

Many astronomer and other scientists, including myself, have criticised astrology for various reasons, but in the author's opinion, it is not their primary responsibility to tackle borderline subjects, as this is the task of a philosopher of science. Such is the qualification of Professor Dr Bernulf Kanitscheider of the Center for the Philosophy of Science of the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, Germany.

I had read in *Universitas* (1989) a German article of his "Steht es in den Sternen?" and I asked him to republish it in English in ISR, to which he agreed and translated it himself. In his view, astrology must be seen in its origin as a religion based on the stars, which were considered as gods with a purposeful will to influence humans. Ptolemaios, author of *Tetrabiblos*, the virtual Bible of astrology to this day, realised that the physical mechanism whereby stars influenced men, would have to be elucidated, considering the influence of Sun and Moon on tides and weather as guidelines and models for astrological interactions.

During the Renaissance, fundamental difficulties arose as a consequence of the new heliocentric astronomy. Astrology is entrenched in geocentric thinking, whereas heliocentricity endows three motions, rotation, orbital revolution and precession, to our Planet Earth. The two systems diverge at the rate of one zodiacal sign approximately every 2000 years, and hence all astrological predictions of recent centuries would be wrong. "It is a strange assumption that the space where constellations were 2000 years ago is now saturated with a residual field of force, that is the source of their influence on our fates today" writes Kanitscheider.

Another modern physical discovery, the absolute speed of light, has presented difficulties to astrologers. Light from Uranus takes 2.5 hours to reach the Earth, and if on an astrological chart Uranus is shown high in the sky at a child's birth, it is actually in the descendant if one takes account of the delay due to the finite speed of light. This time delay affects all influences deriving from the stars as well as those from the planets. After reviewing attempts at statistical correlations between astrological forecasts and qualitative personal traits, the author warns the reader to be skeptical about claims of correlations, as those can easily arise through arbitrary classifications of professions.

However, in spite of all doubts, if astrology is only considered as a life support, perhaps as a substitute for religion, as a kind of practical wisdom, derived only in name through history from stars and planets, then the way might be open for a peaceful coexistence between astrology and astronomy.