

The Constellations And The Signs

By Patrick Alessandra

A Keynote on investigation into the relationship between the zodiacal constellations and the zodiacal signs.

The usefulness of investigation into the relationship between the constellations and their representative signs is indicated by the Tibetan when he states: "In the understanding of the significance of the distinction between constellations as galaxies of stars, and signs as concentrated influences will come fresh light upon the science of astrology."¹

In his books the Tibetan provides us with numerous ideas relevant to this possibility which, as they are held in the contemplative mental substance of esoteric astrologers, can form a "seed framework" from which the above mentioned "significance of the distinction" can precipitate into conventional astrological usefulness through the process of experimental application. In a *Treatise on White Magic*² the Tibetan tells us:

"In casting the horoscope of a human being who is born in a particular month ... it should be borne in mind (which it seldom is) that now the month and the sign do not coincide at all. The Sun is really not in Leo, for instance, during the month of August. The correct interpretation therefore of a chart is largely psycho-metrical and dependent upon the thought-form of the constellation which has been built up for ages by the astrologers. Energy follows thought. For thousands of years certain types of energy and their consequent qualifying effects on substance and form have been considered to be thus and so. Therefore, thus they are, except in the case of the highly

evolved, of the true aspirant who has oriented himself, and is thus escaping from the wheel of existence and beginning to govern his stars, and so is no longer under their rule and domination."

In *Esoteric Astrology*³ he again indicates the importance of the "potency of the thought forms which have been built up in connection with the twelve signs" as regards "astrological prediction and interpretation." In addition, however, he states that the "accuracy of astrological prediction and interpretation" will also be based upon

"the capacity of the astrologer in any specific period to respond to the changes which are all the time taking place, such as the gradual shifting and changing brought about by the precession of the equinoxes, or the slow shift of the pole of the planet."

[The precession of the equinoxes is the apparent shifting or retrograding of the point in the Earth's orbital path about the Sun at which there occurs a day and night of equal length. The time it takes the Earth to orbit from one equinox (or solstice) and back to the same event is one standard year. This occurs at an orbital point just before the earth reaches the place in its orbit where the equinox (or solstice) occurred previously. This is due to the rate of the Earth's wobble on its axis. (The actual precession of the equinoxes, therefore, is ignored by our current calendar system.)]⁴

Because of the precession of the equinoxes (and perhaps our somewhat misleading calendar system) the constellations and the signs are no longer apparently (and approximately) aligned. In fact, according to the current astronomical definition of the constellations, it would be impossible for the constellations and the tropical signs to be perfectly aligned. The constellations are not of the same size nor do they apparently stay in the same orbital plane.

However, even with this apparent shifting, the signs do continue to "represent" the constellations:

"I would remind students again that when speaking of signs I am referring to the influences of the constellations as they are represented by the signs, calling to your attention that in the great evolutionary process and owing to certain shifts and astronomical astrological discrepancies, the Sun is not in the constellation to which a particular sign refers at any given moment."⁵

The Mechanism of this representation would seem to be (at least in part) the thought forms of the signs. However, these thought forms, being quite ancient, are "colored" by much that is no longer useful. As the Tibetan states, "in Atlantean days (from which period we have inherited what we know about astrology)..."⁶ and also:

"Up till the present time, the teaching about the centers has been inherited from Atlantean times and couched in the old forms and formulas which are basically unsuited to our present greatly advanced state of development. The same can be said of orthodox or exoteric astrology."⁷

On pages 62 and 63 in *Esoteric Astrology* the Tibetan reiterates and expands upon these ideas:

"I have frequently referred to the fact that the entire science of astrology is based upon a

non-existent condition. It has no basis in material fact and yet is eternally based on truth. The zodiac is, as you well know, the imaginary path of the Sun in the heavens. It is therefore largely an illusion, from the exoteric point of view. But at the same time the constellations exist, and the streams of energy which pass and repass, intermingle and interlock throughout the body of space are by no means illusions but definitely express eternal relationships. It is the misuse of the various energies that has created the illusion. This illusionary path is consequently as much a reality to humanity today as are the personality illusions of any individual. These illusions are due to the polarization of the individual upon the astral plane."

"It is interesting to note in this connection that--due to the precession of the equinoxes--a fourth type of force is brought to bear upon the planet and man, but one which is seldom recognized and given due place in the horoscope. The month and the sign, or the place of the Sun in the heavens, do not really coincide. When we state, for instance, that the Sun is "in Aries" it conveys an esoteric truth but not an exoteric fact. The Sun was in Aries at the beginning of this great cycle, but it is not in exactly the same position today when it is 'found in that sign.'"

And on pages 256 and 257:

"You will note, if you consult a dictionary, that astronomically Virgo is regarded as occupying the place in the heavens where Libra is to be found. This is all part of the great illusion which astrology finds hard to grasp. There is a constant moving and shifting in space; the precession of the equinoxes is both a fact and an illusion. The whole process and its interpretation is dependent upon the intellectual point in evolution of the race; the responsiveness of man to the planetary forces and to the influence of the zodiacal signs is dependent upon man's vehicles of response and upon the mechanism of reception with which he enters into incarnation"

The conceptualizations in much of current exoteric astrology are no longer concordant with astronomical understanding. As regards the twelve signs (which have been with us since Atlantean times ⁸) in relation to the twelve constellations there are obvious discrepancies (due to the precession of the equinoxes) [see Table 1] which most of exoteric astrology ignores. As shown in Table 1 there is a significant difference in the amount of zodiacal "space" occupied by the constellations (i.e., the Sun currently spends only seven days in Scorpio while it takes over forty to move through Virgo). Astronomically, therefore, as precession continues and the stars slowly move through space, it is also evident that additional constellations can "enter" our zodiac (or shift so as to appear behind the Sun for a certain period). Over the past few hundred years this has occurred and is occurring with respect to two constellations (see Addendum 1), but this also has been ignored by most astrologers.

As cited above "the accuracy of astrological prediction and interpretation" must be based at least in part upon "the capacity of the astrologer... to respond to the gradual shifting and changing brought about by the precession of the equinoxes."

Indeed, although conventional astrology recognizes twelve zodiacal constellations there have not always been twelve. The Tibetan states that during the stage of animal man there were eight zodiacal signs, that in Lemuria there were ten, and that in Atlantean times there were the twelve we now know.⁹ He then tells us that today "men of all types and rays" are responsive to influences of the twelve signs.¹⁰ The evolutionary progress of humanity may thereby evoke (or be invoked by) apparently new zodiacal influences such as the constellations of Ophiuchus and Orion. (See Addendum 1)

From the above statements by the Tibetan it seems apparent that a consideration of the actual zodiacal constellations (or the astronomical positions of the stars) in astrological interpretation and investigation would not only be useful but probably

necessary to obtain adequate levels of accuracy when working with the charts of disciples. In such experimental considerations much light may be shed upon the "significance of the distinction" between the constellations and the signs.

An important question for consideration in such investigations would be: In what manner are stellar and planetary astrological relationships reflected in astronomical observations? Exoteric astrology has for thousands of years maintained a chart calculation system that places the Earth rather than the Sun at the center of our solar system and universe. Could or should chart calculation be adjusted to take modern astronomical understanding into consideration by placing the Sun at the center of a chart and thus making astrology less terra-centric? Should the "official" astronomical constellations be used in chart calculation or should the actual manifested (and un-manifested) stars be used? And what is the distinction between the influence of zodiacal constellations and non-zodiacal constellations?

Investigation along these lines could be quite valuable:

"... I trust I have made clear and practical something which esoteric astrologers need unceasingly to grasp--the fact that once it has been established which constellations are at any one time influencing our Earth, which planets--exoteric and esoteric--are transmitting their influence and which rays are consequently active, it should be possible to prove then the fact of these distributed energies by the appearance upon Earth and among men of their appropriate results, and the expected response." "

In order to adjust to the changes "which are all the time taking place" esoteric astrology could (and perhaps should) take into account the precession of the equinoxes as well as maintain astrological understanding (and its calculations) in concordance with the

"intellectual point in evolution of the race." As this approach is cultivated it is possible that an experimentally developed framework of the relationship between the signs and constellations may unfold and precipitate an appropriate exoteric application.

Table 1: The Constellations and the Signs ¹²

Name	Constellations		Degrees of Zodiac		Tropical signs	
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End
Aries	Apr 19	May 14	24		Mar 21	Apr 21
Taurus (Orion)	May 14	June 21	37		Apr 21	May 21
Gemini	Jun 21	Jul 21	28		May 21	Jun 21
Cancer	Jul 21	Aug 10	20		Jun 21	Jul 21
Leo	Aug 10	Sep 17	36		Jul 21	Aug 21
Virgo	Sep 17	Oct 31	44		Aug 21	Sep 21
Libra	Oct 31	Nov 23	23		Sep 21	Oct 32
Scorpio	Nov 23	Nov 30	7		Oct 21	Nov 21
Ophiuchus	Nov 30	Dec 18	19			
Sagittarius	Dec 18	Jan 19	33		Nov 21	Dec 21
Capricorn	Jan 19	Feb 16	28		Dec 21	Jan 21
Aquarius	Feb 16	Mar 11	24		Jan 21	Feb 21
Pisces	Mar 11	Apr 19	37		Feb 21	Mar 21

between Taurus (the opposite of Scorpio) and Gemini (the opposite of Sagittarius). In fact, Orion is behind the Sun when the Earth is passing from Taurus to Gemini, it is however not yet exactly aligned with the Earth during this period. With the addition of Ophiuchus and Orion we now have thirteen (soon to be fourteen) zodiacal constellations. Orion and Ophiuchus are polar opposites on the zodiacal wheel.



These boundaries cross the ecliptic at the following longitudes (starting with the Pisces-Aries boundary): 28°, 52°, 89°, 117°, 137°, 173°, 217°, 240°, 247°, 266°, 299°, 327°, 351°. Defined this way, the constellations range in width from Virgo (44°) to Scorpius (7°).

The Mythology of the Constellations

If we assume (as the Tibetan indicates in Esoteric Astrology) that the names given by man to the stars and constellations indicate some of the qualities available to humanity from those embodied lives, then a study of the mythology associated with these constellations would be useful in interpreting the energies of Ophiuchus and Orion.

Ophiuchus is, in legend, a man and a great healer. He is said to be so expert in the art of healing that he can raise men from the dead. He is therefore, feared by Pluto (the god of death). Ophiuchus is also known as the "snake holder." The constellation of Ophiuchus includes Barnard's star that is the second closest star to Earth.

Orion is, in legend, a hunter, and the tallest and handsomest of men. He is the Son of Neptune. Orion is said to "pursue the

ADDENDUM I

Two New Zodiacal Constellations

There is one constellation, Ophiuchus, situated between Scorpio and Sagittarius, with which our Earth is aligned (across the Sun) from November 30 (when it leaves Scorpio) to December 18 (when it enters Sagittarius). Ophiuchus, by definition, is now a constellation in our zodiac (see chart below). In addition, at a point exactly opposite the zodiacal position of Ophiuchus, there is another more famous constellation, Orion, that is within one degree of entering our zodiac. Orion is situated

beautiful Pleiades." He is known as the "bringer of Storms and Winter" (perhaps because he is seen in the night sky during the Northern Hemisphere winter). Orion's belt points to Sirius in the constellation of Canis Major [the Great Dog] (this constellation is considered the hunting dog of Orion). Orion was killed by a scorpion (Scorpio?). The constellation of Orion includes the star Betelgeuse which is mentioned by the Tibetan as being of importance to our planet.¹⁴ A derivation from the mythological associations pertinent to the movement of both these constellations into our zodiac is that Ophiuchus, being the great healer, is raising Orion from the dead by "pushing" Scorpio out of the Zodiac.

- ¹ Esoteric Astrology, page 621
- ² A Treatise on White Magic, page 437
- ³ Esoteric Astrology, page 69
- ⁴ The Astronomical Companion by Guy Ottewell, page 28
- ⁵ Esoteric Astrology, page 410
- ⁶ Esoteric Astrology, page 175
- ⁷ Esoteric Astrology, page 77
- ⁸ Esoteric Astrology, page 160
- ⁹ Esoteric Astrology, pages 159-161
- ¹⁰ Esoteric Astrology, page 161
- ¹¹ Esoteric Astrology, page 547
- ¹² Compiled from *The Astronomical Companion* by Guy Ottewell
- ¹³ The Astronomical Companion by Guy Ottewell, page 19
- ¹⁴ Esoteric Astrology, page 15