung’s work, into astrology books written in English. Campion describes Rudhyar as ‘... the second most important astrologer [after Alan Leo] in the twentieth-century English-speaking world.’<sup>20</sup> For Radermacher, Leo and Rudhyar are the two pioneers of psychological astrology.<sup>21</sup> In relation to post-Jung psychological astrology, Rudhyar is seen as the critical innovator. As Hammer writes:

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), p.132.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II* (London: Continuum, 2009), p.238.

<sup>16</sup> Kim Farnell, *Flirting with the Zodiac* (Bournemouth: Wessex Astrologer, 2007), p.81.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Cornelius, *The Moment of Astrology* (Bournemouth: Wessex Astrology, 2003), p.167; Ellic Howe, *Urania’s Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers* (London: William Kimber, 1967), pp.56–57.

<sup>18</sup> Curry, *A confusion of Prophets*, p.151.

<sup>19</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.152.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Campion, ‘Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: The extent and nature of contemporary belief in astrology’ (PhD Thesis, Bath Spa University, 2004), p.118.

<sup>21</sup> Lindsay Radermacher, ‘The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination’ (MPhil Thesis, University of Kent, 2011), p.iii.

Many practicing astrologers seem to have adopted a psychologizing approach to interpretation, created more or less single-handedly by Dane Rudhyar in the 1930s.<sup>22</sup>

Dane Rudhyar was a musician, artist, writer and astrologer who has been identified as one of the important, ‘yet still fairly unrecognised’, modernist American composers.<sup>23</sup> Rudhyar emigrated to the United States from France in 1916, keen to leave the old European world behind and instead embrace the new possibilities of America.<sup>24</sup> Having first encountered astrology in theosophical circles around 1920, his interest was awoken once more through contact with the astrologer Marc Edmund Jones in 1930.<sup>25</sup> However, it was only when he encountered Carl Jung’s work that he was truly gripped, and saw the means through which he could use astrology to bring together psychology and an understanding of the cosmos. As Rudhyar explains:

My interest in depth-psychology began in the Spring, 1932, when I was given a copy of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, a treatise on Chinese esoteric doctrines with a commentary by Richard Wilhelm and Carl Jung. I was deeply impressed and soon after, wrote a circular entitled Harmonic Psychology marking the beginning of my work in astropsychology, or as I called it much later, Humanistic Astrology.<sup>26</sup>

Rudhyar wrote *The Astrology of Personality* in 1936, a text which set out to reform astrology.<sup>27</sup> He went on to write some twenty astrology books in total over a period of almost fifty years, spanning the 1930s to the early 1980s.<sup>28</sup> Maggie Hyde asserts that whilst Rudhyar represents one of the two major streams of psychological astrology stemming from Jung, Liz Greene represents the other.<sup>29</sup> She writes:

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<sup>22</sup> Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p.50.

<sup>23</sup> Deniz Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar: His Music, Thought, and Art* (University of Rochester Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk: 2009), pp, xi, xvii.

<sup>24</sup> Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar*, p.xix.

<sup>25</sup> Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality* (Santa Fe, NM: Aurora, 1991), p.vii.

<sup>26</sup> Dane Rudhyar, *Astrology and the Modern Psyche, Second Edition* (Vancouver, WA: CRCS, 1976), p.vii.

<sup>27</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*.

<sup>28</sup> See Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar*, pp.xxiii–xxx.

<sup>29</sup> Maggie Hyde, *Jung and Astrology* (London: Aquarian, 1992), p.83.

## 60 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

Liz Greene represents a newer generation and an altogether different and more ambitious attempt to draw Jungian ideas into astrology.<sup>30</sup>

Liz Greene became one of the best-selling authors of psychological astrology from the 1970s onwards. In 1982 she co-founded the Centre for Transpersonal Astrology, although the name was changed just one year later to the Centre for Psychological Astrology (CPA), to recognise the fact that a wide range of psychological approaches were reflected in the course and the books arising from the CPA Press.<sup>31</sup> She is recognised by both scholars and other astrologers as an extremely influential astrologer. Fellow astrologer Dennis Elwell described her as 'the most notable' of the 'modern astrologers influenced by the depth psychology of Jung' whilst John Frawley named her the 'Queen of the Bookshelves'.<sup>32</sup> Greene wrote nineteen astrology books, from 1976 to 2003.<sup>33</sup>

### **Magic, psychology and legitimisation**

According to Wouter Hanegraaff, magic has survived in the modern Western world by becoming psychologised.<sup>34</sup> The term 'psychologised' broadly means for something to become more psychological. For Hanegraaff modern practitioners see magic as ultimately based on the powers of the psyche, with some asserting invisible entities are worked with only on the psychological plane rather than having any ontological reality.<sup>35</sup> From all this Hanegraaff concludes that modern magical practice is 'essentially a series of psychological techniques' for raising the consciousness of the individual.<sup>36</sup>

The underlying reason for the psychologisation of magic in the twentieth century, as argued by Hanegraaff, is one of legitimisation. Whist practices classified as magic have always relied on the innate human ability to participate directly in the cosmos, the privileging of causality over participation in the modern era has led to a problem for the modern

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<sup>30</sup> Hyde, *Jung and Astrology*, p.85.

<sup>31</sup> Liz Greene, *Barriers and Boundaries* (London: CPA, 1996), pp.250–51.

<sup>32</sup> Dennis Elwell, *The Cosmic Loom* (London: Urania Trust, 1999), p.90; John Frawley, *The Real Astrology* (London: Apprentice Books, 2000), p.21.

<sup>33</sup> Liz Greene, *Saturn: a new look at an old devil* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1976); Liz Greene, *The Dark of the Soul* (London: CPA, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Hanegraaff, 'How magic survived', pp.357–80.

<sup>35</sup> Hanegraaff, 'How magic survived', p.368.

<sup>36</sup> Hanegraaff, 'How magic survived', p.368.

magician. In a disenchanted world, a psychologised form of magic is far easier to adopt, understand and explain to sceptical observers:

Practices traditionally classed as ‘magic’ have always relied, and still rely, upon the spontaneous human tendency of participation. The coexistence of participation with instrumental causality did not cause acute problems on the level of society in general, until the establishment of an ideology of instrumental causality as the dominant narrative of western society.... ‘Magic’ survives because the spontaneous tendency of participation belongs to human nature; but it becomes ‘occultist’ magic because practitioners feel the need to legitimate their practice in a disenchanted world.<sup>37</sup>

For Hanegraaff, therefore, magical practice is not necessarily invalid, but it has changed in its presentation and focus in the modern world in order to present itself as a legitimate practice. Applied to psychological astrology, his thesis suggests that one of the reasons for the survival of astrology into the modern world is that it has cloaked itself in psychological language and techniques. In doing so it has sought to be legitimate in the modern world.

Alison Bird makes a similar argument specifically in relation to psychological astrology, asserting that twentieth century astrology has sought ways to legitimise itself. For Bird, natal astrology must either be divination or science, religious or secular. She identifies the secularisation of Western societies as having undermined the status of divination, leading to the presentation of astrology as secular, scientific knowledge.<sup>38</sup> According to Bird, major astrological schools of the twentieth century, such as the Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS), were established on a modern, rationalised philosophy which deliberately omitted any divinatory elements.<sup>39</sup> Instead, they increasingly focused on psychological interpretation in an attempt to make the subject as scientific and secular as possible. Bird argues that astrology’s use of actual astronomical data and its ability to be performed without a person at hand (for example, a chart can be cast for a famous person if their birth details are known) has ‘facilitated its twentieth century practitioners’ promotion of the fact that

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<sup>37</sup> Hanegraaff, ‘How magic survived’, p.378.

<sup>38</sup> Bird, ‘Astrology in Education: An Ethnography’ (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2006), p.80.

<sup>39</sup> Bird, ‘Astrology in Education’, p.189.

## 62 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

they are actually doing something else other than divining'.<sup>40</sup> Bird claims this is to do with making astrology legitimate:

Its practitioners concede personal agency and responsibility for their practice to its rational technique: claiming astrology is reliable knowledge allows them to distance themselves from notions of belief in 'magico-religious' divinatory practices which are less than respectable in modern terms.<sup>41</sup>

She continues:

Astrology in its current guises has been well fitted to the requirements of members of today's technologically driven societies: for it invokes the archaic wisdom associated with pre-modern, magical and enchanted cosmologies; but it does so in a methodological structure which honours individual agency and avoids embarrassing modern and rational sensibilities with the palpable presence of unruly daemons and occult spirit guides.<sup>42</sup>

Bird's own ethnographic study of astrology in education gave her the experience of learning astrology but not being introduced to what she terms its 'magico-religious' nature:

In sharp contrast to my experience of learning Tarot, no astrology tutor ever told me I needed to work on my intuition, empathy or psychic abilities: fellow students invoking such phenomena were invariably encouraged to concentrate on developing their technical knowledge of astrology...<sup>43</sup>

Bridget Costello asserts that 'astrologers feel that they are vilified by the mainstream scientific community, which happens to be the very community to which they feel they should legitimately belong'.<sup>44</sup> She identifies astrology as a devalued cultural practice, interest in which comes

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<sup>40</sup> Bird, 'Astrology in Education', p.95.

<sup>41</sup> Bird, 'Astrology in Education', p.107.

<sup>42</sup> Bird, 'Astrology in Education', p.138.

<sup>43</sup> Bird, 'Astrology in Education', p.145.

<sup>44</sup> Bridget Costello, 'Unsettled Lives' (PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2006), p.147.



with stigma.<sup>45</sup> Costello recognises that there is a problem of legitimacy when it comes to astrology, given it does not conform to the ‘normative American stance of obligatory scientific rationality’, and argues that:

Astrologers and non-astrologers alike seem to agree that astrology is generally perceived as a less legitimate form of knowledge than either science or religion, the two paradigms against which it is most likely to be contrasted... this is partly to do with the fact that astrology is a magical practice – that is, individual, furtive, and symbolic/metaphysical.<sup>46</sup>

A similar view is given by Garry Phillipson, who suggests that part of twentieth-century astrologers’ interest in the works of the psychologist Carl Jung was based on a desire to gain some respectability by associating astrology with a science.<sup>47</sup>

### **Leo’s astrology and legitimisation**

Alan Leo’s astrology made a distinction between the esoteric, or inner, and the exoteric, or outer.<sup>48</sup> Leo elevated esoteric interpretations, focusing on the ‘affinity’ he believed ‘existed between the stars and the souls of men’ and emphasising that ‘character is destiny’.<sup>49</sup> This focus on the soul was inspired by theosophy and in particular karma and reincarnation, part of theosophy’s embrace of occult and religious ideas from the East.<sup>50</sup>

Leo had claimed in 1905 that the student of astrology should be aware of the New Psychology.<sup>51</sup> Whilst Leo did not elaborate on what he understood by this term, it was in use around that time referring to the plethora of writings and interest in the burgeoning discipline of

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<sup>45</sup> Costello, ‘Unsettled Lives’, p.130.

<sup>46</sup> Costello, ‘Unsettled Lives’, p.187.

<sup>47</sup> Phillipson, *Astrology in the Year Zero*, p.94.

<sup>48</sup> Alan Leo, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Astrologer’s Library, 1983), p.xiv.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Leo, *Astrology for All* (London: Forgotten Books, 2013 [1899]), p.iv; Alan Leo, *The Art of Synthesis* (London: LN Fowler, 1968), p.134.

<sup>50</sup> Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, p.59; Mark Morrison, ‘The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 31, no. 2 (Winter, 2008), pp.1–22, p.7; Mark Bevir, ‘The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 3 (Autumn, 1994), pp.747–67, p.748.

<sup>51</sup> Alan Leo, *The Progressed Horoscope* (London: Ascella, 1905), p.293.

psychology.<sup>52</sup> In appealing to psychology, Leo claimed that a certain amount of psychological knowledge was necessary to properly consider how a person will react to astrological influences as they unfold over time. This indicates an embrace of psychology or concern with character because natal astrology deals with human matters. It also demonstrates that Leo embraced psychology or an emphasis on character because that approach makes sense philosophically, i.e., without understanding a person's character it is difficult to forecast accurately and assist the individual in maximising their free choice. To illustrate his point, he went on to explore an example from his own chart, involving his birth configuration wherein Saturn is close to the Ascendant.<sup>53</sup> Leo stated that this was 'an unfortunate position hindering the personality and retarding progress', yet when Jupiter came to join these two planets this 'liberated a great deal of benefic influence which brought a period of rising fortune'.<sup>54</sup> Leo combined his understanding of the natal configuration with a broad forecast for a period of better fortune which released the personality from the restriction shown by the natal pattern, i.e., the psychological state of the individual is intertwined with the state of the outer life. Leo went on to say that 'it was the radical position of Saturn which gave the perseverance and caution necessary to enable the expansive Jupiter to act temperately and steadily'.<sup>55</sup> For Leo, it is only by understanding the natal chart in full and what it reveals about the personality that accurate forecasting is possible. It is the understanding of the esoteric or inner world that sheds light on the exoteric or external world. Through a thorough understanding of how a personality is coping with the various qualities indicated by different planets, it is possible to assess what may manifest in the external world under a given astrological movement.

As a theosophist, Leo had a strong conviction in the new era which theosophical founder Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) had written about.<sup>56</sup> This new age was an important context for his belief in the importance of soul evolution through psychological growth. Leo wrote that he was motivated to his adaptation of astrology 'by the primary motive of expressing what I believe to be the true Astrology for the new Era that is now dawning upon the world'.<sup>57</sup> The context of his belief in a new era and

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<sup>52</sup> Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making*, pp.3–5.

<sup>53</sup> Leo, *Progressed Horoscope*, p.293.

<sup>54</sup> Leo, *Progressed Horoscope*, p.293.

<sup>55</sup> Leo, *Progressed Horoscope*, p.293.

<sup>56</sup> Helena Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1997), p.15.

<sup>57</sup> Leo, *Esoteric Astrology*, p.v.

the philosophical primacy of the psychological to aid soul evolution were strong motivations for Leo adopting a psychological approach.

The question of legitimisation in relation to Leo's astrology is also informed by his brushes with the law. Leo operated at a time when 'fortune-telling' could bring one into trouble with the law, as the Vagrancy Act of 1824 prohibited the telling of fortunes by any means; this was regarded as inherently deceptive.<sup>58</sup> In April 1914 Leo was summoned to appear at the police courts to answer a charge of unlawfully pretending to tell fortunes.<sup>59</sup> In the subsequent court hearing, which considered the interpretations that had been provided in a single case, the summons was dismissed on the grounds that there was no evidence that Leo had any knowledge of this particular application for a horoscope interpretation and had furthermore been abroad when the interpretation was provided.<sup>60</sup> This incident however left a deep impression on him, and Leo resolved to remove any trace of fortune-telling, i.e., exact predictions, from his astrological interpretations, instead rebranding astrology as, in Curry's description, a science of tendencies.<sup>61</sup> Leo stated:

Let us part company with the fatalistic astrologer who prides himself on his predictions and who is ever seeking to convince the world that in the predictive side of Astrology alone shall we find its value. We need not argue the point as to its reality, but instead make a much-needed change in the meaning of the word and call Astrology the science of *tendencies*, thus giving a more elastic interpretation of the old but very good astrological word 'influence'.<sup>62</sup>

Curry argues that this brought astrology to a similar position as to that of psychology, with both subjects recognising that human beings cannot be subject to exact prediction.<sup>63</sup> However, Leo's difficulties with the law and charges against him of fortune-telling were not over, for in July 1917 he was once again served with a summons to appear in court on the charge of pretending to tell fortunes, the public prosecutor having decided to bring

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<sup>58</sup> 'Vagrancy Act 1824',

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo4/5/83/section/4>, (accessed: 10 April 2021)

<sup>59</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.145.

<sup>60</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.148.

<sup>61</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.149.

<sup>62</sup> Alan Leo, *Modern Astrology XXV/XI* (July 1914), pp.239–393.

<sup>63</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.150.

## 66 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

back the prosecution.<sup>64</sup> Curry reports that a particular prediction from Leo's interpretations was emphasised, this being that 'at this time a death in your family circle is likely to cause you sorrow'.<sup>65</sup> Although Leo was adamant that he only predicted tendencies rather than specific events, it was difficult to refute the charge that a death in the family was a specific prediction of an event rather than a tendency; as such Leo was found guilty and was fined accordingly.<sup>66</sup> This prosecution, according to Curry, pushed Leo further down a road he had already started upon many years before, that of modernising astrology, and he once again resolved to review his own astrological work, to remove any fatalistic and materialistic tendencies.<sup>67</sup> Leo's focus on an astrology concerned with character was not only self-proclaimed but was recognised by friends and colleagues. Annie Besant (1847–1933), the prominent theosophist, wrote:

He was one of the foremost in raising Astrology from fortune-telling to a scientific forecasting of conditions, a delineation of tendencies in a character, a map of the personal nature, and a wide outlook on coming evolution.<sup>68</sup>

However, Leo had little time to complete his final revision of his work to remove all predictions and focus just on character, as he died from a brain haemorrhage soon after the trial, in late August 1917.<sup>69</sup>

On balance, given the timing of Leo's brushes with the law, which were both towards the end of his life and after his principal astrological books had been published, it is reasonable to conclude that Leo's adoption of psychology was primarily philosophical and because it offered the best chance of human beings influencing their own spiritual development (seen as akin to psychological development) in preparation for the new era which Leo believed in. This view was however reinforced by the legal situation and his own prosecution, which helped to accelerate the tendency for astrologers to take an increasingly psychological perspective.

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<sup>64</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.152.

<sup>65</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.154.

<sup>66</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.154–55.

<sup>67</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.157.

<sup>68</sup> Bessie Leo et al., *The Life and Work of Alan Leo* (1919; Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 2012), p.8.

<sup>69</sup> Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets*, p.158.

### **Rudhyar's astrology and legitimisation**

Dane Rudhyar specifically set out to adapt astrology 'in terms of values acceptable to the modern mind'.<sup>70</sup> In the context of natal astrology, which Rudhyar focused on, these values involve applying astrology in a psychological manner, with a view to increasing 'the significance of an individual destiny and of a unique personality – thus enhancing its individualness and its uniqueness'.<sup>71</sup> Rudhyar's focus on destiny being intertwined with the personality was reminiscent of Leo's 'character is destiny' emphasis.<sup>72</sup> Yet Rudhyar, writing in the mid-1930s, had access to more of the recent literature of depth psychology and could therefore integrate this with astrology to a greater degree. Psychology played an important role in Rudhyar's adaptation of astrology, which aimed to:

... pave the way to a new type of astrology which would be philosophically sound and whose application to modern psychology would help men to live more significant, therefore more spiritual, lives.<sup>73</sup>

Rudhyar was not interested in the sort of psychology that he saw had previously been part of astrology, what he called a "“common-sense” psychology, rather superficial in character".<sup>74</sup> However, he did not provide examples to illustrate what he meant by common-sense psychology. In his astrology, Rudhyar aimed to 'interpret astrological symbols in terms of an "up-to-date" Western psychology, consistently backed up, as it were, by a philosophy which brings into clear relief some of the most recent and the most vital concepts of this century'.<sup>75</sup> Rudhyar's adaptation was for the purpose of updating astrology to the present day. He recognised that modern men and women require justification for a subject in terms which relate to the modern world. In psychology, he saw the potential for cross-fertilisation, with psychology enabling a reading of the birth-chart that emphasised unique individuality, and astrology in turn providing psychology with a greater sense of significance and meaning. Rudhyar did not however see astrology and psychology as synonymous. He asserted:

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<sup>70</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p159.

<sup>71</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology, of Personality*, p.161.

<sup>72</sup> Alan Leo, *How to Judge a Nativity* (New York: Astrologer's Library, 1983), p.xx.

<sup>73</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.81.

<sup>74</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.81.

<sup>75</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.81.

## 68 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

Anyone seeking honestly to correlate the findings of astrology and those of modern psychology is obliged to admit that there can hardly be any point by point correspondence between the two. No one astrological factor represents any one complex; no one particular planetary position or aspect can tell us whether a person is an introvert or an extrovert.<sup>76</sup>

Rudhyar was quite clear that there are major differences between psychology and astrology. Astrology cannot simply be reduced to a system of psychology akin to those in use in twentieth century society – this includes the systems of Jung and other psychoanalytic thinkers who refer to complexes. Rudhyar claimed that the psychologist cannot understand a human being as an organic whole and has no picture to do this. This is where the astrologer can come in for ‘... he can study the blueprint of the total personality, as well as the general schedule of its unfoldment from birth’.<sup>77</sup> The astrologer therefore has an advantage over the psychologist, in having a map of personality to follow in the astrological birth-chart. Yet this does not render psychology functionless. Indeed, in his 1976 *An Astrological Study of Psychological Complexes*, Rudhyar argued that whilst astrology provides the structure, psychology provides the contents.<sup>78</sup> In this sense they may be seen as complementary subjects.

Rudhyar explained the difference between astrology and psychology thus:

It should be clear, however, that astrology and psychology can be of mutual benefit to each other only if it is well understood that astrological thinking is radically different from the rigorous intellectual thinking and empirical methods featured in modern science. Science proceeds by way of exclusion, dealing only with characteristics common to large groups; astrology proceeds by way of inclusion, relating every phenomenon of life to a few fundamental principles considered to be universally valid.<sup>79</sup>

For Rudhyar, astrology worked in a very different way to sciences such as psychology. If astrology cannot be equated with psychology, however, the

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<sup>76</sup> Dane Rudhyar, *An Astrological Study of Psychological Complexes* (Berkeley, CA: Shambhala, 1976), pp.34–35.

<sup>77</sup> Rudhyar, *Modern Psyche*, p.3.

<sup>78</sup> Rudhyar, *Complexes*, p.ix.

<sup>79</sup> Rudhyar, *Complexes*, p.xi.

role of the astrologer could sometimes replace the role of the psychologist. In *The Astrology of Transformation*, Rudhyar stated that ‘... the word “astrologer” could in most instances be replaced by “psychologist”’, ‘... for my approach to the immensely complex problems engendered by the mere fact of living in our city-dominated society transcends strictly defined categories of thought’.<sup>80</sup>

Rudhyar was familiar with Jung’s assertion that ‘astrology represents the summation of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity’.<sup>81</sup> He did not, however, agree and wrote:

Astrology, even as traditionally handed down by Ptolemy, is not the summation of ancient psychology. First, because it refers to many things besides psychology – from governmental matters to weather and the condition of crops. Secondly... astrology is not to be identified, in its essence, with any experimental or empirical science, but rather is the organizing principle of such sciences as deal with life and significance in relation to “organic wholes,” much as mathematics is the organizing principle of sciences dealing with inanimate matter and the realm of “parts.”<sup>82</sup>

Rudhyar accepted that astrology may refer to many areas of life, not just psychology. He also separated astrology from psychology in terms of classifying types of knowledge. For example, he argued that astrology is not a type of science but more akin to a form of mathematics. His formulation of astrology as an ‘algebra of life’ asserts that the astrological system can be lifted and placed on other wholes in order to read meaning and significance from one to the other.<sup>83</sup> If psychology is not the only application for astrology, why specifically is psychology chosen? Rudhyar answered this point as follows:

... considering the practical difficulty there is in applying astrology to physiology and medicine, it seems much wiser to focalize

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<sup>80</sup> Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Transformation* (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), p.xiv

<sup>81</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, ‘In Memory of Richard Wilhelm’, in Richard Wilhelm, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (London: Arkana, 1931), p.154.

<sup>82</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.80.

<sup>83</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.16.

## 70 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

astrological interpretation at the psychological level, merely indicating the possibility of physical-organic correlations when such seem particularly obvious and of paramount influence upon psychological development.<sup>84</sup>

Astrology may therefore be applied to matters other than psychology; it is simply more difficult to do so and of less interest to the modern person interested in their psychological development. Psychology was selected by Rudhyar because of its relevance to modern persons, and because it is an easier and less fallible way with which to apply the astrological system.

Rudhyar's adoption of psychology was also connected to his view of history, which he saw through an astrological lens, regarding the discovery of planets such as Neptune and Pluto as significant in that he saw correlations with shifts in human consciousness, as was the idea of the astrological ages. Whilst Jung had been fascinated with the Age of Pisces, Rudhyar looked forward to the Age of Aquarius and saw his astrology as being a means by which modern men and women could prepare for this new astrological age to come. The Aquarian age had something to say for modern people seeking mystical experience:

In the astrological symbol of Aquarius, Man carries on his shoulders an urn from which "living waters" flow... what the modern seeker after mystical awareness often forgets is that power which is not contained within a form... is ineffectual.<sup>85</sup>

For Rudhyar, his astrological reform was necessary to support those who wished to be ready for the coming age of Aquarius, which would demand the ability to deal with conscious and unconscious processes:

When we speak of the new Aquarian type of person, we are actually referring to human beings through whom will be released in some more or less focused and characteristic manner the energies, the faith... of the new Age. These are dynamic features, and they refer to a large extent to unconscious or semi-conscious processes which occur through the individual persons rather than from them.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.170.

<sup>85</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrological Timing*, pp.165–66.

<sup>86</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrological Timing*, p.167.



Psychological astrology was thus necessary – not to appear legitimate to those who thought astrology could only have value if it appeared scientific – but because it was the means by which individuals would be ready for the coming Aquarian Age. His keenness to associate his work with prominent psychologists suggests Rudhyar was mindful of the need to be legitimate. Having cited Jung’s passage, which stated astrology would be an example of synchronistic thinking on a grand scale if there were sufficient data and resources to test it, he clearly looked to the link with Jung as a form of legitimisation:

If Dr. Jung, first scientist and practicing psychiatrist, then pupil of Freud, finally exponent of his own findings and interpretations as founder of the Zurich school of analytical psychology, discovered this “synchronistic” principle as a result of his own psychological practice, the fact is indeed significant.<sup>87</sup>

Rudhyar embraced Jung partly on the basis that he had independently given credence to astrology. Rudhyar would likely have been unaware that Jung viewed synchronicity, his theory of meaningful coincidences, as a restatement of the theory of correspondences, the long-held rationale for the validity of astrological interpretation.<sup>88</sup> Rudhyar’s own rationale for astrology was not directly connected with synchronicity, however, instead relying on a conception of astrology as the ‘algebra of life’ and a system that could be applied to different parts of life.<sup>89</sup> Nor did he fully embrace all of Jung’s concepts or agree with Jung’s view that astrology ‘represents the sum of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity’.<sup>90</sup> As such, his appeal to Jung, whilst having some connection to the idea of legitimisation, was not one that fully underpinned his own astrology. Rudhyar had his own views on what astrology was and how it should be described and was confident in asserting these reasons regardless of corroboration from other thinkers.

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<sup>87</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.79.

<sup>88</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *On Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, ed. Roderick Main (London: Routledge, 2008), p.101.

<sup>89</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.16.

<sup>90</sup> C.G. Jung, 'Richard Wilhelm: In Memoriam', in *The Spirit in Man, Art, And Literature*, Collected works Vol. 15, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p.56.

On balance, Rudhyar, whilst mindful of the need to be legitimate in the modern world, did not adopt psychology primarily for this purpose, but because it was the level which was philosophically sound, allowing modern people the opportunity to work with their birth-charts from a place that recognised the importance of free-will and consciously choosing to align with the cosmic pattern indicated by the individual birth-chart.

### **Greene's astrology and legitimisation**

Liz Greene recognises the need for astrology to adapt in the modern world. In her first astrology book, *Saturn*, which was published in 1976, Greene laments the state of astrology and suggests that 'there remains a certain flat, two-dimensional quality to many of our traditional interpretations of the birth horoscope'.<sup>91</sup> Greene's critique of astrology underlies her adoption of psychology as the means to improve the quality and depth of astrological interpretation.

Greene puts psychological development at the heart of her astrology and, like Leo and Rudhyar, asserts that astrological interpretation needs to change. She argues that the role of astrology in exploring the human psyche is more important than 'the popular and misguided conception of magical prognostications of the future'.<sup>92</sup> Astrology, for Greene, is not about forecasting future events but is concerned with the psychological growth of the individual. In contrast to a concern with worldly events, her approach is to focus on inner meaning: 'it is the inner meaning which here concerns us'.<sup>93</sup> Two of her immediate reasons for turning to psychology are thus that she sees traditional interpretations as being inadequate and the intrinsic importance of psychological exploration for human beings, this being the key to enhancing their freedom of choice. Greene views astrology as not having kept up with ideas on motivation:

... we are still trapped under the dead weight of malefic planets, afflictions, good and bad characters, and superficial behavioural diagnoses which show no understanding of motive.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Greene, *Saturn*, p.9.

<sup>92</sup> Liz Greene, *Relating: an astrological guide to living with others on a small planet* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1978), p.58.

<sup>93</sup> Greene, *Saturn*, p.15.

<sup>94</sup> Greene, *Saturn*, p.194.

For Greene it is the underlying psychological motive that it is important as opposed to a superficial assessment of behaviour that does not consider the underlying psychological causes.

Greene asserts that astrology and psychology have the same ‘subject of investigation’ but ‘the fruit of their coupling has yet to be fully explored’.<sup>95</sup> By this same subject matter, she refers to the psyche, which she views as being at the heart not only of psychology but also of astrology. Greene, like Jung, asserts that ‘... psychology in its deepest sense, has existed for a long time under other names, the earliest of which, perhaps was astrology’.<sup>96</sup> This contrasts with Rudhyar, who disagreed with Jung’s pronouncement that astrology and psychology have the same subject of investigation. Instead, Rudhyar noted that astrology has a very wide sphere of application but simply chose to focus on the psychological as the most inimical to error and as relevant to modern persons. The contrast is that, for Greene, psychology is fundamental to astrology and essential to being able to understand the birth-chart fully:

I do not feel that it is possible to comprehend a birth chart in a deeper sense without having some grounding in the fundamental principles of psychology. The very basic and apparently simple division of man’s psyche into conscious and unconscious puts the interpretation of the birth chart into a completely new perspective, offering nuances, subtleties, and lines of definite orientation which are otherwise completely missed.<sup>97</sup>

Psychology is adopted not for the purposes of legitimisation, but because it is concerned with the psyche, which for Greene is exactly what astrology is also concerned with. She recognizes that psychology ‘is a very new science’ but argues that psychology concerns itself with psyche, which is akin to the human soul and that ‘the study of the human soul was the province of astrology long before it became the province of anything else’.<sup>98</sup> In Greene’s view a modern presentation of astrology recognises its psychological nature. Greene does not present astrology as science. She argues that ‘we cannot claim that anything astrological is “real” in the objective sense, because the zodiac is an image of the ecliptic, the apparent

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<sup>95</sup> Greene, *Relating*, p.6.

<sup>96</sup> Greene, *Relating*, p.5.

<sup>97</sup> Greene, *Saturn*, p.194.

<sup>98</sup> Greene, *Relating*, p.5.

## 74 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

path of the Sun around the Earth'.<sup>99</sup> When talking about house systems she states:

I think there are a lot of conundrums like this in astrology, where you must in the end accept the fact that if it works for you, use it. But if you are looking for an absolute truth about house systems, neither of us is inclined to give it to you.<sup>100</sup>

There is recognition that there is a mystery around how astrology works, and that things may not be as clear cut and objective as they are sometimes presented to be. For example, the process of astrological interpretation must take the astrologer into account: she asserts that 'what works for one astrologer might not for another'.<sup>101</sup> Greene turns to psychology because she believes that astrology is fundamentally psychological, and not to give astrology legitimacy. She does not present astrology as science, but focuses on the psychological level. She has asserted in her academic work that astrology 'can be understood as a psychological experience' and recognises that astrology has operated in many cultural contexts containing different religious and cultural beliefs.<sup>102</sup>

### Conclusion

Psychology grew rapidly in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influencing many aspects of life. This formed the background to the claim of a new form of astrology having arisen, this being psychological astrology. Hanegraaff asserts that the principle reason for psychologised magic is legitimisation in a disenchanted world.<sup>103</sup> Bird has argued that psychological astrology is presented as scientific knowledge rather than magico-religious knowledge (its true nature) for reasons of legitimisation.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Liz Greene, *The Horoscope in Manifestation* (London: CPA, 1997), p.178.

<sup>100</sup> Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas, *The Inner Planets* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1993), p.300.

<sup>101</sup> Greene, *Relating*, p.201.

<sup>102</sup> Liz Greene, 'Is Astrology a Divinatory System?' *Culture and Cosmos* 12, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2008), pp.3–29, p.29.

<sup>103</sup> Hanegraaff, 'How magic survived', p.396.

<sup>104</sup> Bird, 'Astrology in Education', pp.95, 107.

The problem of legitimacy was also noted by Costello and Phillipson who discussed the adoption of psychology by astrology as being related to establishing respectability through association with science.<sup>105</sup>

This paper has examined the work of three key astrologers of the twentieth century and its findings counter the idea that psychological astrology adopted psychology in order to appear legitimate.

Leo's astrology was part of his theosophical cosmology. He believed that the purpose of life was for souls to develop so that they could eventually be free of the cycle of karma and reincarnation.<sup>106</sup> He also believed that this need to develop was becoming more urgent, given that theosophists believed humanity was on the verge of an imminent new era. The way in which souls could develop was through psychological self-awareness and through understanding their characters. This maximised their freedom in responding to astrological influences and supported soul growth.

Rudhyar's principal reason for adapting astrology on psychological lines was to create a philosophically sound astrology whose psychological nature could contribute to people living more spiritual and meaningful lives.<sup>107</sup> Like Leo, Rudhyar believed in a new astrological age that required greater spiritual development.<sup>108</sup> His astrology would help to create more such people thereby assisting preparation for a new historical epoch. Rudhyar did appeal to Jung as a source of credibility. However, he did not simply accept all that Jung asserted. For example, Rudhyar disagreed with Jung that astrology was the sum of the psychological knowledge of antiquity and openly stated this.<sup>109</sup>

Greene's main reason for creating a psychological astrology was due to her view that astrology and psychology have the same subject matter, the psyche, and without psychology, proper interpretation is not possible. The psychological astrologers discussed in this paper did not adopt psychology in order to find legitimacy in the modern world. The main reason for adapting astrology further in a psychological manner was a philosophical one, to maximise the potential freedom of human beings.

For Leo and Rudhyar, preparing individuals spiritually and psychologically for the new era they anticipated was also important, whilst

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<sup>105</sup> Costello, 'Unsettled Lives', p.147; Phillipson, *Astrology in the Year Zero*, p.94.

<sup>106</sup> Leo, *Esoteric Astrology*, p.vii.

<sup>107</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.81.

<sup>108</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrological Timing*, pp.165–66.

<sup>109</sup> Rudhyar, *Astrology of Personality*, p.80.

## 76 Twentieth-Century Psychological Astrology and Legitimation

for Greene, astrology is fundamentally psychological in nature. As such, it is only natural that astrology should embrace theories of psychological interpretation.