

How Real is *The Real Astrology*?

(John Frawley, *The Real Astrology*, Apprentice Books, 2000)

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John Frawley is a practitioner of what he terms 'traditional' astrology. Although never precisely defined in his book, we understand this tradition to be that established more or less definitively by the Roman astronomer Claudius Ptolemy in his *Tetrabiblos*, and subsequently handed down via the Arabs to the medieval West, culminating (some would say) in the work of the great 17th century English astrologer, William Lilly.

This tradition can be usefully defined as the affiliation of astrological practice, i.e. divinatory judgement and interpretation, with the beautifully ordered cosmic vision of Aristotelian natural science—a model arising from the observation of the seven planets in their perfect spheres from the standpoint of a central (and stationary) Earth. For the classical philosophers and astronomers, this vision revealed a divine order of creation, the movements of the planets paralleled by events on earth in an intricate system of correspondence and sympathy. The neoplatonist Plotinus would describe the whole system as a 'cosmic ballet', each part moving in harmony with all other parts—and the wise man as the one who 'in any one thing could read another', that is, who could understand the signification of heavenly movements as indications of Divine intelligence at work. The neoplatonic position is elegant and clear; the stars have no wills, they are supremely indifferent—but humans may read their patterns as they might read a flight of birds in the sky, as omens or indications of present circumstances or future events. Plotinus rejects the astrologers' attribution of 'material' characteristics to the planets, such as temperament, gender, beneficity or maleficity—they serenely follow their courses, and it is human beings who tend to 'literalise' and identify them with particular qualities as they observe corresponding effects in the earthly realm.

Both Aristotle's ordered heavens and Plotinus' cosmic vision were adopted by Christianity; the Prime Mover, setting the Universe in motion became God speaking through the symbolic language of his creation, astrology then being the sacred art of 'reading in the book of God' to ascertain His will. From a Stoical perspective, the great machine of destiny ground on, and a complex language of interpretation arose which enabled the astrologer to observe the exact qualities of any moment in time from planetary movements. This is the starting point of Frawley's traditional astrology: "In His infinite wisdom", he states, "the Almighty has shaped a universe

that fits together in coherent fashion. Not the least of the many delights of the study of astrology is the chance to marvel at the precision and intricacy of this construction as it turns.” (120). The art of horary astrology, perfected by the Arabs, arose from this conception; for if a question was put to the astrologer, the very moment of the question would be reflected in the current positions of the heavenly bodies and therefore it could be answered by reference to how these bodies were moving. According to the same way of thinking, the moment of birth (and conception) were of fundamental importance in ‘determining’ an individual’s character, and would then set the ‘horoscope’ of the person for life—future events being shown by the ability of the astrologer to look ahead at the inevitable comings and goings of the planets in relation to this ‘blueprint’.

All this could be accommodated within the world view of the Christian astrologer, as long as it allowed for human freewill and choice within the pattern ordained by God. The problem arose when astrologers—enchanted by the predictable unfolding in time of the cosmic cycles—saw this unfolding as a fixed and determined system within which absolute judgments could be made about the human soul, and so a twofold conception of astrological influence arose. ‘Natural astrology’ observed the correlation of cosmic movements with the natural world and the human body, therefore legitimising medical astrology, and was acceptable to the Church as it did not encroach on the territory of the immortal soul. Judicial astrology however was more suspect, if it sought to subjugate human will to the stars. Any Christian form of ‘traditional’, Stoical astrology, despite using (what appears to be) a determinist language, must preserve both the ultimate authority of a supreme God whose will is always superior to any human judgement, and the autonomy of the human soul to find freedom in ‘doing’ this will rather than that of the stars; in Frawley’s words, “the Almighty is never bound by astrology and will intervene as his wisdom sees fit” (124). The implication is that astrology may aid human beings in rising above a ‘fated’ existence by becoming conscious of it and therefore having some power to change what is ‘written in the stars’; indeed Frawley argues that “by showing clearly and dispassionately the reality of our situation, [astrology] is a powerful tool with which we may acquire [free will]”. He asserts “traditional astrology is one of the few pathways towards [free will] that are still open in the modern world” (188). He (along with Lilly) would argue that “the stars show, they do not compel”, in other words, the revelation of an individual’s path of good fortune (and path to God) is there to be taken up through his or her own choice.

This is all by way of introduction to John Frawley’s manifesto of traditionalism in astrology, *The Real Astrology*. In this review essay I hope to show the limitations of his approach. I must however stress at the outset that I am not criticising classical astrology in itself, which may indeed

provide a firm structure (the 'bones', as it were) for oracular insight, but the issues that arise when *any* systemised body of thought is taken to reveal the immutable ' Truth' for all beings. For Frawley, "[this] system represents truth, the real cosmological order" (64); interpreting the cosmos reveals "the supreme truth" (61), and furthermore, the whole purpose of astrology is "to lead us to God"(67). In fact Frawley goes so far as to assert "we can have an astrology only within the revealed faiths" (126)—i.e., all modern forms of astrology, psychological and otherwise, which do not locate themselves within a monotheistic model are deemed to be "rubbish" (2). Now it is undoubtedly true that some modern practitioners, as traditional ones, are not very wise or experienced—and may even be mistaken in their understanding and judgements—but to assert that all modern *astrology* is itself at fault is a gross, limited and distorted assumption about the nature of symbol and its power to move the soul.

At this point we must remind ourselves that astrological omen reading arose in the pagan cultures of ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon long before the classical Greek and Roman systematisation of the cosmos. For thousands of years humans led their lives by the stars, seeing them as gods or spirits, asking for guidance, making sacrificial offerings to obtain good fortune. Frawley may be right in his claim that the meanings associated with planets and constellations were divinely revealed in a mysterious way—but this certainly does not depend on a monotheistic model. The early astronomer/astrologers negotiated with the sky gods, they participated in a polytheistic cosmos of many autonomous powers, any of whom, at any time, might be impetrated to bestow their blessings. They certainly sensed unseen worlds behind this one, but—and most importantly—they knew that they themselves were implicated in all ritual acts—that working with the stars was an act of relationship, an 'I-thou' experience, not a rational act of applied technique.

All this was swept away, however, by the high degree of objectivity and linear causality that 'natural science' has brought to astrology, and for Frawley, any sense of "secret mutual connivance" (to quote C.G.Jung) between the astrologer and his symbols is totally disparaged. The astrologer becomes the all-seeing, objective observer of "the precepts that Divinity laid down for man's behaviour" (19), and any other means of communicating, communing, conversing, or responding to the heavens is regarded as degenerate, superficial and self-indulgent—and above all, trivial (a word that Frawley uses at least once on every page). Any traditional system of thought may easily become blind to all authority except its own, or may ascribe immutable authority to a set of precepts which are seen to be 'out there' and inviolable. In this case, the authority is in the stars themselves. Frawley understands the meanings of the seven planets and the twelve zodiacal images to have been revealed directly by God; taking an essentialist position,

he argues that their pristine meaning precedes all material existence, therefore the actual visible constellations are in some sense 'fallen' from the original purity of their immaterial essence (53). This means that any further additions to the scheme (i.e. the three outer planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto) can only be human inventions, given arbitrary associations, and of no use whatsoever in an astrological consultation (it is strange, therefore, that they appear in all the examples of charts in his book!) However Frawley quite happily acknowledges that the outer planets mark periods of time with their orbits, as the inner ones do (45), so one wonders why they are not allowed to contribute to the 'time moment quality' in the same way.

Now this denial of the outer planets as effective symbols in astrology raises a serious question about the very nature of symbols and how they arise. Astrologers who work with the outer planets know that since they have been taken up by the collective consciousness as resonating at an archetypal level, they 'work' in the charts of both individuals and events. This is not an illusion, but an expansion of the astrological vocabulary that forms a new pattern—it does not deny the efficacy of the old pattern, but indicates that sets of ordered images that can be used for divinatory purposes may continually change and adapt to circumstances. Frawley contends that the meanings assigned to the outer planets are arbitrary and without foundation, but his thinking shows a remarkable lack of symbolic 'attitude'. If you say a meaning of Uranus is divorce, he says, then how come so many people got divorced before it was discovered? This response demonstrates an almost unbelievable over-literalism and superficiality of thought which are a hallmark of this book, for any idea that Frawley does not like tends to be reduced to an absurdity (such as Pluto's only meaning for modern astrologers is sex). It is not altogether surprising that such a limited symbolic insight would give rise to the rejection of both depth psychological perspectives and magical practice, as we shall see later.

Ironically, Frawley's discussion of the comet Hale-Bopp falls into exactly the same trap as he attempts to set for the supporters of the outer planets. Although criticising bitterly the choosing of arbitrary meanings for Uranus, he announces triumphantly "it was no surprise that this comet's appearance was soon followed by the announcements of the cloning of Dolly the sheep" (128), as if this event was somehow 'The Truth' of the comet. No: the symbolic imagination has made an association between this particular event (one out of many that may fit the symbolism) and the appearance of the comet, in exactly the same way as the association would be made between Uranus and revolution, or enlightenment thought. But in neither case do the celestial phenomena determine a particular outcome. When an astrologer takes up a chart for a significant moment, he or she is aware that countless events are happening at that moment, in the same place—but the symbolism of the moment they choose is significant (or may be, there is

no guarantee) *precisely because they have chosen to engage with it*, not because it is part of a pre-ordained plan laid out above and beyond their own participative enquiry.

This brings us to the question of self-referencing, on which Frawley throws his accustomed scorn. It is true that modern 'psychological astrology' tends to be concerned with 'inner' motivations, complexes and patterns, but it is surely ridiculous to state that "modern astrology demonstrates an absolute obsession with the inside of one's head", as if mind powers are literally limited to the physical brain. Indeed doesn't Frawley himself believe that archetypal meaning precedes manifestation in matter? Long before modern psychology the great Renaissance astrologer Marsilio Ficino observed, "the planets are not to be found outside, in some other place, but the heavens in their entirety are found within us, where the light of life and origin of heaven dwell" (Letter to Lorenzo de' Medici the younger). From this neoplatonic perspective, the internalisation of the archetypes is seen as a necessary reflection of the macrocosm in the microcosm of the human soul, and enables the individual to work constructively on a psychological level to transform so-called 'malefic' influences into positive expression. Frawley appears somewhat confused about this possibility: on the one hand, he upholds the autonomy of the chart—"the chart gives a clear and objective picture which we may choose to ignore but which we cannot truthfully deny" (125) and "we let the chart move in order to find out what is actually going to come to pass and what will remain as unfulfilled potential" (119)—and on the other, he suggests we can have some power to change the picture: "[the chart] also shows just as clearly what tools we have at our disposal to remedy these faults"...."we can either view the planets in the chart as functions of the outside world, and suffer their consequences, or see them as attributes of our own soul and work to integrate them" (125-6). But if the chart states clearly that "unfulfilled potential" will remain as such, how can any 'integrative' work occur? Well says Frawley, one views the ascendant as the Ego, and the Moon as the "psychic substance of the soul" (126), and one finds a possibility for change through examining planetary aspects which will show a "way out" of a problem (126).

But isn't this precisely what those dreadful 'modern' astrologers do? Well apparently not, for their work is reduced in its entirety to the category of ineffectual 'self-help' manuals; they present to the client the picture they want to see (instead of the 'truth'), and focus exclusively on the irrelevance of 'childhood trauma' (22). "What is being sought" complains Frawley, "is primarily comfort and reassurance" (114), as if the 'real' astrologer's job is provide neither of these things but to shock the client with the stark and unpleasant reality of their doom-laden existence. The possible benefits of both reassurance and directions towards helping oneself are ignored. Furthermore, the work of C.G. Jung on the power of the symbol to reveal the

unconscious motivation or desire, to 'turn' the soul, is reduced to an absurd caricature, a travesty of its true depth of insight. As for synchronicity, this is merely "an elaborate way of saying 'let's not think about [planetary influence] at all'" (74). Frawley does not like it because it challenges his essentialist position and implies an irrational, perhaps even *daimonic* intelligence at work that has embarrassingly escaped the order of the System. For Frawley, all is explained by essence: a pure, God-given essence that is refracted through the planetary spheres forming chains of sympathy, as 'objectified' neoplatonic resonances that can be rationally apprehended as 'facts' in creation. These essences are the manifestations of God's nature in His creation, to be observed by the astrologer through the meanings of the planets and signs. There is no reason, according to Frawley, for the astrologer's psyche to be implicated in any way, and there seems to be no possible half way position between an "objective means of analysis" (115) using an astrology which is "in black and white on the paper before you" (116) and the dumping of the "astrologer's mental refuse" (115) on the unsuspecting client. Frawley's analysis, needless to say, is hardly borne out by the experience of most modern astrologers (including myself) for whom an acknowledgment of participation in the 'event' that is the consultation is a vital component in both understanding the needs of the client and the manner in which advice is given. But Frawley will not listen. The dreaded "synchronicity" theory can only mean that "If the client is here now, he must have bearing on whatever mental sewage I am currently wading through" (116).

One wonders why Frawley regards the (his?) inner life as so toxic, dark and sinister. Such a view all too easily gives rise to a refusal to engage with it at all and Frawley appeals to the words of the Traditionalist Guenon to persuade us that we should not even begin to direct the light of consciousness onto such a torid mess. This raises serious concerns indeed about the consequences of ignoring the unintegrated 'shadow' (both individual and collective) and the wisdom of keeping such a beast tethered underground. Ironically Frawley is unable to see that the dogmatic, Olympian super-structure he has constructed for astrology is as much a reflection of his own unconscious agenda as any God-given, universal truth.

Rene Guenon has pointed out that what the mind keeps unconscious, it keeps unconscious for good reason; it does not do to go poking around in it. The amount of psychic detritus we see all around us is not unconnected with the twentieth-century fashion for doing just that. All manner of unsavoury genies have been released from bottles in which they slumbered quite safely; they are not easily returned (41).

As if the rest of history has been immune from 'unsavoury genies'? This assumption, that it is *possible* even to retain an uncluttered, psychically immune perspective on the true nature of a

client's life (both inner and outer), as if the astrologer is in fact a remote God and not a human being at all, seems to be a naive and false understanding of divine knowledge. Frawley puts himself in the position of a prophet; "the point, as always in astrology, is to look beyond towards the Divine. *We shall show them our portents on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that it is the Truth*" (Qu'ran) (41). But one could argue that the Divine is not 'beyond' the interplay of astrologer and client; what could be more prophetic than the profound revelation and realisation of what was previously 'unconscious' to the client in the depths of his own being? The use of symbols (whether astrological or other kinds) in theurgic ritual was to awaken the spiritual consciousness of the practitioner—predicting the future was merely a side-effect of an expanded and enlightened state of insight into the nature of things, beyond the realm of time as we know it. Frawley does not acknowledge that his own condition of being or consciousness may have any relevance to his practice of astrology, or rather to the kind of astrology he has decided is 'real'. If all individuals are expressing their birth charts in their lives, with their unique choices and life paths, then even Frawley's arch enemy Liz Greene will be living her potential in the best way she can. The very fact that Frawley can condemn others for not conforming to his vision of truth is astounding, when as an astrologer the foundation of his practice rests on the 'matching' of the individual's natal astrology with their particular ideals and way of being in the world. Has he never made a connection between his own astrological signature and the kind of philosophy and practice he is drawn to? If so, should this not make him tolerant of the different kinds of practices others are drawn to, with their rather different charts? Ah, but even that intolerance is no doubt announced by the planets...

Frawley's attitude to modern sun-sign astrology is to be expected. The heliocentric model of the universe in itself is regarded as 'trivia' in comparison with the "profound truth" of the geocentric model" in a spiritual sense (52) (oddly, this appears to contradict his statement elsewhere that "one level of truth does not deny the veracity of another level of truth" in respect to the differences between 'astrological' and 'clock' time 45). Alan Leo, the founder of sun-sign astrology in the early twentieth century, is accused of "neutering" astrology, avoiding "plain, accurate judgement" in favour of vague character analysis (21). Yet, Frawley's position clearly acknowledges that "the Sun is the manifest symbol of the Divine in our cosmos" (49), so why can it not then symbolise the divine spark in the human being? It would seem logical, in the universe of sympathetic resonance within which the astrologer works, that the interpretation of the Sun's movement alone should therefore have something important to say, metaphorically, in relation to sun signs of human beings. A good sun sign astrologer can indeed 'catch' the flavour of the day in relation to the sun's motion, and this may well ring true with some readers—but the 'truth' of

symbolic meaning is just that, it arises in the moment, it is *relational* to the immediate situation, not fixed into an infallible structure which must be 'true' for everyone. If I read a sign which speaks a truth to me, whether in a sun-sign column or a book of poetry, who cares if the other twenty million Capricorns in the world see it as relevant or not, at that particular time? What statistical analysis of the falsity of sun-sign astrology –or the disdain of a traditional astrologer— can take away that glimpse of a coherent cosmos in which I play a part? To reduce this fleeting, but powerful apprehension of meaning to coincidence or illusion is to fall prey to the dominance of a rational paradigm that kills qualitative perception and denies the 'sixth sense' "that all men have but few use" to quote Plotinus.

Interestingly, Frawley *is* concerned with the 'moment' described by the astrological symbolism, but he sees it from within a very strictly delineated mode of cosmological time:

What astrology does—that of which the whole craft of astrology consists—is to describe that actual individual nature of moments of time as they exist in different places. The means by which astrology achieves this description is by reference to the relative positions of the planets. This is what astrology is, and this is all that astrology is: a means of describing the individual nature of moments of time. (43)

One of the problems with this statement is that, again, it assumes an objectivity of past, present and future that the astrologer can simply tap into at any point—yet all astrologers know that there is absolutely no guarantee that any chart, for any event, will be 'radical' (that is, show the nature of event in its symbolism). Symbols may reveal in a way that disregards all notion of 'time' in a linear sense, linking qualities of events in disparate places and widely diverse time periods. If the outcome of football matches can be predicted (as Frawley suggests) because of the "nature of the moment at which the event happens" (43), then, as is often pointed out by denigrators of astrology, astrologers would all be millionaires. But there is a get-out clause: "bearing in mind that all things at all times are subject to the will of God, ... no matter how inevitable my prediction might seem, whether based on astrology or horticulture, it can always fail". (43) So that's alright then, we preserve the possibility of the 'miraculous' intervention, of God knowing best after all. But doesn't this make a mockery of the astrological art, and set God firmly apart from His creation? Does it not imply that Divine Revelation may in fact have nothing to do with astrology, and should not be confused with it? Does it not amplify the gulf between 'human judgement' and 'divine will' that Ficino and the Platonists were at such pains to heal, by acknowledging that *there could be no further interpretation* beyond the god-given meaning discerned by the soul? Frawley and Ficino might agree that prediction can only occur through

rational judgement and so may be overridden by divine revelation, but for the Platonist that revelation is *part and parcel* of the potential of the astrological symbol, glimpsed by the interpreter through “a gift of the soul” which has lifted him or her to a different level of insight altogether.

Such a divinatory approach would maintain that there is no such thing as a ‘right or wrong’ omen; the symbol speaks or it doesn’t. The symbol is empty until it gains significance in a context (is ‘instantiated’). The idea of a prediction ‘failing’ is utterly alien to a mode of consciousness in which the omens may change from moment to moment: if you cast a chart for a football match, it is more likely to refer to the dynamics of you and your friends casting the chart than any ‘future’ event and its outcome that are pre-ordained. But to fully take this on board would require letting go of the cherished notion of a Divine Plan, and admitting to the possibility of symbols themselves having, or pointing to, a dynamic, autonomous energy (for want of a better word). In short, we find ourselves in the realm of ‘magic’ which for Frawley is the hottest potato in the oven.

For Frawley the very idea of planetary spirits communicating with mankind is “utterly unacceptable to the tradition” (74), “blasphemous and pointless” (162). Again we find a strictly uncompromising attitude, reminiscent of St Augustine’s condemnation of the astrologers for communing with demons (even if they ‘get it right’, says Augustine, this is still due to the infiltration of evil spirits in their minds). Despite mentioning Ficino in a positive light earlier in his book, Frawley here pays no attention to the natural magic of the Renaissance Christian astrologers. Ficino’s astral magic, conducted with a piety and reverence for the life-forces of the cosmos, is founded on the life-giving and benevolent forces of nature (or super-nature), active through the planets, who bestow the gifts of the Divine Mind to human beings. The great project of his reformation of astrology was to redefine it as a soul-based activity (rather than a pseudo-science) that operated through the imagination. Disparaging of those ‘petty ogres’ who thought they could predict or prophesy through technique alone, he advocated a divinatory approach to astrological symbolism which fully engaged the soul-faculties of the operator, faculties which lifted him or her beyond the limitations of rational inference or speculation to the realms of imagination, inspiration and the ‘divine frenzy’ of Plato. It is this ‘imaginal’ realm, the realm of the symbolic image that links divine intellect to sense perception, that Frawley has difficulty in conceiving as valid. A planetary magic that cultivates the imagination is not about prediction, but about affiliation to the archetypes as living manifestations of cosmic life (the Platonist in Ficino, but not the Christian, would say of divine life). This is undoubtedly the kind of humanistic astrology that heavily influenced those modern practitioners (from Dane Rudyhar to Liz Greene) who Frawley despises, because it is not about predicting events, but about *healing*. From the

perspective of 'tradition', which depends on a strong rational mind and non-participative interpretation (and one might say, control), the autonomous intelligence of the cosmos may appear threatening. "Pure planetary force is powerful and hard" says Frawley, "if not impossible to regulate" (161). He therefore warns against talismans and other methods of attracting it, as if it somehow consists of a material influence like a beam of energy that may cause havoc in one's life. But quite how does this square with the 'language of the stars' given by God? Is the planetary force part of God's plan, and if not, where does it originate? And how exactly does one differentiate between 'planetary force' and 'planetary spirit'?

Despite rejecting the activity of cosmic intermediaries, Frawley happily accepts the activity of angels as God's messengers; when Homer describes the intervention of Pallas Athena in the affairs of men, he suggests, she might well be understood as an angel by a Muslim, Christian or Jew; and furthermore, "translated into astrology, this becomes a Mercury contact. All carry the same message from the same Source". (49). But wait a minute, weren't planetary spirits communicating with mankind "utterly unacceptable to the tradition"? Or is the analogy acceptable here because Mercury isn't *really* an angel, in a literal sense, but *seems like* one? But vague allegorisation does not sit well with the upholders of Tradition for whom astrology is black and white. Furthermore, Mercury may be seen as an angel, but he is known as a *daimon* by pre-Christian astrologers, and the *daimones* have no truck with the regulation of a Supreme authority turning the wheel of destiny. One senses that Frawley is out of his depth in such matters, not least because the theological constraints he has set himself simply cannot accommodate the *experience* of the living cosmos.

Another element of 'magical' activity is that of the direction of desire or intention to achieve a particular outcome, which has been given a therapeutic model in the practice of active imagination by such metaphysical thinkers as Henry Corbin and Jung. The very word 'desire' derives from *de-sidere* (from the star) and suggests that a fundamental desire of humankind is to reconnect with the cosmos in some way. The Arabic horary practitioners often state that the firmer and more focussed the desire of the querent, the clearer and more radical the chart for the moment will be. This apparent responsiveness of symbol to "intention of the mind" (Ficino's phrase) would seem to belie the traditionalists' assumption that it is all laid out before the astrologer independently from (and often in contradiction to) the client's or the astrologer's involvement in the matter. What is at stake for Frawley when he asks if the repair man will arrive on time? Has he soul-searched for three days to ascertain the seriousness his question (as recommended by the Arabic astrologers) and is the matter of direct import for the unfolding of his destiny? Probably not, but he may have had a strong desire to stay in the bath that morning.

“The limitation with horary”, he complains, “is that it does not work mechanically. If the question about my barbecue or the weather over the summer wanders into my head of its own volition, a horary chart will give accurate judgement” (140). But many thoughts wander into peoples’ heads about weather and barbecues, and many other day to day affairs, and it is hard to see why these wandering thoughts should inevitably give rise to effective horaries in a way that is any different from a ‘mechanical’ question, whatever Frawley means by that. He fails to see that it is not a question of ‘mechanistic’ or ‘volitional’ enquiries, but that the symbol may reveal or conceal *at any moment of interpretation*, but will be given more power and import by the ritual procedure of ‘going to the oracle’. There is a great danger that interpreting horaries for oneself becomes a solipsistic exercise in the guise of objectivity—the ‘true’ desire may well be more accurately discerned by the posing of the question to the third party astrologer.

But then Frawley does not seem to grasp the role of desire in astrological judgement and efficacy, using the vague and rather derogatory phrase “subjective mood” to apply to the those inner intentions of the client which may be completely at odds with the ‘truth’ of the chart as seen by the astrologer. He gives the example of someone who dreams of winning the lottery, and points out that if there is no indication of sudden wealth in the individual’s natal chart, no transit, progression or return will bring it. Because of this, he claims rather simplistically that it is possible for traditional astrologers to differentiate between “events in the world” and “subjective moods”, (121) unlike the “moderns” who apparently claim this is impossible. But what modern astrologer would claim (unless they were distinctly lacking in intelligence), that a “subjective mood” about winning the lottery could actually bring it about? They might however observe that appropriate action at the right time would be more likely to achieve beneficial results, if it were accompanied by a strong force of intention (and Ficino would say, prayer or invocation to the presiding deity). If a Venus transit coincides with a new love affair, then Venus and the love affair are experienced as two dimensions of the same archetype, the metaphorical and the literal aspects of Love. In this sense they are both differentiated yet united—it is simply not a case of ‘either-or’.

But a more complex issue is raised here, which in many ways lies at the heart of this book’s fundamentalist religious stance. According to Frawley, no amount of Venus transits will coincide with a love affair if the natal chart’s own Venus does not promise such an event. However, he does acknowledge that God’s will can override all astrological indications. But how, exactly, does God’s will manifest? Does it come from ‘without’, as a sudden rupture, an overriding, revelatory transport, presenting the dejected lover with the beauty of his dreams? Is it like (as Frawley suggests, 124) an initiation into the Greater Mysteries, whose spiritual truth goes so far beyond

the 'human' or "lesser mysteries" of the natal chart that it renders its symbols meaningless? Or is it possible that 'God's will' may in fact be located in the depths of the human soul (as I suggested earlier), that part which never separated from Him in the first place, and that—as the neoplatonists taught—magical (theurgic) practice might facilitate the working of this divine power in and through the world, through the raising of human consciousness? In which case, active imagination techniques using prayer, invocation, intention and intense visualisation may be seen to be in aid of a process of 'divinisation' which would allow human beings to reach a level of insight, understanding and manifestation beyond the 'fatedness' of any astrological judgement. The strictures of a badly placed Venus would then fall away and the seemingly miraculous and ardently prayed for event might occur, 'divine will' (whether God's or the gods') merging with 'the soul's deepest desire', which is about as far removed from a 'subjective mood' as could be imagined.

No doubt I have over-simplified complex theological distinctions here, but with Frawley's inability to allow a polytheistic perspective of an animate cosmos intimately connected to human desire into his monolithic monotheism, we find ourselves up against the 'exoteric-esoteric' divide in religious thinking that has, ironically, always dumped astrology in the same camp as magic, and pitted both against orthodoxy. Only in this case, astrology has become a bastion of true Christian principle, opposed to the superstition of both magicians and psychologists!

In conclusion, Frawley's insistence that astrology *is* a psychology "orientated towards the knowledge of the Divine"(114) and that all other psychology is "error" has serious implications. He does not see that in rejecting an 'imaginal' psychology he is rejecting all possibility of seeing *himself* mirrored in the symbolic system he espouses. He does not see that his astrology is an authentic expression of *his* truth, not 'The Truth', which undermines, to my view, his very credibility as an astrologer. Nor does he see that the Divine is not 'out there' directing a vast machine of destiny but is present in every moment of symbolic insight, as a multitude of living, *daimonic* connections to the cosmos and to the world. The astrological chart may, or may not give rise to the moment of realisation between symbol and soul, for such a possibility cannot be predicted or guaranteed. However intricate the design, however predictable the astronomy, the movements of the planets mean nothing and portend nothing until they are taken up by the astrologer as a meaningful omen and are realised in life events.

Frawley ends his book with the famous quotation from Lilly's 'To the students in Astrology' in *Christian Astrology*: " the more holy thou art, and more near to God, the purer Judgement thou shalt give". One cannot help feeling however that Lilly's understanding of the word 'holy' admits a far greater humility than John Frawley demonstrates in this book.

