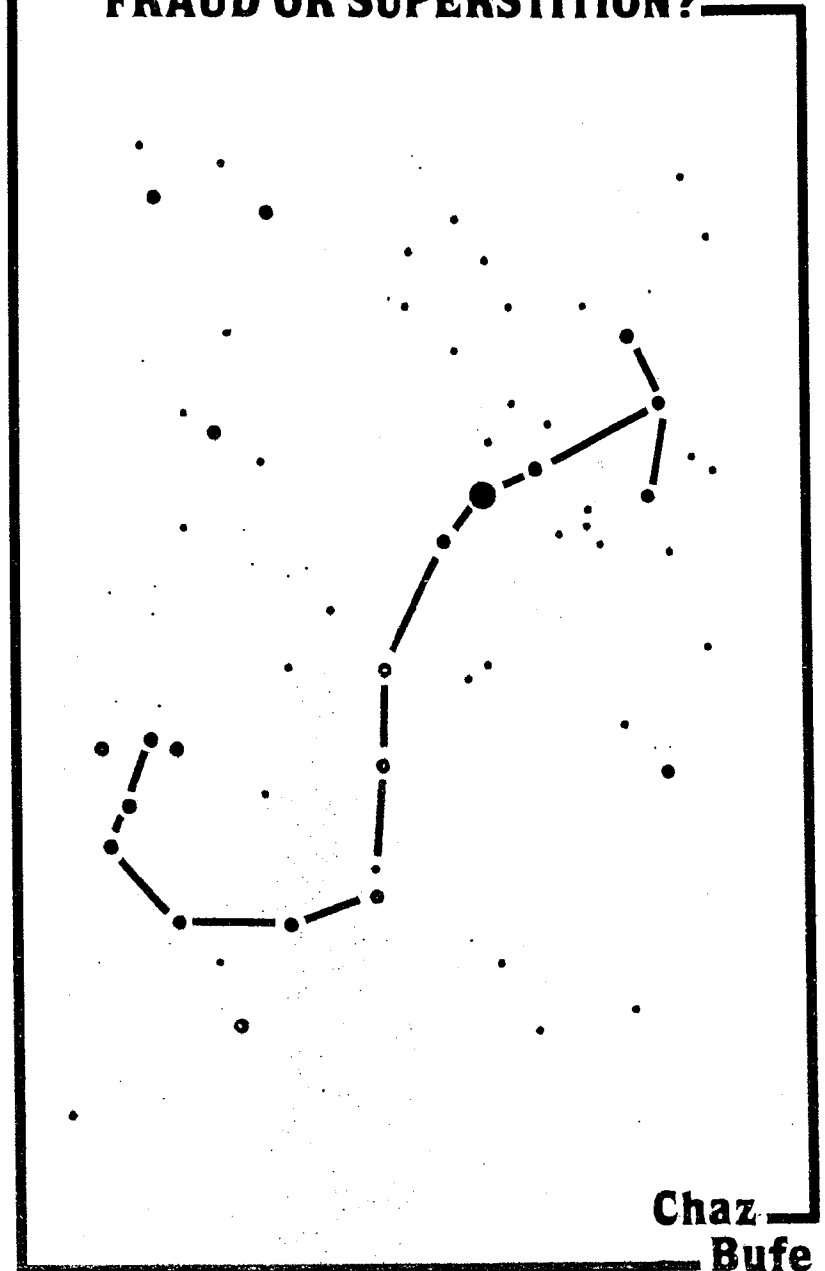


\$1.00

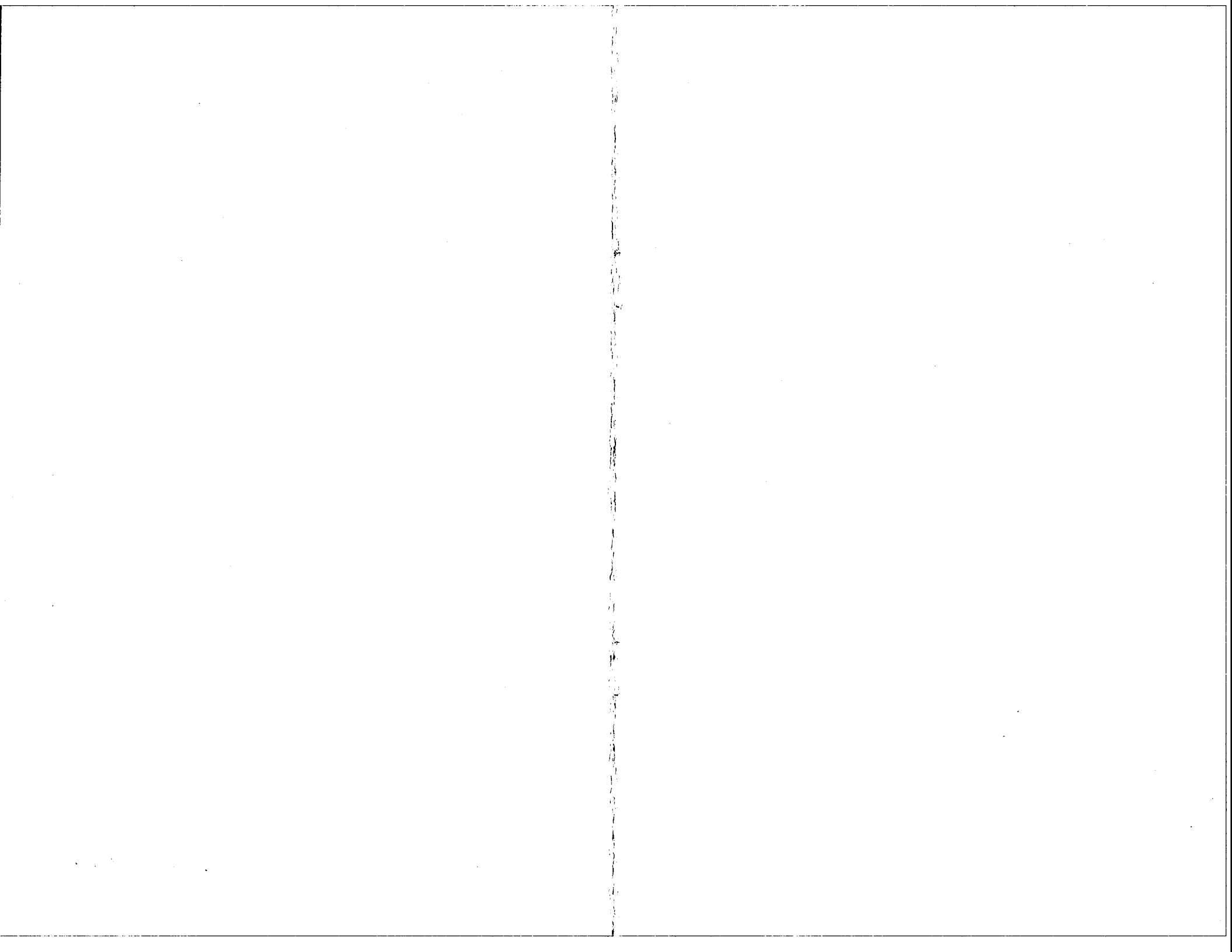
This pamphlet briefly but thoroughly debunks astrology's supposed scientific basis and takes a close look at why anyone would believe in such patent nonsense.

# ASTROLOGY

**FRAUD OR SUPERSTITION?**



**Chaz  
Bufe**



**HORRORS OF THE INQUISITION**, by Joseph McCabe. This H-J reprint is the perfect antidote to catholic apologists who claim that the Inquisition wasn't all that bad. Enlightening but horrifying. 44 pp. / \$3.50

**HOW CHRISTIANITY GREW OUT OF PAGANISM**, by Joseph McCabe. This Haldeman-Julius reprint briefly but clearly shows how christianity adopted virtually all of its central myths and ceremonies directly from pagan religions. 12 pp. / \$1.00

**JUDEO-CHRISTIAN DEGRADATION OF WOMAN**, by Joseph McCabe. If you've ever had any doubts about the hateful attitude of judeo-christianity toward women—and its devastating impact on women's lives—this Haldeman-Julius reprint will erase those doubts. 40 pp. / \$3.50

**MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU: A LIGHTEARTED LOOK AT WHY GOD DOES NOT EXIST**, by April Pedersen. Amusing and insightful. Contains over a dozen cartoons and illustrations. 20 pp. / \$2.00

**THE MEANING OF ATHEISM**, by E. Haldeman-Julius. The title says it all in this reprint of the classic H-J pamphlet. This is one of the most lucid and entertaining expositions of the atheist position ever written. 24 pp. / \$1.50

**PAGAN CHRISTS**, by Joseph McCabe. This Haldeman-Julius reprint covers the same ground as How Christianity Grew Out of Paganism, but in considerably more detail. Well written and amusing. 44 pp. / \$3.50

**SCIENCE, SOCIETY & RELIGION**, by Yves Barbero. This pamphlet looks at the differences between religious, legal, and scientific "truth," and at how religious absolutists are attempting to use the coercive power of the state to impose their beliefs in the public schools. 16 pp. / \$1.50

**THUMBSCREW & RACK**, by George E. MacDonald. An enlightening, heavily illustrated guide to the instruments of torture used by organized christianity to persuade heretics and witches of the truth and beauty of the One True Faith. 20 pp. / \$2.00

**20 REASONS TO ABANDON CHRISTIANITY**, by Chaz Bufe. Includes discussions of christianity's cruelty, arrogance, authoritarianism, dishonesty, misogyny, homophobia, and morbid sexual preoccupations. 24 pp. / \$2.00

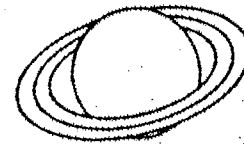
**WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED TO MAN: THE GENUINE WORD OF GOD** (as revealed by the world's holy men and holy books). We won't spoil the surprise for you, but believe us, this pamphlet packs a punch and delivers exactly what it promises. 12 pp. / 35 cents each, 4 for \$1, 30 for \$5, 75 for \$10

**WHY I AM NOT A MORMON: FALLACIES OF THE MORMON FAITH**, by John Johnson. An ex-Mormon's exceptionally penetrating look at the absurdities and blatant falsehoods in the Book of Mormon, and the shameful attempts of the Mormon hierarchy to deceive rank-and-file Mormons about these things. 28 pp. / \$2.50

**MAIL ORDERS:** Add prices of individual pamphlets plus \$3.00 for P/H (per order, not per item) and send check or m.o. to See Sharp Press, P.O. Box 1731, Tucson, AZ 85702-1731. Overseas orders please include \$5.00 for P/H and send payment in U.S. dollars.

# ASTROLOGY

## FRAUD OR SUPERSTITION?



**CHAZ BUFE**

SEE SHARP PRESS / TUCSON, AZ / 2002

## Atheist/Freethought Pamphlets from See Sharp Press

**AMONG THE CANNIBAL CHRISTIANS**, by Earl Lee. Did the early christians take the command, "Eat of my body," a bit too literally? And just what did the "Body and Blood of Christ" really consist of? For evidence that the attitude of the early christians toward mind-altering substances was a wee bit more liberal than that of their brethren today, check out this pamphlet. 32 pp. / \$3.00

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SEX PROBLEM**, by Joseph McCabe. As relevant today as when it was written half a century ago, this extremely revealing Haldeman-Julius reprint by ex-catholic priest McCabe clearly explains the sickness and perversion of the catholic church's teachings, practices, and history regarding human sexuality. 28 pp. / \$2.50

**CHRISTIANITY & SLAVERY**, by Joseph McCabe. This H-J reprint provides a good overview of the disgraceful relationship of christianity to slavery, and is an excellent antidote to christian apologists who claim that christianity led the fight against slavery. 44 pp. / \$3.50

**THE CRIMES OF JEHOVAH**, Mark Mirabello, author/editor. Dozens of Old Testament passages taken from the King James version of the bible reveal the judeo-christian god to be vindictive, sadistic, self-contradictory, and remarkably juvenile. 24 pp. / \$2.50

**DIALOGUE BETWEEN A PRIEST AND A DYING ATHEIST**, by Marquis de Sade. An amusing and insightful but little known work, which shows a little known side of "the divine marquis." 16 pp. / \$2.00

**DOES GOD EXIST? 12 PROOFS OF THE NONEXISTENCE OF GOD**, by Sebastien Faure. A sophisticated analysis of inconsistencies in deistic beliefs by the foremost French freethinker and anarchist of the early 20th century. 32 pp. / \$2.50

**GOD EATING: A STUDY IN CHRISTIANITY AND CANNIBALISM**, by J.T. Lloyd. A detailed, careful account of the origins of ritual cannibalism in christianity. One of the first works published by the Rationalist Press Association, this pamphlet is still as relevant as when it first appeared a century ago. 36 pp. / \$3.00

**THE HERETIC'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE**, Chaz Bufe, editor. The worst of the bible, focusing on sex, sexism, slavery, submission, unfulfilled prophecies, contradictions, atrocities, and absurdities. Over 100 passages cited. (excerpted from *The Heretic's Handbook of Quotations*) 12 pp. / \$1.50

**A HISTORY OF SATANISM**, by Joseph McCabe. This Haldeman-Julius reprint provides a detailed history and analysis of the intimate connection between christianity and satanism, demonstrating that they're merely two sides of the same coin. 32 pp. / \$3.00

Copyright 1987, 2000, 2002 by Chaz Bufe. All rights reserved.

For information write to See Sharp Press, P.O. Box 1731, Tucson, AZ 85702-1731, or to [info@seesharppress.com](mailto:info@seesharppress.com), or go to our web site: <http://www.seesharppress.com>.

See Sharp Press has been publishing books, pamphlets and bumper stickers since 1984. Our primary publishing areas are anarchism, atheism, music, philosophy, and anti-12-step substance abuse books, although we also publish occasional works in the areas of sex and psychology. Our full catalog is on line at [www.seesharppress.com](http://www.seesharppress.com). Print catalog upon request.

think, and how to feel. Astrology, like other religious beliefs, fills the bill. As a system of preordination ("Oh! You're a Scorpio! You must . . ."), it gives believers a nice, neat means of interpreting reality and of tailoring their behavior and expectations to fit the prescriptions of their belief system. Astrologers themselves admit this, with some of them maintaining that astrology "controls," "influences," or "can serve as a road guide." (The difference between these descriptions is one of degree, not substance.)

Still, why do so many choose astrology as a belief system rather than Mormonism, Catholicism, Islam, etc.? A probable reason is that astrology meets the desire of many people for a preordination system, yet it does not contain the most unpleasant aspects of conventional religions. It is silly and utterly irrational, and almost certainly influences some to make unfortunate personal decisions. (Consider the effect of articles such as "Birth Control by Astrology" upon those who take them seriously.) In extreme cases, astrological belief may incline individuals toward passivity—after all, if everything is written in the stars, why not just go with the flow? But unlike such religions as Judaism, Christianity, Mormonism, and Islam, astrology is not based upon guilt, misogyny, and sexual repression. It is simply based upon credulousness, ignorance, irrationality, and the cagerness of human sheep to be led.

Astrology is a handy crutch for those who are repelled by the more overtly reactionary, inhumane aspects of conventional religions, but are not yet ready to free themselves from supernatural preordination systems. In itself, this turn from organized religion is mildly encouraging. But it would be far more encouraging to see believers in astrology rise from the Procrustean bed of their irrational beliefs and begin to think for themselves.

## ASTROLOGY FRAUD OR SUPERSTITION?

For tens of thousands of years human beings have looked up at the night sky and asked themselves, "What does it all mean?" Many answers have been suggested. One of the oldest is provided by astrology: the belief that the stars and planets are controlling influences on our lives.

Astrology, as even most astrologers will admit, did not arise until the advent of civilization and the concomitant religious/magical view of the world. (Religion and magic were a natural outgrowth of wonder and ignorance; they likely survived, at least in part, because they were useful to the priests and royalty as a means of frightening their subjects into line.) Thus, astrology was the result of combining the ancient practice of observing the night sky with a magical view of the world, specifically what Lawrence Jerome, in the September/October 1975 *Humanist*, calls the "principle of correspondences." He explains this principle as follows:

The omen or magic object has certain physical properties that are related to the external world by analogy. For instance, the reddish color of the planet Mars means to the astrologer that it is magically related with blood, war and metal iron. . . .

After its invention by the Babylonians (whose priests used astrology and the equally sensible practice of reading the entrails of animals to "foretell" the futures of kings and nations), astrology was further developed by the ancient Greeks, who named the planets after their deities and ascribed the qualities of those deities to the planets. (Those qualities are still the ones ascribed to the planets in "modern" astrolo-

gy.) Finally, in the second century c.e., Ptolemy wrote his *Tetrabiblos*, the astrological bible, in the city of Alexandria and brought astrology into its "modern" form.

During the Middle Ages, astrology was banned by the church, and it wasn't resurrected until the Renaissance, along with the writings of the Greeks. The rise of science sent astrology into eclipse once again, and it didn't resurface as a widely held belief until the turbulent years of the early twentieth century.

Since its resurrection, belief in astrology has touched all segments of the population, not only in the U.S., but in Europe as well. Most of the top Nazis believed in astrology. Himmler's astrologer, Wilhelm Wulff, even wrote a book on the subject, *Zodiac and Swastika*. Hitler himself, however, apparently did not believe in astrology and viewed it as merely a convenient means of manipulation.

In the U.S., a number of years ago *Time* magazine identified Ronald Reagan as a client of astrologer Carroll Righter, and a recent survey revealed that 15% of college undergraduates believe in astrology. Among the general population, the percentage is far higher. Jon D. Miller of Northern Illinois University reports that 39% of adult Americans, some 66 million persons, believe that astrology is "scientific." These figures seem reasonable in light of astrology's popularity.

At present, two-thirds of U.S. daily newspapers carry horoscopes. There are at least 10,000 full-time and 175,000 part-time astrologers in the country. And astrologically related books and magazines are a glut on the market. A few sample titles: "The Astrology Way to Stock Market Profits," "Birth Control by Astrology," "Astrology: Judging Compatibility," and "Choosing by the Stars: Appropriate Perfumes."

(A number of years ago I wrote a "horoscope" for a humor magazine in which I listed among my credits an article in *Motor Trend* titled, "Astrology and MPGs: Tune Your Car by the Stars." After reviewing the available writings by astrologers, my only question is WHEN *Motor Trend* will get around to publishing such an article.)

gists Peter Glick of Lawrence University and Mark Snyder of the University of Minnesota, published in the May/June 1986 *Humanist*, concluded that skeptics are "fact-oriented," while astrological believers are "theory-driven":

[S]keptics paid close attention to the information they gathered . . . while believers largely ignored what targets told them when it came to pass judgment on how well the astrological horoscope had predicted the targets' personalities.

A study of credence in another occult belief, ESP, published in the March 1980 *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, tends to confirm that occult believers ignore contradictory evidence much more often than skeptics. In that study, skeptics and ESP believers read articles with which they agreed and with which they disagreed, and then answered questions about the articles. Approximately 90% of the skeptics correctly remembered the conclusions of articles regardless of whether the articles were pro- or anti-ESP, while fewer than 40% of the ESP believers correctly recalled the conclusion of the article which debunked ESP; a large majority of the believers "remembered" that the article concluded that ESP exists.

Another of Gauquelin's experiments provides a more amusing example of the self-deception of occult believers. He took out a newspaper advertisement in which he promised free personalized horoscopes to all who answered the ad. One hundred fifty persons responded. Gauquelin then sent out the same horoscope to all 150 and asked them how well it fit them. Ninety-four percent replied that they recognized themselves in it. The horoscope was that of Dr. Michel Peüot, a mass murderer.

Why do occult believers have such a reluctance to face facts? Glick and Snyder concluded that, "in order to maintain the sense of being able to predict events, the believer makes the facts 'fit' the theory whether or not these events are consistent with the theory's predictions." The reason for this blindness is obvious.

It's an unfortunate fact that a great many people do not want to go to the work of making their own decisions. They want someone or something to tell them how to act, how to

The fact that millions of astrological believers claim that they “feel” astrological influences in their own lives and “see” astrological influences at work in the lives of others is a prime example of wishful thinking, and nothing more. Believers in astrology, like other religionists, want so badly to believe in their preordination system that they “feel” and “see” effects where none exist. Similarly, a great many born-again christians claim to “feel” the presence of Jesus or the “holy spirit” and to “see” the hand of Satan at work in astrology and other occult beliefs. (Most born-again christians really do believe that Satan exists.) And if believers in astrology want us to accept their feelings as evidence supporting their beliefs, they must, to be consistent, grant the same evidentiary value to the feelings of born-again christians, which in some ways directly contradict the feelings of astrological believers—all of which demonstrates the unreliability of personal feelings as “evidence” in matters of this sort.

Why would anyone believe in anything as patently absurd as astrology? Probably for reasons similar to those of persons who believe in such patent absurdities as transubstantiation or their own “personal savior.” One particularly disturbing aspect of this belief in the absurd is that many astrological believers not only do not use logical (scientific) reasoning, but they do not want to use it. Their “reasoning” is that of a stubborn child: “If I want it to be true, it *must* be true!” So, they adopt (probably unconsciously) a completely dishonest intellectual attitude, clinging obstinately to anything which seems to confirm their belief, while ignoring the plethora of inconvenient facts which call it into doubt. The pathetic clamoring about Gauquelin’s since-disproven “Mars effect”—while other similar studies indicated that no such effect existed, and the above-listed objections to astrology went unanswered—is a case in point.

The standard reply of astrologers to this is the childish, “You’re one too,” which evades the question of their own dishonesty by implying that skeptics also ignore inconvenient facts. Unfortunately for the astrologers, that does not appear to be the case. A study of information evaluation by psycholo-

In addition to its being based on the magical “principle of correspondences,” there are many other reasons to regard astrology as a system of magic rather than as a science. First of all, astrologers have never attempted to explain how astrology supposedly works—that is, why the apparent positions of different astronomical bodies supposedly have different effects upon different people. As Bart Bok, former president of the American Astronomical Society, put it:

Many believers in astrology have suggested that each planet issues a different variety of special as-yet-undetected radiations or “vibrations” . . . [but] there is apparently conclusive evidence that the sun, moon, planets, and stars are all made of the same stuff, varieties and combinations of atomic particles and molecules, all governed by uniform laws of physics. It does not make sense to suppose that the various planets and the moon, all with rather similar physical properties, could manage to affect human affairs in totally dissimilar fashion.

Second, astrology does not even take into account all of the major bodies in our solar system, let alone all those in our galaxy or the hundreds of billions of other galaxies in the universe. Most astrologers make their planetary computations using only the planets known to the ancients; they don’t take into account those discovered by modern science (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto); and no astrologers take into account the nearest stars, which are far nearer to us than those in the zodiac constellations, which themselves are at wildly varying distances.

Third, there is no reason whatsoever to believe that the mysterious, undetectable, astrological forces supposedly emanating from the planets would be any stronger than the gravitational forces of the planets. And those forces are weak indeed. At its nearest conjunction, Mars exerts far less gravitational force upon a newborn infant than the midwife or doctor who delivers the child.

Fourth, astrologers, in their computations, do not take into account the inverse square law, which is a fundamental law of physics. It says that the amount of radiation received by a body varies as the inverse square of its distance from the source of

the radiation. For example, the amount of light reaching a ship four miles from a lighthouse will be only one-quarter (per unit of surface area) of that reaching a ship two miles from the lighthouse, and one-sixteenth of that reaching a ship one mile from the lighthouse. But laws of physics do not matter to astrologers, and they don't care whether Mars is 40 million or 100 million miles away. They only concern themselves with the apparent position—to a viewer on Earth—of Mars in relation to the backdrop of the zodiac constellations and the other planets. So, if the astrological "radiation" ("vibration"—choose your own nebulous term) of the planets does influence human beings as astrologers claim, it would have to be a most peculiar type of radiation, one which disobeys a fundamental, well-established law of physics.

Fifth, many astrologers ignore precession. The Earth's rotational axis is not stable, and the Earth wobbles like a top—but much more slowly. So slowly, in fact, that it takes approximately 26,000 years for the Earth's axis to complete one rotation around the 47-degree-diameter circle it describes. This slow wobbling is called precession. It means, among other things, that the stars we now see in summer will be seen in winter (and vice versa) 13,000 years from now. It also means that the sun has receded almost a full sign along the zodiac since the Tetrabiblos was written nearly two millennia ago. So, the calculations of astrologers who rely on that hoary source are now off almost a full sign.

Sixth, the most popular type of astrology is natal astrology, in which astrological forces supposedly leap into action at the moment of an individual's birth, imprinting her or him with certain characteristics. But the choice of the time of birth as the moment of supposed astrological imprinting makes no sense at all. Astrologers choose the time of birth purely because it's convenient. They might object that a mother's body shields her baby from astrological "radiation" until birth, but that argument ignores the fact that almost all babies are born indoors, and it would be illogical to think that this "radiation" could penetrate wood, concrete and steel, but not a few centimeters of human flesh.

Some astrologers, especially the "humanistic" variety, attempt to discount criticisms such as these by claiming that the planets and stars do not produce astrological effects, but, rather, that the positions of astronomical bodies only serve as "indications" of astrological forces. This is a transparent attempt to evade questioning of astrology's supposed causal mechanism by retreating into a fog of ever-vaguer claims. By taking such a position, astrologers are saying in effect that for unknown reasons the positions of some of the stars and planets are indications of the undetectable effects of unknown types of undetectable forces emanating from unknown, undetectable sources. Such a proposition is even more ludicrous than the traditional astrological view that the stars and planets—never mind how—influence our daily lives.

Finally, there is absolutely no empirical evidence, absolutely none, that astrology has any value whatsoever as a means of prediction. What scientific testing has been done indicates that there are no astrological "effects." For instance, former Michigan State University psychologist Bernie Silberman asked astrologers to list compatible and incompatible signs. Silberman then inspected the records of 478 couples who divorced and 2978 who married in 1967 and 1968 in Michigan. He found no correspondence beyond that of random chance between the astrological signs predicted to be compatible or incompatible by astrologers and the signs of those getting married or divorced.

French statistician Michel Gauquelin has conducted far more detailed tests which also have discovered no astrological effects. (Gauquelin's early, highly publicized report of a "Mars effect" on professional athletes was the result of an error in his calculations, and similar studies conducted by others showed no such effect.) In one test he examined the signs (moon, zodiacal, planetary, ascendant, and mid-heaven) for 15,560 professionals from five European nations in 10 different occupations. He found no evidence of any astrological effects. His calculations showed that the correlation between astrological signs and occupations to be that of random chance.