

In her 1960 thesis for Radcliffe College called *Astrology Today*, on pages 67 to 71, Marcia Moore reproduced a letter from John J. O'Neill to Sydney Omarr, who was the editor of *Astrology News*. She writes, "O'Neill, long recognized as one of the most brilliant men in the American scientific field as Science Editor of the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE and a Pulitzer Prize winner, He writes:"

July 8, 1951

Dear Mr. Omarr:

I received your letter asking me to verify a quotation from one of my lectures which you used in a debate with Dr. Roy K. Marshall, Director of the Fels Planetarium, over station WPEN.

The quotation you cite is: "While I do not believe all astrology is scientific and worthwhile there is a certain amount of good work being done in that field and it is that which makes me try to do something to help the astrologers."

The quotation is substantially correct.

I have no hesitancy in verifying the quotation. If I were making the statement today I would make it much stronger on the basis of developments in the meantime.

It may be asked what experience I have had that would give value to my opinions on the subject of debate.

I am not an astrologer.

I am fundamentally an astronomer. More of my time is spent at the eyepiece of my telescope, in making astronomical gadgets, and in working on astronomical problems, than in any other of my activities. I have had over a long period of years extensive professional contact with all of the sciences from anthropology to zoology. I have a good background in history, the history of science, and in philosophy.

With this useful background available I have made numerous contacts with astrology. For years I condemned it as unscientific and totally irrational. This was the usual formula of the astronomers. Just as they have done for a long time I condemned without making an adequate investigation of what I was condemning. Such a procedure is the utter negation of the scientific attitude, but I was quite blind to the fact at the time and mistakenly assumed I was rendering a useful service to science.

With repeated contacts yielding increasing knowledge of what astrology is, and what it stands for, I have learned that astrology is something vastly different from what I thought it was, and what most astrologers think it is. I have, undoubtedly, had greater contact with astrology than any other scientist and am, therefore, competent to express an opinion concerning it. Most of the critics have lacked the competence that comes from adequate investigation. The converse is true of the most outspoken and aggressive propagandists for astrology --- they are less competent for the task than many who remain discreetly silent.

I speak as a scientist who does not deviate to the slightest degree from the most rigorous adherence to the highest standards of demonstrated evidence in support of truth. I do deviate from the average attitude of scientists in that I place far more reliance on direct observation of nature than I place on text books and human authorities. Since I am not associated with any academic institution I probably enjoy a much greater freedom to speak and write than the average run of scientists. It is only through the freedom of such individuals as myself that science can progress to new domains, and I do not intend to pull my punches in discussing what I believe to be either a truth or a falsehood.

Astrology is one of the most important fields for scientific research today, and one of the most neglected. Astrology, properly defined, is the science of the relationship of man and his celestial environment; it is the accumulated and organized knowledge of the effect on man of the forces reaching the earth from surrounding space.

The study of this subject has been under way for at least 5,000 years and a vast amount of knowledge has been accumulated. Practically all of our sciences have stemmed from it and are actually specialties within the larger field of astrology. Today astrology, per se, occupies a more restricted and more sharply defined field. Its center of gravity lies more in the field of the biological than the physical sciences but its borders extend into both realms. It is still a virile intellectual mother lode out of which a continuing succession of new sciences and new knowledge will be born.

There is absolutely nothing unscientific about engaging in research in this field, and no stigma of any kind should be associated with it in the mind of any scientist or layman.

The human race should not tolerate further delay in bringing the full cooperative resources of science to extended researches in this field. We know very little about the array of forces that are impinging on the earth but that little demonstrates a great urgency for further researches, and the fascinating possibilities that await discovery.

The hypothesis of the astrologers that forces are transmitted to the earth without attenuation with increasing distance, and do not vary with respect to the differences in masses of the sun, moon and planets on which they originate, was totally inconsistent with the old style Newtonian mechanics, but today, it is in complete accord with the much more recent Einstein photo-electric theory, which demonstrates that the effect of a photon does not diminish with distance, and which has been universally adopted by scientists to supplant the Newtonian mechanics in that field.

The hypothesis of the astrologers that different effects will be produced by different configurations of the heavenly bodies is entirely consistent with the modern developments in the field of chemistry in which the properties of substances are stated in terms of the architectural configurations of the atoms within the molecules, and with the theories of the atomic physicists that the properties of the atoms are associated with the orbital structure of the electrons.

It is well to keep in mind that the same wave length of radio transmission can carry to the listeners the "Suicide Sonata" or a lively military march with vastly different psychological effects on the audience but no indication of these effects would be detected by a wavemeter.

Modern mechanistic and materialistic astronomy which makes organic man a stranger in an inorganic universe is antiquated, in this concept, by at least a century. A vitalistic cosmogony will recognize a complete and most intimate harmonic relationship, in a single pattern, between every entity from the fundamental particles, through the atoms, through man, through the whole planetary cosmos, to the Godhead himself. The hypotheses of astrology are consistent with such a vitalistic cosmogony, in this respect the astrological concept is much more modern than the astronomical.

Scientists today cannot look down on astrology; instead they must raise their eyes to take in the higher horizons that astrologers have preserved for them.

In presenting this objective view of astrology I do not want to be misunderstood as recommending that scientists take lessons in the technique of casting and interpreting horoscopes, or that I am giving sanction to the varied misconceptions and unsupported claims in which many of the astrologers indulge. Astrology has about the same kind and magnitude of a lunatic fringe as astronomy, biology, psychology or economics. Almost all novel developments in any science pass through the lunatic fringe before being incorporated in the orthodox nucleus, but of course the mortality in making the transition is very high.

I do urge an extensive statistical investigation of every claim for specific and configurational effects attributed to the planets by astrologers. Until this is done no scientist can provide justification for making a statement for, or against, the existence of such effects.

Attacks on astrology, without previous extensive investigations by competent individuals must, from now on, be regarded as a very antiquated, unscientific practice closely related to witch hunting, and must be correctly diagnosed as a symptom of professional paranoia on the part of the individual doing the attacking.

This, of course, does not include criticism of a constructive nature that is designed with good intentions to arouse and interest in a more scientific approach to the investigation of the very interesting problems which astrology presents. I am assuming that the present debate belongs in this category for I am sure that Dr. Marshall would not dissipate his valuable efforts and energy in other than constructive activities.

May I suggest to Dr. Marshall that he stage a special solar system show at the planetarium. He could extend a special invitation to astrologers to attend. He could share the platform with an astrologer and let each have equal time to present his story about each of the heavenly bodies. It may be desirable to arrange a series of such meetings. The experiment would be an interesting one and I don't think the box office would suffer.

Scientists are not going to rush into this field to take up research problems. The task must rest largely on the astrologers themselves. The experimental sessions suggested could lead to a cooperative effort in which the astrologers would learn more about the astronomical aspects of the problems they have to solve. Both sides could join in singing the recently popular song --- "Accentuate the Positive, Minimize the Negative."

It has been my experience that when two sincere men disagree both are right to a great extent, and that a more fully resolved statement of their differences would lead to further agreement.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) John J. O'Neill