The Path of Wisdom & the erroneous steps of reason

1473 – 1543: Nicholas Copernicus: *De revolutionaibus*, in which he asserted that the Sun was the centre of the solar system and that the Earth moved around it. This was revolutionary for its time and turned an entire world paradigm on its head. Copernicus studied the Trivium and Quadrivium at Jagiellonian University, Cracow in 1491. He later moved to Bologna and studied at Padua. The astronomy of the time was primarily theoretical rather than observational and drew on classical philosophy. He was exposed to horoscopic astrology and there are examples of charts cast by him. He would have encountered Hermetic teachings and the newly interpreted works of Plato.

From classical Greece to the time of the Renaissance, the art of learning was seen to comprise of seven stages. At Oxford, the Schoolmen or students would study each stage for one year, and then attain the award: Master of Arts.

The Seven Liberal Arts

Based on the types of studies that were pursued in the Classical world, the Seven Liberal Arts became codified in late antiquity by such writers as Varro and Martianus Capella. In medieval times, the Seven Liberal Arts offered a canonical way of depicting the realms of higher learning.

The Liberal Arts were divided into the Trivium, the three roads, and the Quadrivium, the four roads.

The Trivium consisted of:

- Grammar
- Rhetoric
- Logic

The Quadrivium consisted of:

- Arithmetic: number in itself
- Geometry: number in space
- Music, Harmonics, or Tuning Theory: number in time
- Astral-logica, knowledge of the heavens or cosmos: astrology and astronomy: number in space and time.

The medieval Quadrivium thus followed the division of mathematics made by the Pythagoreans. Recently, mathematics has been defined as *the study of patterns in space and time*, which very much resembles the ancient Pythagorean understanding.

There were other important studies in medieval times. For example, philosophy was often envisioned as a metastudy that united all branches of knowledge. For this reason, Philosophia is depicted in the following illustration as nourishing the Seven Liberal Arts.

Philosophia Nourishing the Liberal Arts

the Hierophant

The Hierophant card of the Tarot, depicted here dispensing wisdom to the seekers, is reminiscent of Philosophia Nourishing the Liberal Arts.

- *The Renaissance:*

Patrick Curry writes in *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*:

'In the late fifteenth century, a series of influential translations by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) made available more re-discovered Greek texts, including much of Plato, Plotinus and Iamblichus and the Corpus Hermeticum.

These placed a renewed magical and/or mystical astrology at the heart of the Renaissance revival of neo-Platonism and hermeticism. Typically, it managed to evade Pico della Mirandola's powerful critique in his Disputationes (1494) by finding shelter elsewhere in the very set of ideas that had so inspired him (for example, occult sympathy and antipathy).

Not surprisingly, astrology remained controversial with the Christian Church. It survived the condemnations of St. Augustine and the early church fathers, who saw it as pagan (and in particular polytheistic) and a transgression of both human free will and divine omnipotence. Augustine didn't deny that astrologers could speak truthfully, only that when they did so it was with the help of, and in the service of, demons.

At both popular and elite levels, however, astrology in one form or another remained entrenched. It fell to St Thomas Aquinas in the late thirteenth century to arrange a compromise which secured for it a longlived and relatively secure, if limited, niche. His synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian natural philosophy permitted "natural astrology" to influence physical and collective phenomena but not – directly – human souls; the individual judgements (and in particular predictions) of "judicial astrology" were therefore illicit. Since Aquinas admitted that most people were in turn influenced by their bodies, however, there was a kind of tacit legitimation of astrology in practice.'[i]

The growing adherence to follow scientia rather than philo-sophia (love of wisdom), or pay homage to both as Ficino sought to do, brought about a widening separation between Science and Philosophy, Spirituality and Magik, paving the way for the *Enlightenment* and our more secular age of modern reasoning and scientism.[ii]

Philo: Love

Sophia: Wisdom

Spirit: Anima, breath, life

Magik: The art of influencing, or forecasting, events, effects, or forces by invoking the supernatural.

Scientia: Knowledge.

Now there were widening divisions:

Logos	*v*	*Mythos*
Material	*v*	*Spiritual*
Research	*v*	*Revelation*
Objective	*v*	*Subjective*
Empiricism	*v*	*Intuition*
Reason	*v*	*Enchantment*
Knowledge	*v*	*Wisdom*
Natural	*v*	*Supernatural*
Chemistry	*v*	*Alchemy*
Science	*v*	*Magik*

Astrology

'Astrology is best defined as the set of theories and practices interpreting the positions of the heavenly bodies in terms of human and terrestrial implications. (The former have variously been considered signs and, more controversially, causes.) The subject – and therefore its study – is riven with characteristics, often paradoxical, that constitute both its interest and its difficulty. One is that although inextricably entangled with what are now demarcated as science, magic, religion, politics, psychology and so on, it cannot be reduced to any of these.'

1503 – 1566: Nostradamus, famous Astrologer and visionary.

1517. Formal beginning of the reformation. Protestantism: Martin Luther, John Calvin. Protestantism linked to development of capitalism.

1527 – 1608: John Dee; Alchemist (see detailed section).

1533: Agrippa publishes *De Occulta Philosopha*.

1533: Isaak Luria, Jewish Kabbalist, born in Jerusalem

1535: Giambattista della Porta born in Naples. Author of *Magia Naturalis* (Natural Magic).

1542: Inquisition established in Rome.

1546 – 1601: Tycho Brahe, Danish Astronomer, the first to make measurement of planetary motions his guide instead of Ptolemaic theory. On the night of 11th November 1572, after working in his alchemical laboratory, he looked up and noticed a new star: a supernova, an exploding star. Tycho calculated that the star appeared beyond the Moon in the region which Aristotelian cosmology defined as changing and perfect, whereas it was believed that such a thing could only occur in the corruptible space between the Earth and the Moon. This had an impact on the world view of reality, equivalent to Einstein's theory of relativity: an old certainty had been destroyed and the door was now open to one of his pupils, Johannes Kepler, to complete the theory of planetary motion.

1561 – 1626: Frances Bacon. The beginning of the scientific revolution: Introduced the preference for empiricism and induction over Aristotelian deductive logic. He advocated experimental method, which was in part, a viewpoint influenced by the craft of ceremonial magic. Bacon believed the point of knowledge is power, especially over nature. Anthropocentric and misogynistic, Bacon's rhetoric was masculine and rapine: he advised 'true sons of knowledge' to 'penetrate further', in order to 'conquer and subdue Nature, with all her children, bind her to your service and make her your slave'. This would enable you to 'discover the secrets still locked inside nature's bosom'. Nature must be 'penetrated', 'pierced', 'vanquished', and 'put to the question'. The new science would 'extend the bounds of human empire, as far as God Almighty in his goodness shall permit'.

1564 – 1642: Galileo Galilei: Astronomer and astrologer who told Kepler he was philosophically in favour of Copernicanism and the Heliocentric solar system. Attacked Aristotelianism after the 1604 supernova. Using the newly invented telescope he was the first to observe and record the craters of the Moon, and the moons of Jupiter (thus, undermining Aristotle's sublunary/superlunary). He recorded Sun spots, the Sun's rotation and the phases of Venus. Promoted Copernican heliocentricism and was placed under house arrest by the Inquisition. Moreover, being a mathematician, Galileo advocated the idea that quantity is primary over quality. Thus, everything can be reduced to a quantity – the primary number. This gives momentum to the move away from qualities: feelings, visions, perceptions, intuitions, sensations etc. to quality: *the* single and correct, absolute, answer.

1571 – 1630: Johannes Kepler. Astrologer and follower of Pythagorean principles. Kepler's laws of planetary motion introduced new perspectives and accuracy to astrology as well as defining the place of the Earth in the heavens. Kepler described himself as 'a Lutheran astrologer: throwing away the nonsense and keeping the kernel'.

1564: Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* published.

1581: Dee and Kelley start their mystical experiments.

1581 – 1656: James Ussher (also spelled Usher). Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625-1656. A prolific religious scholar, published a biblical chronology which dated the creation of the world as being the 28th October 4004 BCE.

1584: Bruno publishes *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* .

1595: Microscope: Zacharias Janssen.

1596 – 1650: Rene Descartes, father of the scientific method. 'The unification and illumination of the whole of knowledge by one and the same method: the method of *reason*'.

In 1610, the paradigm that the only pathway to truth is that of *reason* came to Descartes … in a dream, the traditional way that the Gods speak to men. Descartes' ideas, along with Bacon before him, and Newton to come, formed the paradigm of scientific method which gave birth to modern science and the common secular theology of our present western world.

It was Descartes who declared, 'I think, therefore, I am'. The separation between objective and subjective, Spirit and mind, Soul and body, inner and outer, became complete with Descartes. He asserted that only the inner (man's) feelings and visions were connected with God, and so, therefore, the outer (animals and matter) are betes-machines without awareness or feelings. He hoped 'that those who have understood all that has been said in this treatise will, in future, see nothing whose cause they cannot easily understand, nor anything that gives them any cause to marvel'. 'There exist no occult (hidden) forces in stones or plants. There are no amazing and marvellous sympathies and antipathies, in fact there exists nothing in the whole of nature which cannot be explained in terms of purely corporeal causes totally devoid of mind and thought'. Descartes heralded the end of animism.

1600: Wiliam Gilbert: English scientist who returned to the subject in *De Magnete*, and coined the modern Latin word *electricus* from *ηλεκτρον* (*elektron*), the Greek word for amber, which soon gave rise to the English words *electric* and *electricity*.

1602 - 1681: William Lilly, Astrologer; author of *Christian Astrology* and translator of *Trithemius*, born in Diseworth, county Leicester, England. Lilly became a prominent Astrologer of his time, and is still very influential with modern astrologers who follow *The Tradition*. During Lilly's lifetime astrology was a commonplace and ordinary feature in the culture of English life.

1608: Refracting telescope: Hans Lippershey.

1626 - 1697: John Aubrey: First survey of Stonehenge. Aubry concluded it was a Roman Sun temple.

1642 – 1727: Isaac Newton: Born in year of Galileo's death marking the end of the Renaissance and the dawn of a Newtonian world view. An alchemist and reported explorer of astrological concepts, he created calculus and explained Kepler's

elliptical planetary orbits. He was responsible for the invention of the reflecting telescope, the corpuscular theory of light and the development of the principles of gravity and terrestrial and celestial motion.

The political impact of Newton's work, building on that of Kepler, was based on the same logic that if the entire universe is subject to a single set of natural laws, human society must be subject to the same laws. If, therefore, Kings and commoners are subject to the same laws then the elevation of one over the other is contrary to natural law. This line of reasoning was expressed in the Natural Rights philosophy on which the US constitution is based.

The scientific revolution had begun in earnest. Newton is seen by some scholars as the first scientist and by others as the last of the magicians.

From now on western society would make its political decisions, scientific inventions and technological progressions from the perspective of a secular disenchantment that would begin to run out of steam towards the end of the twentieth century.

1650: Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism establishes the linage of the Dalai Lama.

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[i] Patrick Curry, Oxford companion

[ii] *Scientism: Unlike the use of the scientific method as only one mode of reaching knowledge, scientism claims that science alone can render truth about the world and reality. Scientism's single-minded adherence to only the empirical, or testable, makes it a strictly scientific worldview, in much the same way that a Protestant fundamentalism that rejects science can be seen as a strictly religious worldview. Scientism sees it necessary to do away with most, if not all, metaphysical, philosophical, and religious claims, as the truths they proclaim cannot be apprehended by the scientific method. In essence, scientism sees science as the absolute and only justifiable access to the truth.*

Sourced 16th October 2004, http://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/gengloss/sciism-body.html