Review
Reviewed Work(s): Ancient Astrology by Tamsyn Barton; Cosmology in Antiquity by M. R. Wright
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Source: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Winter, 1998), pp. 456-460
Published by: Springer
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30222388
Accessed: 05-11-2019 19:28 UTC

the alignment between socioeconomic or class contradiction and visual ambiguity; according to the editors, these texts "act as icons"—that is, intellectual points of reference—for the essays in their anthology. I was a little hard-pressed, however, to find much trace of most of the "icons" in most of the chapters.) But certainly a contextualist semiology and deconstruction of practices of visual interpretation can be—and in these essays has been—a highly productive way of framing historical case studies.

It is not possible to reduce all of the essays to a single proposal about classical and Hellenistic practices of "seeing meaning." But it is striking that many (though not all) of the essays claim to discover the ways in which images (and the attendant activities of construing them) in one way or another unsettled, destabilized, or fractured the possibility of stable, definite iconographic reference, proliferating ambiguity and perhaps even enabling reflexive critical awareness of their own referential practices among ancient reader-viewers. (In theory, of course, we would expect all makers of reference to wield this meta-reference to their own practice—but it has proven exceedingly difficult to document it adequately.) Several writers hope to correlate this dissemination with constitutive instabilities in the ancient social systems or psychosocial identities themselves: the ambiguity of textual-visual reference is somehow, they suggest, an index or symptom of instability or fluidity, real or imagined, in social relations (for example, gender roles or social-status positions). I was not always convinced by this; sometimes it would seem that we simply find the usual and expected disjunctions between sense and reference, between use and rule, between iconography and iconology, and between context and structure. It remains to be seen, in other words, whether the "new iconography" represented in these essays will generate a new social history of the ancient world. But the anthology can be highly recommended as an excellent introduction to cutting-edge work in a field that is clearly on the move.

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Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, ser. Sciences of Antiquity (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), XXV + 245 pp.

M. R. Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity*, ser. Sciences of Antiquity (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), X + 201 pp.

A book about early astrology directed to the non-specialist reader is a delicate and difficult undertaking. The subject is highly technical, and its technicalities are the harder to grasp now because they appear so artificial. A century of scholarship has done much to make the original documents accessible, but adequate commentaries and translations are still lacking except for a few treatises. And it is becoming increasingly evident how much a reconstruction of the history of ancient astrology depends on texts not only in Greek and Latin, but also in Akkadian, Egyptian, Aramaic, Sanskrit, and Arabic. One might therefore approach Barton's *Ancient Astrology* with some trepidation, even if one had not seen publisher's advertisements highlighting its demonstration of ancient methods of horoscopy applied to the nativity of the Prince of Wales.

Against expectation this is a good book: engagingly written, based on accurate and wide-ranging reading, and almost always judicious in the choice of topics and the appropriate level of detail. As in the other volumes that have appeared in the "Sciences of Antiquity" series, the antiquity in question is unabashedly Greco-Roman, and by far the greatest emphasis is on the astrology of the Roman Empire. This was above all horoscopic astrology, which sought to correlate mundane events and conditions with the calculated positions of the sun, moon, and five visible planets in relation to the zodiac and to a local horizon and meridian plane at a particular instant, typically the birth of an individual. Another strand of astrology, seemingly less prominent than horoscopy in the Roman period but of much longer standing, sought to forecast events of regional significance on the basis of ominous occurrences in the heavens.

Barton's book owes part of its success to her wise decision not to organize all her material into a uniform chronological narrative. In the earliest substantial documentation for Greek astrology, dating from the second half of the first century B.C., the science has already taken the same general shape, with the same goals and methods, that was to persist through the rest of antiquity. The stages by which it came into being, the contribution of Mesopotamian omen literature and the so-called Babylonian horoscopes, and the role of Egypt as the likely place where the fusion and transformation occurred, constitute a murky historical problem intermittently illuminated by flashes of genuine evidence as well as by will-o'-the-wisps. Barton's brief chapter of "historical background" presents and cautiously interprets the relevant documentation for the Hellenistic period in a manner that, without being exhaustive, fairly represents the whole. Two further expository chapters shift the focus from the evolution of astrological doctrine to the external history of astrology in relation to Roman politics, law, and religion (pagan, Jewish, and Christian). The social history latent in the astrological texts (a subject made famous by Franz Cumont's *L'Égypte des astrologues* [Bruxelles, 1937; repr. New York, 1976]) and the connections between astrology and an assortment of sciences, magic, and cult occupy the final chapters.

Barton reserves the detailed treatment of the technical content of ancient astrology for the core of the book (this has the drawback that the earlier chapters occasionally need to refer to concepts not yet introduced). The chapter on the elementary astronomical and astrological concepts underlying a horoscope is the weakest of the book. Readers who require an introduction to the basic facts of the celestial sphere and planetary motion implicated in astrology will probably find neither the text nor the diagrams clear enough; and there are one or two factual errors, for example the assertion (p. 86) that Mercury's longitudinal period is 88 days. Most of the important astrological terminology appears, but the explanations are often very brief, and one would like to see more use of illustrations, e.g. for the subdivisions of the zodiacal signs. Symbols for the planets and zodiacal signs are employed freely in the diagrams, although they are only later explained (caption to Fig. 22).

In "Astrological Practice: Casting a Horoscope," Barton turns to a central problem of early astrology, how the astrologer interpreted a horoscope. This is by no means an easy question to answer in spite of the large number of ancient horoscopes that survive. The documentary horoscopes on papyrus and other media as a rule give only the name, date and time of birth, and the computed astronomical data. Horoscopes in astrological treatises are interpreted in a didactic way, often concentrating on special problems, and even the instances that smell most strongly of the practicing astrologer's workshop (particularly those in Vettius Valens) are contaminated by the

writer's hindsight. Rather than work from these, Barton constructs an artificial example by looking up the various planetary configurations in an arbitrary horoscope in the treatises of Firmicus Maternus and Dorotheus, and compiling their corresponding prognostications for the native. (Questions of taste aside, Britain's Prince Charles was not an ideal choice for this exercise, since the association of the horoscope with a well-known personage interferes with the reader's objectivity; nor has Barton been able to resist the occasional facetious remark.) As she points out, this procedure generates a kind of undigested and contradictory text that resembles the unique example we have of a personal forecast based on a horoscope in a contemporary document, the so-called "Old Coptic horoscope". Beyond this we cannot go. Whatever practical counsel the astrologer might have distilled from this material was surely imparted to his client orally; and as Barton persuasively argues, the interpretative dimension of Greek astrology was also largely a science orally transmitted from teacher to pupil, not to be found in the written sources.

Beyond those mentioned above, I have few general cavils: the occasional lapse of style, a too skimpy glossary of technical terms, and an irritating habit of alluding to nameless "scholars" who are identified only in the notes at the back. Nevertheless, *Ancient Astrology* is a useful book and an impressive accomplishment.

M. R. Wright's *Cosmology in Antiquity* is a book of very different merit. Whether a history of cosmology is appropriate for a series on "sciences of antiquity" is doubtful; in antiquity there was no discipline passing by this or any name, possessing a literature dedicated to cosmological topics. Nevertheless it would be useful to have an approachable, accurate treatment of classical thought on the structure, composition, and history of the cosmos, drawing on the literary, philosophical, and technical sources. Unfortunately the present book is of the kind that beginners need to be warned away from, and that has nothing to offer specialists.

Modern cosmology is a speculative but highly technical field firmly based in mathematical physics and astrophysics. Its closest ancient counterpart would be the physical modellings of the cosmos in Aristotle, Theon of Smyrna, and Ptolemy's *Planetary Hypotheses* (a profoundly influential work, never once mentioned in this book). With the newspaper-reading layman in mind, Wright frequently tries to highlight ways in which present-day cosmological concerns derive from classical antecedents; the appeals are sometimes apposite, sometimes strained, occasionally absurd (as in the claim that the four-color map theorem and the structure of DNA are both descendants of the ancient earth-air-water-fire theory).

The book comprises a "survey of cosmological texts" (to A.D. 200) followed by thematic chapters (cosmogony, elements, microcosm/macrocosm, etc.). This could work well, giving the reader a first acquaintance with the principal authors in their chronological context and a general overview of the cosmological systems in their integrity before aspects of them are subjected to a more analytical treatment. The introductory survey, however, while too brief to offer much more than a doxographical catalogue, is long enough to display to the full the most serious defect of the book: the inaccuracy of its scholarship when dealing with sources outside the basic texts of Greek literature and philosophy.

According to Wright, one must begin a study of Greek science with a discussion of the thought of the "Asian, African and Semitic races" (by which, as it turns out, she means the Mesopotamians and Egyptians), although of the two reasons given for this,

the argument of intrinsic worth would apply also to, say, the Mayans or Chinese, whereas the question that really matters—whether and how they influenced Greek thought—is nowhere seriously addressed. Four pages manage to present an astonishing amount of misinformation about the cultures, cosmology, and astronomy of the ancient Near East. We read that the Babylonians built (only?) two libraries to house their tablets (all of them, apparently), that these libraries contained records of over two millennia of astronomical observations, that they used an 8-year intercalation cycle, that the Old Babylonian creation epic mentions the zodiac, that the Babylonians developed the seven-day planetary week. (This last point is illustrated by a diagram attempting to show how the sequence of the days reflects the standard Greek [!] order of planetary distances, but characteristically omitting the key role played by the planetary lordships of the hours.) Egypt fares no better. But what is, if possible, more pernicious is that the trusting reader, impressed by this display of learning, may accept as authoritative such a pronouncement as that Babylonian astronomy (which achieved, among other things, the analysis of the conditions of lunar crescent visibility into its four principal periodic components) was not a "subject of human reasoning" (p. 19).

A book on ancient cosmology that does not stop with Aristotle inevitably will need to say much about the more specialized Greek astronomical writers; and one ought to know the subject well enough to be able to select which technicalities need discussion, and explain them clearly. Doubts may be raised when one reads (29) that Apollonius wrote a treatise *On Cones* "which derived the three types of cone from a common model" (43), that the lunar month is 28 days long, or, in a particularly muddled paragraph (36), that Hipparchus was earlier than Aristarchus, that the *Planisphaerium* (seemingly not a work by Ptolemy) is about the armillary sphere, and that Ptolemy wrote a catalogue of stars distinct from his *Almagest* (which throughout the book is consistently referred to as the "Amalgest"). In fact the chapter expressly devoted to mathematical astronomy, in large part a contribution of Stuart Leggatt, is a fairly faithful presentation of the history of Greek astronomy more or less as it was understood following Paul Tannery's *Recherches sur l'histoire de l'astronomie ancienne* (Paris, 1893). Even so, too few specifics are given to help the reader to visualize even qualitatively either the basic celestial phenomena or how the astronomers' models accounted for them. Here and elsewhere the diagrams frustrate the reader with details unexplained in the text; some of them, e.g. Figs. 5 and 9, have no discoverable connection with the contexts in which they appear.

When dealing with the Greek philosophers, especially the Presocratics and Plato, Wright shows a surer grasp of the subject and scholarship. Almost too much so, indeed, for although she makes use of translated quotations, the book has no notes or references to guide the reader to the sources for statements in the text. As an example of why this matters so much in a book concerned in large part with fragmentary or lost authors, consider Wright's succinct summary (44) of Empedocles' solar and lunar theory, a topic of interest not only as part of Empedocles' system but also for what it tells us about the level of Greek astronomical knowledge in the early fifth century: here one learns that the moon "was estimated to be about half [the sun's] size, so that lunar phases and eclipses could be accounted for by the extent to which the moon was overshadowed by the earth. . . ." This strikes one as odd—how could Empedocles have correctly understood lunar eclipses and yet have imagined that when the sun is about to set and the half moon is high in the sky, the earth's shadow is falling on it?

What the reader is not told, and is given no means of finding out, is that the authority for the first part of this statement actually says only that Empedocles placed the moon twice as far away from the sun as from the earth (which would make the moon one *third* the size of the sun if Empedocles also assumed that their apparent disks were equal), and that the passage in Plutarch's *De facie* on which the second claim rests is merely a conventional statement of the cause of lunar eclipses as understood in the Roman period, and has nothing to do with either the moon's phases or the quotation from Empedocles that precedes it.

To sum up: If what one wants is a good book on early Greek philosophy of nature, there are others that go much further to initiate the beginner into the challenges of scholarship (the first volume of Furley's *Greek Cosmologists* is the outstanding example). For a more comprehensive treatment of ancient cosmology, one will have to wait.

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Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), IX + 422 pp.

The book divides into three unequal sections. Part I, mistitled "Philosophy," discusses fragment B6 of Empedocles and the association of the four 'roots' or elements with four divinities. The discussion ranges wide—late Greek alchemy and the musings of Carl Gustav Jung, Philo in Armenian and the Arabic *Turba philosophorum*. One of the major themes of the book has it that an early Pythagorean tradition flowed down channels ignored or derided by most classical scholars. And we are invited to fish in strange streams.

Part II, "Mystery," starts from the identification of the element of fire with the god Hades; but its main subject is the geographical 'myth' in Plato's *Phaedo*. There is no reason to think that Plato himself made any significant contribution to it (p. 109). On the contrary, "the *Phaedo* myth in its entirety, even down to the smallest details, derives from a Pythagorean source" (p. 192)—more precisely from the *Crater*, an Orphic poem written by the Pythagorean armsmonger, Zopyrus of Tarentum, who flourished at the end of the fifth century.

Part III is "Magic." In B111 Empedocles promises wizard powers: to cure old age, to stay the winds, to raise the dead. Thus his "concern with nature and cosmology was magical" (p. 229); and we must take seriously the stories about his bronze sandals and his plunge into Etna. More generally, we must "reassess the work of Empedocles and pre-Platonic Pythagoreans by viewing them in a primarily magical and practical context" (p. 343).

Kingsley argues with verve and displays a vast scholarship. Many of his unorthodox theses seem to me to be correct—and bracing. The book is a valuable contribution to Presocratic studies. But there are snags. For one thing, the references need checking. Kingsley alludes to "Plato's repeated and serious emphasis on the idea that solid geometry can only be taught in a one-to-one situation" (p. 330, n.47). He cites *Laws* 968CE, *Rep.* 528BC, and *Tim.* 55C—in none of which is the idea mentioned. Or p.