

Astrology, Hermeneutics and Metaphorical Web

by Aldo Mazzucchelli

Note P.G.: Aldo Mazzucchelli's important paper has been published in English with the title "Celestial Weathercock, Diagrams & Metaphorical Web: Some Semiotic Considerations on Western Astrology" in the magazine "S - European Journal for Semiotic Studies" (Vol. 12.4, 2000, Vienna).

Summary

This paper sets out to study the nature of astrological activity, resorting mainly to some ideas taken from Peircean semiotics. After a brief description of some fundamental astrological procedures, the paper sets out to demonstrate how the statements usually made about this subject –mainly in the scientific field, and particularly in astronomy– do not normally consider the specific manner in which astrology operates. Astrological statements do not refer to the "planets" and their "influences" as entities and material forces, but as cosmic indices that can only be interpreted if taken as symbols through a web of intertwined metaphors hermeneutically fixed in a specific cultural tradition. Next, following some of Paul Ricoeur's ideas, the notions of metaphor and symbol as interrelated but different entities are discussed. Metaphors are construed as a case of an absurd and anomalous predicate which depends on iconicity to establish a new meaning, while symbols are seen as double-natured entities, verbal (logos) on the one hand and non-verbal or natural (bios) on the other. Symbols, which are rooted in the natural world, demand a "labor of meaning" from speech, which is mostly fulfilled by the visual-iconic and the verbal-metaphoric. After some considerations on the argumentative role of the mythological element in astrological interpretation, it is concluded that it is possible to discuss the interest of astrology, if we do so within its specific language and its own referents, when it is applied and controlled by the community of experts who actually know it well and make use of it.

A brief remark on the article, from Fernando Andacht, Editor of *S - European Journal for Semiotic Studies* (Issue 12 (4), 2000, pp. 614-615).

"[...] From this baroque bloody matter, we proceed to the classical mind games in A. Mazzucchelli's work on two comparative semiotic Systems, namely, Western astrology (charts) and the Western doctrine of semiosis. A subject which seems a priori to be destined only to a debunking exercise –one more stone cast against that flimsy abode of charlatans– becomes a dazzling and well-argued meditation on the creative possibilities of the non-academic hermeneutic tradition of astrology, when viewed in the light of Peircean semiotic. With the help of European hermeneutics (Ricoeur, Gadamer), Mazzucchelli unfolds a fascinating argument which shows the poetic power of the astrological chart when it is not only considered as an index of the celestial weathercock, but also a metaphoric string (*mýthōs*) with which endless meaningful stories are woven, for the benefit of the astrologic addressee. The author applies with accuracy and originality the Pragmatic Maxim to the Hermetic maxim ("As it is above, so it is below"). Notions such as denotation, connotation, index, icon and symbol are confronted to the rich theological and literary concept of "symbol", in order to account for the unique attraction that for thousands of years this interpretative, unscientific but not wholly inaccurate strategy has held for so many people. As we speak of comparative literature, maybe we should also consider the advantages of pondering over comparative semiotic systems, even if one or the other of the terms considered

does not enjoy scientific legitimacy. The insights that abound in this paper more than justify the bold decision of carrying such an inclusion."

Foreword

"I hear you say: 'All that is not fact; it is poetry.' Nonsense! Bad poetry is false, I grant; but nothing is truer than true poetry. And let me tell the scientific men that the artists are much finer and more accurate observers than they are, except of the special minutiae that the scientific man is looking for"
(Charles S. Peirce, *The Seven Systems of Metaphysics*)

The view we shall present in this paper depicts astrology as an activity different both from the idea that about it have natural scientists, astronomers in particular, and from what many astrologers think and make of it. This must be clarified from the very beginning, since rather different activities have always found shelter under the "astrology".

On the one hand -its most obvious aspect- it includes some forms of generalised, superstitious, unfounded pseudo-divination, of the type of the solar sign astrology that appears on newspapers. On the other, it consists of the application and development of a model which generates applied significant analogies, what necessarily presupposes the existence of a *kósmos* [1] , a general order of attractions and likenesses, whose suggestion of the grand and the distant may be used -taken as a model- in order to categorise, describe and understand the ways of being of the small and the nearby.

Between these two extremes, as it were, there is a nearly endless shade of greys. We do not intend to make of this paper a phenomenology of those very many ways of practising astrology, but to study what the second manner or extreme -the least known- is about.

We know we are tackling an activity lacking any prestige among the academically organized sciences. We are also aware of the fact that the type of astrology we intend to deal with is not the one practised by many of those who call themselves astrologers. However, it is our belief that by examining the attempts of those who practise what we consider the "serious" kind of astrology may shed some light on the true procedures of a group of disciplines called occult or esoteric. [2]

This paper is organised in three parts. Firstly, we shall consider the external form of the astrological subject matter, which we shall characterise as a group of signs on the visible sky from where they are gathered by a series of astronomical procedures that select and locate elements; these elements, in turn, determine the state of a sign whose main feature is its indexicality. The operation is analogous to that of someone who looks at a weathercock -in this case a celestial weathercock-, to refer to the well-known example of Peirce on the Dicot Sinsign. (EP: 2.297)

From the diagram of that "celestial weathercock", obtained with the aforementioned astronomical procedure, two radically different types or series of readings arise; one presupposes a denotative attitude and may only establish causality links between the sky and the earth; the another one takes the propositions generated from the astrological chart as connotative [3] . This second attitude is based on the understanding of celestial shapes as symbols.

From this standpoint, it generates ad hoc stories developed from traditional arguments, consisting of metaphors and examples aimed at unfolding a version of that set of symbols from the outside, in the framework of an hermeneutic tradition.

In the second part of this paper, after having characterised the astrological chart as a symbol, we shall develop the idea presented before: its interpretation may only be formulated through the use of metaphors. To that end, we shall review some conceptions of metaphor and symbol that suit our purpose. Metaphors, following

mostly Ricoeur (1998: chap.3), have been seen as a deviated, unexpected, absurd predicative case (cf. Cohen, 1966) which, at a second stage and through analogy, refers to an object not immediately present. It is, therefore, the quintessential language of discovery and formulation of the unknown by means of a peculiar predicative procedure based on likeness.

In the third part of this paper we finally conclude that what the type of astrology we are dealing with truly does is to construct specific significant stories within the context of a dialogue, which are based on a pattern of relationships between metaphors built around that symbol of the state of the cosmos which is the astrological chart.

Astrological interpretation could be seen, therefore, as the uncertain winding of a string, woven into a fabric of chained metaphors, which in turn generate a narrative [4], in such a manner that the addressee of the story echoes it. To "echo" may still sound too metaphorical for the reader who longs for another kind of proof.

Indeed, at this stage we must refer to languages. To the final concept of truth not as the possibility of logic verification of some propositions, but as the *confirmation* - despite all the logical difficulties contained in the concept- of propositions in a linguistic agreement. Such confirmation operates in the interaction of a community of researchers who apply that language acting in a scientific manner in the wider sense. To use one of Peirce's concepts, within a "*community of quasi-minds*". (Peirce, EP: 2.392)

Proof of the power of any language to represent something -or otherwise to discover that it is a mere pattern of meaningless voiced events- may only be obtained by learning to speak that language, that is to say, to use it, because language has neither meaning nor semantics in isolation from its use. Or, as it has been said, "as theoreticians, we know nothing of the human *language*, unless we understand human *speech*". (Strawson, 1983: 215)

1 Observing the celestial weathercock

It is obvious that astrological statements [5] are astronomical for a start, since their reference is to entities and events of a material nature which take place in the sky. In order to develop this initial nature of the symbols used by astrology, we shall mention briefly how astrology works. Without going into any details, let us simply say that, once several elements of the material existence of the sky have been defined from an earthly perspective, the most common technique -there are many others which may be assimilated to it for the purposes of our study- consists of calculating the relative positions of all these elements for a given observation point and moment in time.

Usually, the results of this calculation are represented in a hypoicon-diagram (Peirce, EP: 2.274), known as the "astrological chart", where the dyadic relationships of astronomic positional type between each of the elements considered are presented. So far, all the work is pure astronomical calculation, and on the basis of the acceptance of the applied geocentric referential system, it does not deserve much attention given our aims.

Once the diagram has been obtained, and since it represents one single moment - a simultaneity of everything it describes- we may say it might be translated, in terms of the linear language, as a group of Decisigns or propositions: $pa \rightarrow pb \rightarrow pc \rightarrow pd \dots \rightarrow pn$.

For instance, from the diagram it may be concluded that the planet Mercury is placed in a given subdivision of the ecliptic called "the sign of Capricorn", a fact which is enunciated as "Mercury is in Capricorn", but which, at the same time, is in a given angular relation -measured along the ecliptic- close to 60° with the planet Mars, enunciated as "and Mercury sextile Mars", etc. The subject about which something is being stated in them is, in fact, the moment described by that particular chart. The

shape of each of its propositions, therefore, may be generalised by saying that it is of the type of "Here and now A is in a certain relationship with B", a proposition which implies the existence of A and B, as well as a specific astronomical relationship between them, and that A exists at that specific and same moment, in that specific, special relationship with B. Generically, and in order to simplify things, let us imagine that everything contained in the chart in astronomical terms may be represented by one single proposition pA .

That predicative relationship [6] states a spatial fact verifiable in physical terms: the presence of a given subject observable in a clearly determined spot in space. What is under discussion when the truth value of all this is discussed is an issue which may be settled in astronomical terms. [7]

A first reading shows that all the astrological propositions formulated in an astrological chart are of this type. So an astrological chart is a diagram of the sky for a given time and place, and, like every diagram, it takes into consideration certain privileged dyadic relations within the representative system it belongs to.

So far, there is no difference to be accounted for between the existence of the astrological chart and that of a celestial clock. This image has been resorted to at other times, especially nowadays. [8] In all these cases the birth chart and all its elements are seen as fingers and pointers of a direct clock, that is of a pure indexical nature, which would be located in the sky. A sort of natural Dicot Sinsign, just as an anchored ship is a natural telltale. A kind of celestial weathercock that would vary, and thus indicate, the "rhythm of time" or the "cycles of the sky". All this is indicated by this celestial clock or weathercock purely by virtue of the way in which it exists and regardless of the existence of a legisign of which it is a replica, simply by the way in which -if we may overstate it- "it is constructed".

But it is evident that no one considers astrological maps sheer artifices to measure time, because astrology "draws conclusions" from astrological maps. In other words, every astrological diagram has a corresponding -at least one- proposition that interprets it, that we shall call qA . For the astrologer, an astrological chart is not a mere collection of descriptive propositions as the ones we have mentioned; on the contrary, each of them -or all of them considered together, rather, but this is an astrological technicality that does not affect this discussion- has a corresponding proposition. This is the astrological "interpretation" of planetary positions.

We have called the two connected propositions which would describe astrology's basic semiotic working order pA and qA . The usual reading of astrology from science, which inevitably leads to astrology's discredit, always sees this relationship as a conditional of the $pA \rightarrow qA$ type. What is being assumed in this current approach to the topic is that astrology works as a sort of mechanism that reveals terrestrial physical events as caused by celestial bodies; this is expressed in the union of $pA \rightarrow qA$, whose reading is approximately this one:

"If [here and now] Mercury is in Capricorn, then the person [to whom this chart belongs] will have [for instance] conservative ideas".

In "(here and now) Mercury is in Capricorn" Mercury and Capricorn are existing physical entities in a relationship of astronomic simultaneity for a given time and place on the earth's surface.

So far we have presented the lay view on astrology. This way of seeing it may be semiotically summarised by saying that astrologers build up, by means of several astronomical procedures, sky diagrams which are hypoicons reproducing dyadic relationships generated from legisigns, of which graphic representations are tokens (EP: 2.480). These describe a series of natural sky phenomena which constitute Dicot Sinsigns, indicating the mere movement of celestial bodies, which is a sort of "temporal proposition" in itself, and for that reason we say they are Dicot Symbols. Interpretants are attached to these, and so are Dicot Symbols, which postulate a

causal relationship between the display on the sky and the events that shall take place on earth. [9]

2. A second reading of the celestial weathercock

So far we have acknowledged a "normal" interpretation of astrological propositions. "Mercury is in Capricorn" has undoubtedly this first reading, $pA \rightarrow qA$, as the postulate of a cause-effect relationship. But in astrological literature there are several indications that this is not the way in which some of the astrologers interpret the meaning of an astrological diagram. [10]

The same statement exemplified in "**Mercury is in Capricorn**" also means - without losing or overseeing its material referentiality for that reason- another way of understanding the terms involved and their relationship. Instead of making reference *simply* to an astronomical event and of working only as a temporal index, as presented in the previous section, in this second case it may be understood that what the new proposition expresses is the existence of a relationship which is presently taking place between two terms which no longer simply denote the astronomical planet Mercury and the 30-degree segment of the ecliptic called Capricorn respectively, but which now describes what we shall consider symbol **Mercury** and symbol **Capricorn**. This relationship will therefore have to be analysed in more detail.

The original astrological statement thus makes visible the existence of another type of relationship between other components -and the corresponding existence of a different proposition, let us say pS . Its constituent elements are, in this case, symbols.

We are not using the word "symbol" in its Peircean meaning of "conventional sign" here, but in a wider sense, as used by the tradition of the philosophy of language, mythology, literary theory, psychology or religion, and which we shall discuss further in the following sections.

So we have stated that both Mercury and Capricorn (for instance) are Symbols. The statement that a symbol "is" in another symbol, is absurd if we are aiming at taking it as a statement of spatial or time location, since the nature of symbols is not such that they may be located in some discrete corner of the Universe. The copula "is in" is an absurd predication if taken literally. This statement is not of the type: "*The Eiffel Tower is in Paris*".

It is more of the type of statement we may exemplify as:

"Yesterday I was in hell", or "Girls are bubbles".

It is a union between two terms that may not be interpreted in a direct sense.

Any serious astrology book is filled with examples showing that what astrologers do is to develop the task of interpreting with a figurative sense what, somehow obscurely, an astrological chart expresses. [11]

Describing this meaning-attributing operation is possible if we resort to the definition of some phenomena not only manifested in this case but also widely known in philosophy, the theory of literature, poetics, religious thought and psychology. These are the notions already referred to of symbol, metaphor, denotation and connotation.

3. The double condition of astrology

This double condition of astrology has generated the largest number of arguments against it which in the end made it illegitimate in the field of modern sciences. [12]

And these arguments are in existence not just from the imposition of rationality and empiricism in science after Galileo and Bacon, but at least from the time of the Greeks. The sensible ethical objections astrology has always provoked in the Church, among others, have been mixed with epistemological observations drawn basically from what we have categorised here as a denotative or literal reading of astrological

signs. [13] Such a reading leaves little room to consider the relationship sky-earth as anything else but a causality relationship.

If it is true that the sentence "(Here and now) Mercury is in Capricorn" -using astrological symbols: "(Here and now) **Mercury** is in **Capricorn**"- expresses a proposition (pA) which characterises a moment of a constantly moving set on the basis of its reference to certain elements in this set, it is also true that it has a second reading.

In this second proposition or pS , it is not the material reference that rules, but the union of two symbolic entities in a relationship of mutual modification. In this second case what is being predicated is the attribution of a certain *symbolic quality* to the same time and space to which the proposition refers when taken in its direct or astronomical sense.

The subject of pA is preserved in all its terms: it is the same "Here and now". But what is now meant by pS is the existence of a relationship no longer astronomical, material and of the cause-effect type, but symbolic.

Astrological statements are presented in this case as elements of an odd class, whose occurrence is determined materially, but whose meaning is understood, as we will see immediately, in terms of a metaphor which partially unveils something existing further away, in the forever blurred land of symbols.

4. A superstitious *epojé*?

"*The lord, whose oracle is at Delphi, neither speaks nor conceals, but indicates with signs*". This widespread maxim attributed to Heraclitus, organizes the link between the first and second part of this paper. Its significance branches out from the field of the Indexical to that of the oracular.

All techniques that might be defined as oracular have an indexical level in its practice. This is what is interpreted afterwards. There is, we might say, a resource to non-human intervention in the initial stage of the oracular, an etymological resonance of the phenomenological method in an *epojé*, a momentary withdrawal from action in order to perceive the signs being sent out by the world here and now. It is

(..) above all, the halting of movement, the interruption of a process, a cessation (...) of which astronomy retains the meaning of apparent pause in the trajectory of a planet: apogee, station which precedes retrogradation (...) and which in Ptolemy meant position, usually referred. (...) This is why the same term is used again for the position of the stars in the horoscope, or also for the place and shape of a constellation. The semantic field expands from space to time: *epojé* becomes a stabilized point of time, that is to say, the reference point; positions are calculated from it. (Serres, 1970: 181)

This is what both those who observe the signs on the sky and those who observe the colorful icons in the order -random?- in which an arrangement of Tarot cards brings them out in a reading do, or even what augurs saw in a bird's flight. Why all this indexical vocation and this attachment to the result which awaits in the randomness of a card's reading or in the unchangeable mechanics of planets? Does "superstition" really need such mechanisms? Is it the same belief that the external world has something significant to say that moves both the natural sciences and the "sciences of the occult" after all? Is it, then, a question of the type of symbols used by one and the other to "say what they see" that makes some legitimate and others illegitimate?

In this second movement, once the *indexical* quality of the oracular has been established, let us consider now the last statement contained in Heraclitus' maxim: *it indicates with signs*. What is the nature of these signs? Indexical, because they indicate. But also indirect: it is neither said openly nor is it hidden. Here is an open way to the union of the first part of the astrological proposition, which is an index, with its second part, its interpretation, which consists basically of iconic signs. For our

hypothesis is that astrology -and this is the only serious way we know of to explain its survival- consists of a practice which makes use of celestial signs in their double value as indices and as icons, in order to interpret them as direct propositions which pre-exist in a symbolic order.

As a matter of fact, we are not assuming that such an order exists with absolute independence from its knowledge, or from its formulation in some language. But nor do we believe that a language may exist without the persuasion and forcefulness of something else, as a game of natural attractions. Both aspects taken together are the kind of order that we believe our world to have, without an outer side to which to resort.

The unveiling and revealing of this order requires the "work of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1998: 70) of a web of metaphors, of some argumentative coherence or *mýthōs*. This justifies the existence of a long interpretative and hermeneutic tradition in astrology. We shall therefore have to explain what we understand by symbol and by metaphor in order to clarify in what sense it is legitimate to so describe "what the matter is" with astrology.

5. The metaphorical surface of the astrological

Let us start by considering metaphors. There are indeed several traditional definitions of metaphor in the rhetorical tradition that we are not going to review here. It should suffice to remember that they originate in the well-known classification of Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1457b): "Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy."

It is of no interest to us here to consider the metaphor as a semiotic event only, but in its relationship with symbols, and it is for that reason that we have adopted at large the joint study that Ricoeur has made of both topics. [14]

In the text we shall use repeatedly in this paper, Ricoeur (1998) points out that the turn that the philosophy of language and poetics in the 20th century have been giving to the concept has led him to stress that metaphors have not to do with terms but with propositions. It is not the mere replacement of a term by another that resembles it:

[Metaphors] are only meaningful within an expression, they are a predicative, not denominative phenomenon. When the poet speaks of a 'blue Angelus', or of 'a mantle of pain', he opposes two terms (...) and the combination of the two forms the metaphor (...) The metaphor is the result of the tension between two terms in a metaphorical expression (Ricoeur, 1998: 63)

From this analysis it arises that what happens in a metaphor is the generation of what others have called "a semantic deviation" that the interpreter must solve. (Cohen, 1966) A metaphor is meaningless if interpreted literally, because pain cannot literally be a mantle. So, as Ricoeur says, "the gap must be bridged" between what is said and what could possibly be understood, and this is precisely the function of likeness in the metaphorical.

We should add at this stage that likeness must not be understood as a mere resource to 'eliminate' the tension created in order to somehow return to the literal meaning. On the contrary, likeness is the way that makes possible to create, to advance, to go from the familiar to the unknown. In a metaphor, the familiarity is in the qualities involved in the terms, while the unknown is that new relationship of qualities proposed by the predicative relationship in which they appear. This new relationship is self-contained, it cannot be translated or reduced without alteration.

A key consequence of this entire way of seeing the world of metaphors is that "a metaphor is not an ornament of discourse. It has a higher emotive value since it provides new information. (...) A metaphor tells us something new about reality". (Ricoeur, 1998: 66)

Let us compare that approach with the one suggested by Peirce. Of the well-known phenomenological subdivision this author makes of the iconic sign -dating from 1903- we are particularly interested in retaining the meaning of metaphor.

Hypoicons may roughly [be] divided according to the mode of Firstness which they partake. Those which partake the simple qualities, or First Firstnesses, are *images*; those which represent the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts, are diagrams; those which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are *metaphors*. (EP 2.274)

In other words, Peircean metaphors represent the *mode* in which something replaces something else, and on doing so what they do is to show some appropriate parallelism.

If one says "man is a wolf", the sign is replacing something else, the quality of human ferocity; but this is only an aspect of the sign, since the expression is untranslatable. And to do so, it shows the parallel relationship between both terms of the metaphor. Such parallelism proposes that *as* the wolf is ferocious, *so* is man. The relationship which is thus established is the "something else" Peirce talks about, but it is not the object of the original metaphor in itself, but the mode through which we may find guidance to understand the message: that of a mood typical of man.

What becomes more evident in metaphorical usage is the intuition of the features or icons present in the object, not as a disconnected list (image) or a group of relationships that may be analysed (diagram), but as a single entity; that is to say, what operates in a metaphor is the notion of the unity of the object as it is significant or known (interpreted, complete, triadic) to us, *though not simply for us to recognise it*, but to use it as a model of something unknown.

By linking it to another name, we intend that the first sign, the metaphor, be taken as *a model to understand* a given quality in the second stage of metaphorical interpretation. The sign of the metaphor, as it were, represents some object with which we are not familiar, but to which we will eventually arrive through our own means by following the procedure indicated to get to the (absurd) Object of the first sign.

Surprisingly, after raising awareness about all this, the metaphor seems to be directed to itself, to its own *way of speaking*, with the object remaining an object ... of language set up by the metaphor in a sort of circle. The way out of this circle -the "understanding" of the metaphor- is a combination different from that of mere language; it is related to the energy of directly intuiting something from experience, even if it is internal experience. It means breaking free from the labyrinth of mirrors.

In fact, there is no way of translating the *meaning* of a metaphor. All that can be done is to refer to its object once more, in a different way. But since the object of a metaphor is not exactly a worldly object but a way of seeing a quality of that world, we may only, in purity, repeat the metaphor once and again until it is perhaps understood.

In the words of Aristotle, the ability to create (and interpret) metaphors implies a specific insight to *observe* similarities.

Let us now underline a very important element of the process described. For Urban (1952: 363-365), as well as for Max Black (1962), a metaphor is somehow analogous to a *model*. Black distinguishes between a scale model -the model of a ship-, analogical models -a diagram- and theoretical models -which consist of building an imaginary object- more accessible to description, which replaces a more complex domain of reality, and whose properties correspond to the properties of the object-. Such a description reproduces -we could say it is an icon- Peirce' gradation of the three classes of hypoicon in the fragment we have transcribed.

The implication of this classification for Max Black is that through model metaphors we may describe a domain of reality in terms of a new language. This language

originates in the construction of a heuristic fiction and transposes the features of this heuristic fiction to reality itself.

Metaphors, therefore, operate as a model of recognition, allowing us to discover new relationships in the domain of reality to which we refer through them.

The consequence of including such an extended digression in the field of poetics is the understanding that a metaphorical language, if such is what we have described, may actually work -in the sense in which we mean it- as a bridge, since it provides recognition models that enable us to describe inner and external experience in terms of the metaphorical web which constitutes the tradition of meaning in astrology. It is on this basis that the most interesting interpretation forms of this discipline develop. But the former link is obviously not justified unless we explain what the metaphor-symbol relationship may consist of, and accept that astrology is a question of symbols.

6. Bios & Logos

Metaphor alone does not suffice, therefore, to describe what we believe takes place when astrological interpretation takes place. If astrology were only a question of metaphors, it would not be different from poetry, except for being less poetical.

It is precisely here where the most bizarre and peculiar quality of the astrological matter plays a role, of which, perhaps for being obvious, not enough notice is taken, and which lies in what in astrology is interpreted as "a state of the sky", or in other words, something rooted in the *kósmos*.

We shall consider next that one of the features of symbols is their dual nature, and that while they have a verbal or representational aspect which has been studied and referred to at large, they also have the peculiarity, perfectly described by Ricoeur, of being rooted in life itself, in that state in which "the capacity to talk is founded on the capacity of cosmos to signify".(Ricoeur, 1998: 75)

We are therefore stating that a symbol has always a dual condition, where "*logos*" and "*bios*" mix (ibid, 72). Based on such an understanding of things, we believe it is possible to affirm that the diagram constructed on the basis of the skies' pure indexicality is a map which is a symbol in itself, a non logos: it is rooted. Not only has each of its elements a symbolic reading, but it is also itself a symbol because it is nothing else but the diagram of interpreted dyadic relationships which are the world's contiguity, the *kósmos*, that etimological "being in order".

Any representation of what the *kósmos* is at that precise moment, shall be an interpretation of those symbols.

7. The symbolic core of Astrology

The symbol-metaphor relationship is so close that it becomes difficult to discern between the two terms. Many references to the topic leave out the distinction between symbol and metaphor, since in both cases human consciousness is faced with the transit from the known to the unknown. Kant states that symbols contain "[...] indirect presentations of the concept [...]", and he adds further on that this presentation is done, in the case of symbols,

[...] by the aid of an analogy (for which recourse is had even to empirical intuitions), in which analogy judgement performs a double function: first in applying the concept to the object of a sensible intuition, and then, secondly, in applying the mere rule of its reflection upon that intuition to quite another object, of which the former is but the symbol. (Kant, 1997: Section II, SS 59).

He points out that there is no (literal) likeness between the terms of the symbolic, but that such likeness exists "[...] between the rules of reflection upon both and their causality" (ibid)

This leads us back to a feature we had already seen in Peirce's definition of metaphor: the 'meaning' of a symbol is not its 'current representation', as in the case

of the meaning of an image, but a similarity *in the way of reflecting on both things*; a common operational rule. That is, that the symbol -and its *logos* side, i.e., the metaphor- may not be reduced to likeness, but that likeness merges into the metaphor as the path that leads into the unknown. Ricoeur insists on this too, when he writes that "[...] symbolic significance is formed in such a way that we may only achieve secondary significance by means of primary significance, where the latter is the only way to access the excess of meaning". (Ricoeur 1998: 68)

There have also been attempts to formulate this feature -that may not be reduced to the verbal aspect of the symbol- from deep psychology, although we cannot go into them here. We shall simply mention that both for Freud in his idea of "the work of dreams" -in terms of a non-verbal libido made manifest in images- and for Carl G. Jung, the symbol must clearly relate to something translinguistic, capable of, so to speak, making demands to the language it uses. On this Jung writes that "[...] the symbol always presupposes that the expression chosen is the best denomination or possible formula of a *relatively unknown factual situation, but one whose presence is either known or demanded*". [our emphasis]. (Jung, 1994: 554)

So what the symbol is searching -requiring a "work of meaning", writes Ricoeur- through a metaphor is a bridge to convey its being. And the metaphor does this by linking areas of the world -not merely of meaning- so far apparently disconnected. Writes Urban:

Precisely, the partially 'unconscious' function of symbols is to relate two discourse contexts or domains so far unrelated. Predication by analogy is the very essence of the symbolic function, and the validity of symbolic knowledge depends on the reality of the relationship of the assumed suppositions in that predication. Every symbol interpretation implies that dual reference. (1952: 350)

The main problem for which Ricoeur does not limit his analysis to metaphors is the awareness that "something in the symbol has no correspondence with the metaphor, and for that reason, it resists any linguistic, semantic or logical transcription." (1998: 70)

It is in the field of the sacred where the specificity of the symbolic is more clearly revealed. Otto (1958) points that the Holy manifests itself as power, strength, efficacy. Ricoeur adds that this view helps us

"to be on guard against all attempts to reduce mythology linguistically [...] The numinous element is not primarily a question of language, if it actually ever becomes that, since to refer to power is to refer to something that is not speech, even if it implies the ability to speak. Such power, as efficacy par excellence, is what fails to be completely transferred to the articulation of meaning." (1998: 73)

The possibility that the language of the symbolic -not in astrology alone but also in astrology, we believe- be seen as the attempt to metaphorically unveil something rooted in the Universe which is perceived as "sacred", is clearly expressed in the following paragraph, that we transcribe in full -and for which length we apologise-:

Within the universe of the holy, the living creatures are not here and there, but life is everywhere as something sacred, that impregnates everything and may be seen in the movement of the stars, the rebirth of vegetation year after year and the cycle of life and death. It is in this sense that symbols are confined within the holy universe: they only come to language insofar as the worldly elements become transparent. This confined nature of symbols establishes the whole difference between symbol and metaphor. The latter is a free invention of discourse; the former is linked to the cosmos. We have come to an unyielding element, more uncompromising than that revealed by poetic experience. In the holy universe, the capacity to speak is founded on the capacity of the cosmos to signify. Consequently, the logic of meaning arises from the same structure of the holy universe. Its law is the law of correspondence between creation *in illo tempore* and the current order of natural appearances and human activities." (Ricoeur, 1998: 74)

The core of this case points directly to the form of astrology as we understand it, so much so that we may say that it practically provides an explanation of what its activity consists of. Symbols are, first of all, some interpretable beings in the *kósmos*. Symbols are, secondly, the demand for a meaning of the language of things that are together by contiguity or by similarity. Symbols are, in the third place, those already meaningful nuclei, although still rooted in life, to which the language of images is capable of drawing us near.

If astrology's diagrams are representations of a momentary state of a celestial weathercock which indexically states the changes of time through the sky and the changes in the sky along time, and if symbols are something "confined" to the *kósmos*, it is possible to see that the interpretation of those glyphs and those strange shapes of astrology may refer to that confined symbolism, attributed to the rhythms of the *kósmos*, through Ricoeur's "law of correspondences", and which is expressed simply in the widespread hermetic maxim "As it is above, so it is below".

Symbols require the existence of an iconic substratum of "*Qualities of feeling*" [15], that is precisely the part of the symbol rooted in the world. Since it is *not a culture or a specific linguistic code the one to establish the relationships between a cave and the uterus* or between a furrow and the female sexual organ, but the world itself (its Firstness) as it is given to us in any concrete percept (Secondness), represented (Thirdness) in any way. And this generality demanded of the metaphor to express the symbol is precisely that of law. As with any sign, what is made operational in the symbol is the allocation of an interpretant to the sign as a whole, which transfers the iconic elements of the predicate's interpretant.

8. Likeness, Continuity and Symbol

If we have resorted to the likeness of the qualities perceived in the symbolic, it is befitting to observe the role these qualities are bound to represent. We intend to remind the reader that the symbol -understood as a momentary interpretation of qualities comprised in the "worldly elements" - brings together bundles of qualities, but it does not do so *merely* by virtue of cultural pressures.

The persuasion and forcefulness that perceptual stimuli (percept-perceptual judgement) (Marty, 1999) have in each case differ in the case of the iconic symbol, because in this one -as opposed to what happens with the conventional Peircean symbol, where the logos, the rule of men, is predominant- the union of the qualities resulting in the perceptual judgement is strongly conditioned by "the intrinsic capacity of the stimulus to impose itself on the subject's perception by its own power". (ibid)

This conceptual outline seems to be an appropriate description of what happens when a metaphor "works for" a symbol. The union of elements provided by a metaphor referred to a symbolic nucleus is not the union of perceptible qualities only as a result of "the subject's more or less developed receptivity based on his previous experiences" (Marty, 1999), but it is a perpetual game or dialogue. It is the third and first generality of the symbolic and metaphorical on the one hand -the *logos* side of the symbol (Ricoeur, 1998: 72), and the weight imposed by Secondness with its own power and manner of resisting, on the other. Rooted in the world as an orderly bundle of qualities, this manifest reality is the *bios* aspect of symbols (ibid), unyielding in the end, in its language conditioning suggestion, to every sign tried on it, as those signs or interpretants of the perceptibly symbolic are contingent to the evolution of a culture as a communication community.

Any relativism stating that we are forever prisoners of an illusion and that the outer world does not provide us with data to correct even our most stunning metaphors, is denying the typical way Secondness has to surprise us. Peirce has argued strongly and frequently about the real nature of Secondness. One of his most eloquent arguments, by way of example, appears on chapter IV of *The seven Systems of Metaphysics* (EP: 2.193).

We seem to see some indication that there is a way, precisely in the Peircean concept of synechism, to save the perplexity regarding the association, apparently insoluble, between the "hard" reality of the celestial weathercock and that web of metaphors which, from the most elementary perceptions, gradually weave into one another until they form what in astrology is an utterly conventional metaphorical web of meanings but with a worldly reference. Writes Peirce: "We may note, here, in passing, that of the two generally recognised principles of association, contiguity and similarity, the former is a connection due to a power without, the latter a connection due to a power within." (EP:1.314).

How can we affirm that, from the recognition of contiguity, our mind progresses until it also "recognises" likenesses? But is not all this related to the fundamental problems that Peirce himself considers when describing his synechism in 1892, in *The law of mind*? There, Peirce wonders: "What distinct meaning can attach to saying that an idea in the past in any way affects an idea in the future, from which it is completely detached?" (EP: 1.314) He then concludes that the existence of a universal attraction of ideas, a superior law, would be the only possibility to explain the principle of dissemination and mutual influence of some ideas over others.

As we may see, if anything underlies the feasibility of the existence of new knowledge through metaphors, it is precisely this single peculiarity of our ideas, the 'capacity for contagion'. Were it not this way, it would be impossible for the new ideas to integrate into the field of the known, and thus, to exist for us. On the other hand, this idea is also important to understand what is being meant by the existence of a non-linguistic side to symbols, as suggested by Ricoeur, which nonetheless struggles for recognition and integration into the language. We go back to the question of whether or not there exists a real *quality of feeling*, and how the miracle occurs that we should integrate our world and should make abductions suitable to our purposes in the sea of diversity of things. "When one considers the matter from a *logical* point of view, the notion that qualities are illusions and play no part in the real universe shows itself to be a particularly *unfounded* opinion" (EP: 2.188)

Peirce states all this already in his previous development of synechism, and it is of interest here to mention what he says in the fourth point of his conclusions about the redefined Law of Mind:

"this supreme law, which is the celestial and living harmony, does not so much as demand that the special ideas shall surrender their peculiar arbitrariness and caprice entirely; for that would be self-destructive. It only requires that they shall influence and be influenced by one another" (EP: 1.330)

Peirce had intuited in 1892, in *The Law of Mind*, the question of how this living harmony -a sort of loving energy- achieves the integration of the nearby in likeness. Similarity is in the world and at the same time in the way we allow ourselves to build that world together with the world itself.

This reading of Peirce, speculative as it may be, appears suggestive to face the crucial problem of the translation of meaning based on our knowledge of the world. A consistent and continuist monism seems to be a good theoretical cornerstone to understand how we achieve that existential linguistic liberty to discover what underlies words in every here and now.

Etymology is one of those areas which more obviously show this game of imperceptible continuities.

In a passage of Cratyl, in the words of Socrates, Plato says that the body *"is the grave [séma] of the soul, as if it was buried in this [body] we now possess; and as, on the other hand, the soul expresses all its manifestations through it, this is why it is called precisely 'sign' [séma]."*

Besides being another one of the many language games present throughout the dialogue, what is stated in the passage is the possibility that the representamens themselves be always prepared for a wider game of interpretations. In this particular

case, it is the use of a sign of life which encapsulates a sign of death, inviting to a sort of intellectual and existential inquiry of opposed qualities in the mere sonority of the representamen. The object of the sign 'body' is corporal life as death and prison (as "Orpheus' henchmen" believe, explains Socrates afterwards), the half-mute tomb as a sign of another life.

There is no discontinuity, but infinitely minute differences that group, move, disappear and come back into shape when *mentioned*. Nothing simply is, as Parmenides believed. Peirce recalled in 1893

There is a famous saying of Parmenides, "being is, and not being is nothing." This sounds plausible; yet, synechism flatly denies it, declaring that being is a matter of more or less, so as to merge insensibly into nothing. (EP, 2.2)

9. Astrology is to weave stories

So far we have said that astrology is, like everything else, not the union of "something material with something immaterial", but one of the ways of any manifestation, which is triadic by nature. There is a factor external to the mind and a mental one, but none of them is anything more than the interaction of them both, to put it bluntly. For the purposes of our analysis, however, we have proceeded in a dual manner, separating so far the external or natural aspect, of which we have indices, from the symbolic aspect, which is on the borderline between the natural external element of *bios* and the conventional internal aspect of *logos*. But as we have understood it so far, it is the concept of symbol the one which sums up the whole problem in its most important aspect.

Yet to be succinctly mentioned is the utterly conventional aspect of astrological language, of the astrological hermeneutical tradition, or, in other words, *what has always been said and may be said being aware of it*, in metaphors, of the symbol that is the chart itself, the "*q* propositions" we made general reference to in the first part.

As to that, the practical reality of astrology, where its main current problems lie (terminological problems of inaccuracy between vulgar and technical language, confusion between denotative and other types of phrases, extremely serious teleological problems about the purpose of astrology, etc.) would demand a separate study, and rather large as well, which we are unable to undertake here.

We do want to say, however, that the main feature of this language is that it has been built, like every other human effort of representation, on the basis of threads that lead to the multiple meanings bound to be unfolded from the birth chart as a symbol. And in this sense, to interpret a birth chart is to wind a string, to unfold and represent myths

At the very beginning of his Poetics, Aristotle warns that the whole issue of representation is a question of mimesis, and so that imitation be made possible, it is essential to elaborate a myth, a thread, a weft, a plot. The astrology session is also about elaborating an interpretation capable of building a story or narration in metaphors, images and examples meaningful to the "customer".

What may be the value of such fiction? For a start, the same value of any metaphor, if it is well created: to provide a model of identification, in this case, for entire areas of life experiences, which seem to be a rather unintelligible matter without a reference to some conducting thread.

It must not be forgotten, in order to consider the above, the nature given to *mythos* at the different stages of Greek thought (see for instance Diel, 1996, or Gadamer, 1997); this is important in order to understand the nature of astrological interpretative discourse with respect to the episteme, which refers to pure rationality. From Antiquity, the mythological has been something different from what is true. *Mythos* is "everything that can only be narrated" (Gadamer, 1997: 25), as opposed to what can be proved. But myths have their own status, they are not "made-up stories", but "found stories": to the interior of what has been known for a long time,

from ancient times, the poet finds something fresh that renews the old (ibid.: 27)
Thus,

"in Plato's dialogues, the myth is placed next to logos, and very often it is its climax. Plato's myths are stories that, despite not aspiring to the whole truth, represent a sort of bargaining with truth, and are thus capable of broadening those thoughts which search for that truth" (ibid)

In this framework, the myth-truth relationship is not that of two contenders but that of two parallel ways of saying which depend on verisimilitude in the case of myth, and on rational demonstration in the case of episteme.

And let us add that myths have their own power. Their work is what we refer to as the fulfillment of something demanded by an arrangement "external" to language, an arrangement that has its origin in the symbol. This power is clearly shown by the possibility the mythic narrator has of prolonging and ramifying his tale as much as he wishes. What is it that is being lengthened in a myth, in the retelling, but that sort of generative force which originates in something that is not language? "We say of someone that he is a good narrator if he can tell a story with no interruptions and can, so to speak, continue to weave the plot endlessly." (Gadamer, 1997: 32)

This "possibility to keep telling" as the profound essence of the mythological was already noticed in Antiquity: "even Aristotle sees in the mythic tradition of the gods a sort of notice of forgotten knowledge in which he recognizes his metaphysics of the *Primum Mobile* (Met. L8, 1974b)" (Gadamer, 1997: 28).

Also Diel -who makes a more psychotherapeutically-oriented presentation- states that Creation myths "[...] are identical in their hidden meaning: they speak in an imagined way of the 'first cause' [...] no cause is determined by its effects, and the first cause of the world's existence may not be determined through its manifestation." (Diel 1966: Foreword)

Astrology is based on the retelling of a bundle of stories whose form is basically found in the Greek pantheon. In the stories and the meaning of these stories represented in the denominations and meanings of the planets, there is also a sort of *mythologica* or series of Peircean *arguments*, a network of metaphors situated in its utterance by an Indexical procedure which at some point generates the possibility of multiple interpretative discourses, not less descriptive for that reason, of how that world appears to us as a *thing*, as something of our concern (see for instance Greene, 1983). All we shall ever know about the world will be what we are able to turn into metaphors *from it*. The interpretative moment of astrology is, as any modern form of narrative, another place, probably the most literal one, where mythology is alive.

And the astrological myth fulfils its function only in one *corpus* of discourse, in a metaphorical web. Since, how is it possible to speak of symbols if these are reduced to a hidden existence, a sort of sea from which language is only able to recover some moments of froth? Philip Wheelwright (1962) has directed our attention to a very well known fact in mythology and literature: metaphors are hierarchically grouped, they reveal "centres" around which groups of metaphors are generated, which shed light on a sort of central hub of similarities, as butterflies flying around a source of light. From the most elementary and most casual hubs, metaphors attract one another and form larger meaningful groups: literary works, folk corpuses or the mythology of a culture. "In the end, there is talk of *archetypes*, as those radical metaphors that appear in nearly every human discourse." (Ricoeur, 1998: 78)

In other words, were there no possibility of integration into culture, metaphors would be reduced to isolated episodes of speech, ahistorical moments of a larger or smaller cognitive "fortune". In actual fact, it is clear that even the possibility of survival of a metaphor as that creative moment, that indication as to how to rescue the pearls of new knowledge, contradicts its own definition. If a metaphor christens and names the new every time, it cannot last, unless it becomes its own memory, a non-creative repetition. It is not possible to baptize something more than once, a

practice present even in the popular custom which believes unlucky to change a ship her name. So a metaphor, alive in language, becomes a fossil, a conventional sign in the insipid Saussurian *langue*.

A metaphor dies the moment it is interpreted. It is its destiny. If a symbol is reduced to the metaphor that uses it, it should die as well. However, it is a commonplace of symbolism in its most varied expressions to point out that symbols are unextinguishable, [16] and that they are a force that generates new formulations, while their specificity seems to express itself partially without ever exhausting itself in them. This seems to suffice in order to prove that symbols are something beyond and different from any of their linguistic and metaphorical, or iconic formulations of other types.

10. The astrological system as a metaphorical web

The astrological metaphor, doomed to death by the law of repetition, seems to find some redemption, however, thanks to a sort of policy of alliances. There are webs, wefts, groups of metaphors which organize themselves around every symbolic nucleus: "signs", "planets", "houses", "aspects".... They all form a centre, a nucleus that generates new meanings from the kinship shown by its associated metaphors, one which communicates to whom knows and applies language a "way of understanding how things are bound together", "what has to do with what", where the secret of a cohesive astrological system lies.

That might be the meaning of the statement that metaphors never exhaust a symbol, never dry up the fountain from which, one after the other, forms of meaning continue to spring which allude to it before disappearing, but perhaps not completely, since they form semantic nuclei that refer to one another, support one another as the adjacent knots in a net, and as such form part of the habits of Thirdness -be it linguistic, iconographic, acoustic or from the world of smell (the reader is invited to think of the demoniac associations of sulphur or the sexual ones of musk)- in order to survive as expression areas, as symbolic shades.

Astrology appears, therefore, as a system that, based on the experience gathered by its practitioners, and with the possibility of adjustment offered by the placing of its metaphors according to the celestial weathercock, has gradually built a metaphorical web and refined its net to in turn refine the meanings it captures and formulates. It is not surprising, then, that it may be significant to our culture, since our Western culture is literally held together by that same network of narrations and meta-stories that holds astrology together.

Thus, **Mars** is a symbol that associates, around a common nucleus, a metaphorical drift of the type that disquiets Eco in his description of the wild side of unlimited interpretation [17] : red - iron - blood - weapons - war - courage -will- virility - aggressiveness - penetration - male sexuality - pain - rape.... Finally, the mythological attributes of Ares, the war god, incorporate part of this range in one story, an argument to generate its own derived narrations, interpretations, meanings. A potentially infinite metaphorical drift may be made of what is generated in the symbol; and, as it has been made clear, what operates in this process is the discovery of a signatura, the knowledge of hidden relationships that only then become part of a language.

Hermetic languages have been criticised for their imprecision, because there is always some point of view from where anything has to do with anything else. In actual fact, this is true, but what this criticism seems to ignore is the pragmatic *use* of hermetic languages, a use just as referential as that of any other language.

To sum up, the generality of every language is not only the condition of its existence but also the condition of its capacity to refer to *what is similar* in an endless variety of uses. And just as nobody mistakes the dog that bit him, even if they are all dogs, so the person who *uses* the hermetic language, if well used, does not become

confused about the meaning of "Mars square Saturn". In order to make himself understood, he must resort to metaphor, and we do not see any problems in that. Metaphors, as concepts, refer to experience, and have not only their *Sinn*, but also their *Bedeutung*.

To close this section on some aspects of the target language of astrology, we believe at least one very important conclusion must be drawn for the development of this metaphorical game: that interpretative propositions attached to a given birth chart or group of all astrological pS so interpreted must consist, if not of a group of metaphorical propositions *per se*, at least of one in which these alternate, at the most, with *ecthesis*, or examples (Peirce, 2:303).

That is to say, what the interpreter of an astrological chart with the necessary competence could produce would be merely a series of phrases which are no more than possible cases arising abductively in his interpretation from the game of operational qualities present in the chart. If he does not give his "customer" direct metaphors, he should at least be aware that he cannot give him facts, since the chain that links "facts" to symbols does not exist in a direct manner.

Our sample phrase is finally transformed, strictly speaking and in a way somehow different to how things occur, into the following:

[Here and now], the quality Mercury [which means thought, exchange, information, speed, intelligence, logos, writing, communication...] is linked to quality Capricorn [which stands for resistance, worldliness, slowness, limits, work, time...]. If you understand how these may be combined, you could draw very fruitful conclusions. I can help you with some examples...

Another way of putting it is to say that symbols may be accessed only through metaphors, and that metaphors may not denote facts, but qualities bound to be associated with facts.

An example may be of help to see this. In a Semiotics class I mentioned the word dromedary, and one student did not know its meaning. Another student used a metaphor to explain it to her: "it is a camel with a single hump". Evidently, that is not a definition of a dromedary that a zoologist would approve of. However, the student understood... the metaphor -but undoubtedly she did not have an experience of a dromedary-. She simply created a mythical animal which, until further notice, is "her" way of interacting in the world of "the people who know dromedaries" and feeling she knows what she is talking about. But does she really know it? In her own world, in a world whose limits are those of her language, she does: "that" has a meaning for her.

This is the kind of things that an astrological interpreter does for his customer: he chooses to reveal him the dromedaries he believes to be appropriate for him. He may even, if he feels like guessing, "predict" the dromedaries or unicorns he will encounter. But he may do it in *no other terms* than those of "camels with a single hump" or "white horses mixed with single-horned deer" that the customer is familiar with. No matter how insightful a metaphor, it is the listener who must understand what meaning that game of qualities he is being presented with may have.

It is for this reason that there seems to be little hope for the existence of a true *factual* prediction in astrology, or at least not in the sense in which there is one in a calculation of resistance of materials for the building of a bridge.

However, if what happens is that the astrological chart generates a game of metaphors which prowl around significant and relevant symbolic nuclei from the point of view of the one who interprets the signs on the chart (the customer through the astrologer), then it is feasible to consider that the whole game may have some validity. A wonderful validity even, of the type that direct intuitions have when obtained by means of a poetic or religious epiphany. But the condition for it shall always be not to forget that, as Ricoeur puts it, "the operating law is the law of correspondence" among the worldly figures appearing on the diagram and the shades of meaning around which symbols organise the metaphorical drift.

11. Truth as usage

We do not deem it appropriate to make any statement about how absurd the whole idea of astrological charts having any real capacity to generate these interesting consequences seems to be; not until it has not been confronted with the real and practical experience of analyzing it. From a theoretical point of view, and this is what matters in this kind of reasoning, there is no strong reason to deny it. Nor is there to affirm it. Only in the universe of astrological facts, which has its own language -the language of astrology- is it possible to determine the validity of this method, since it may only be carried out within the framework of *some* language that makes it possible to evaluate its possible meaning when applied to concrete cases.

If we perceive the idea of internal realism as a valid alternative to metaphysical dualism of any kind, then we shall accept with Putnam that

[...] given a language we may, in a "trivial" sense, describe the "facts" that make true or false the statements of that language -by using the statements of that same language-; but the dream of finding a clearly defined universal relationship between a (supposed) unity of all facts and a true arbitrary statement in an arbitrary language is merely the dream of an absolute notion of a fact (or of an "object") and of an absolute relationship between statements and facts (or objects) "in themselves"; the same dream whose impossibility I hope to have shown [...]. (Putnam, 1994: 92)

Or to follow Putnam again, that it is true that the method of counting the number of objects in an *x* world, or even the notion of what an object is, depends on our own choice (let us call it "convention"); but the answer to the question "how many objects are there in that *x* world?" does not become a matter of convention. Depending on the language of my choice, *I shall have to decide on a given* number of objects, and not any other, because that quantity shall be determined both by the world and by my definitions of "object" and "counting". In brief, *there are external facts*, and we can say *which ones*. What we cannot say -because it means nothing- is that those facts are independent from all conceptual choices. (Putnam, 1994: 82).

As a matter of fact, not all languages are equally appropriate to express everything. In this paper we have precisely tried to prove that the language of astrology is very problematic when it comes to referring to the world in precise terms, with denotative phrases. In fact, it is radically incapable of doing so. Astrology is a *conjectural art*, as it was called in Antiquity. To compensate, its system seems to be rather adequate to refer to the world in an allusive, connotative way. And it is adequate due to a refinement acquired after centuries of *being applied* by a community of scholars, thus saving it from any other type of vagueness than that inherent to it. This connotative way has always been the language of religion and of the occult. In order to refer to the symbolic, and to attempt to -and usually fail to- speak of the holy, we need some type of discourse. Since immemorial times man has talked about these topics, has experienced them, and only the particularly strong imposition of a paradigm with nothing to say about it, and which has become the single rule of knowledge, could have ignored such important issues for the past few centuries.

Many astrologers and scientists behave as if reality was written on the world and all that was required was to find an adequate language to "truly" state it. To many astronomers, besides, their language may invalidate that of the astrologer.

While many astronomers consider that the entities described and linked in the language of astronomy are "the reality" of the sky, many astrologers consider that the real world has a certain way of being transcendent *which is revealed to them* -to them out of all people!- through their predictive interpretations of the celestial propositions -which thus become heavenly.

Astrologers are, in this, 'more royal than royalty' indeed, and when they apply this type of determinist reading of astrological symbols they go into a sort of science-less

astronomy that appears rather contemptible to any serious analysis. And this does not even involve the ethical dimension of the problem. But these two postures, secretly symmetrical in their confrontation, do nothing else but to dramatise the same form of dualism intending to one day get to the absolute knowledge and truth.

The *kósmos* exists and manifests itself to our perceptions. In recognising that, we support a sort of realistic point of view.

But, in opposition to the aforementioned view of astronomers and astrologers, this view of occultism we have conceived does not accept that *kósmos* to be independent of every language. It is not independent of astronomical language, which under its materialistic and positivistic paradigm shall only see in it physical objects with a certain composition, which influence each other and revolve around each other. Nor will it be independent of astrological language, which sees in it meaningful configurations, or *ranges of qualities*, expressed in a metaphorical web.

It is useful to point out here that perhaps there is a link between the apparent contiguity of object between both languages, that of astronomers and that of astrologers, and the conflicts of mutual validity between their areas of knowledge. But such continuity is made merely of equal representaments which refer to objects of a different use and to different meanings within each of those so distant languages. It is only the metaphysical petition of principles that each group makes with respect to the preeminence of the "real world" -the matter in the case of many astronomers, the obscurity of Destiny as a god that communicates directly with them in the case of many astrologers- that keeps them up on arms. We believe it to be an unnecessary conflict.

12. Real astrological problems are of an ethical kind

The key question that arises towards the end is: is the astrological chart a genuine symbol or is it a fake? Is it enough to prove that it is a celestial weathercock, an index truly rooted in the rhythms of the *kósmos* which are external to human will, to attribute significant power to any metaphor elaborated on the basis of that reference?

The answer to this question can only be provided from the "inside" of this specific symbolic-metaphorical game, because a symbol cannot be authorized or unauthorized to be so by any linguistic thing external to it.

If the world as a unity is something that may not be represented in terms of dualities that split the existent, but *that being is a matter of more or less*, then the possibility opens up that metaphors be a procedure of successive unveilings of the infinitely continuous discontinuity (ordered differences) of the perceptible. Since they do not refer directly to an object as the social, legal and habitual crystalization of the taken for granted, metaphors free themselves from the *already known* and, let the metaphorical expression be, it happens that 'small steps in the land of what claims to be known' are taken.

Language is thus apt to account for the differences which are effectively provided by something beyond which, to follow Peirce, is phenomenologically characterized as Secondness. The mind acts in the intelligible world through the requirement of forever wider and more precise forms of recognition and relationship of qualities, in a discourse not verifiable but capable of being confirmed by a communication community.

That is to say, metaphors are the way to discover not a thing in itself that is postulated beforehand and gradually revealed, but an account of how we are constantly able to perform the "work of meaning" for language, which is the reason why human language requires the intersubjective experience of human beings to be significant. And the tendency toward truth may be seen as the result of the interaction with what opposes resistance. As Ransdell puts it:

The tendency toward truth can be otherwise described as a tendency to make effective contact with reality, since reality is defined by Peirce as the object of a true

belief. By "making effective contact with reality" I mean that the believer of the true belief is, insofar, capable of acting or behaving in an effective manner relative to a relevant goal. That is, the truth of the belief and the fact that reality is grasped in the belief are the same thing, and they are equivalent to the fact that the believer can act effectively, given certain material or environmental conditions, in the bringing about of some desired end. The possession of truth (the grasp of reality) is, in short, behavioral competence. (Ransdell, 1997: III)

The lack of a community of knowledge is obvious in Astrology. This is what makes it very difficult, not just for astrologers but for anybody else, to build up a sound astrological language. Just as Davidson (1992: 158-161) points out the suggestive fact that in our acquisition of language the common presence in a single space of the one who teaches and the one who learns is essential, so the natural extension of the idea that arises from the understanding of what Davidson postulates may be used regarding the validity of astrology. In a comment on the conception of language and meaning in Davidson, Moya (1992) expresses that

The social nature of language and thought is very clearly underlined by Davidson. Only in the framework of intersubjective relationships in a world common to all subjects may there be thoughts, concepts and meaning. The possibility of interpretation is not compatible with the assumption that objects in our mental states are private, conceptually neutral representations from which concepts would emerge - just as it happens in empiricism- from their similarity and contiguity relationships, or that an autonomous conceptual activity would bring order -as it happens in Kantianism- into the representation of an objective world. Both conceptions depart from an idea that the Davidsonian conception of interpretation turns unintelligible: the distinction between a conceptual outline and a neutral content, be it called reality, experience or sensorial data. The assumptions of interpretation compel us to conceive the contents of our basic beliefs as a public event or object, and not as an intermediate entity between the subject and the world. The contents of our basic beliefs are part of the public and intersubjective world, not intermediate objects between it and us. (ibid 36)

And further on, Moya adds that

The sciences dealing with intentional human action -which, we should remember, is conceived in terms of the coherence and causality relationships with beliefs, wishes and intentions- must proceed in an holistic and interpretative manner, adjusting the result to the evidence under development guided by the globally coherent nature of mental life and the conduct of agents. This way of proceeding separates them from the search for laws and the nomologic explanation that characterizes the sciences of nature. (ibid 38)

It is arguable, in the former sense, that any statement about the validity of the astrological propositions and their interpretation may be sensibly attempted outside a community where this statement is conceived as one of public value which may be proved through the experience of the community of knowledge.

We have based ourselves largely on a broad reading of Peirce to get to this point. We believe that in pragmatism there is still a coherent and fruitful attitude to face the problems of knowledge without the prejudices of some completely unnecessary a priori, arising from the separative urgency of a dual perspective.

The view we have tried to approach in this paper intends to merely indicate the conceivable previous step in a way of integrating symbolic knowledge into a communication community. Such integration seems to us justified from the point of view of the present notions of meaning and truth, which we believe are prepared by a reading of Peircean pragmatism. Let us say to sum up, that the problems that appear to any kind of knowledge, but very specially to astrological knowledge - whatever this may be- go much beyond this problem of pragmatic integration. There is the need to consider the subordination of the problems of knowledge to a wider,

ethical sphere. Knowledge needs to be reconsidered beyond the sphere of the private to which the scientific technological rationality and political pragmatism -and the pragmatism of the public in general- have relegated it. The true problems of divination, astrology, esoteric knowledge, just as those involved in some mystifications of mysticism and some of science, are of an ethical kind, and for their consideration it would be convenient to contribute to bringing them out into the light of common examination.

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Notes

[1] *kósmos* meant 'order' in Greek.

[2] We have found along some ten years of study of these topics that the usual critics made to astrology from scientific quarters are a priori, based on some notions of an 'Epistemology with a capital E' as Hilary Putnam names it (Putnam, 1994: 161), when he rejects the ontological project of a "description of things as they are 'apart from our conceptual systems'" (ibid). The most outstanding examples of this kind of pseudoconsiderations of the astrological which, nevertheless, dominates practically the whole field of academic knowledge with a nearly absolute power by means of its authority, have already been criticised sharply by Feyerabend (Feyerabend, 1978) on referring to a manifesto against astrology published in 1975 in *The Humanist*, carrying the signature of 168 scientists, among them 18 Nobel prizes.

[3] We use the term not in the logical sense John Stuart Mill gave it and that Peirce criticizes (EP: 2.203, 2.281n, 2.305, 2.473), but in another rather habitual one in literary theory which blends in better with the Peircean idea that "to connote properly means to denote along with in a secondary way" (EP: 2.281n). A good description of the different readings of the concept may be reviewed in Lewandowsky (1995: 75)

[4] *mýthōs*, fable, narration.

[5] Let us define to start with what we understand by astrological sign. We do not refer to the zodiac signs, but to the conventional signs (symbols in the Peircean sense) used in what we shall call the basic astrological proposition. These symbols

belong to the astrological language. They are the well known glyphs for the signs, planets, etc." As it has been showed (Eco, 1984: IV, 2.2), it is one of many cases of conventional signs developed from iconic signs by a stylization process (Eco, 1975). Indeed, to be so, does not prevent whoever plunges into them from perceiving, beyond convention, their iconic nature. Thus, it is not just by convention that, once understood that the **Sun** is a male symbol and the **Moon** a female one, then **Mercury** iconizes androgyny. On this, cf. Wirth (1982), Chp. XV

[6] Even though the grammatical form in which the proposition we are talking about is stated is of the subject-predicate type, being the subject the planet and the predicate the location or relationship it enters, the role played by time in this case is essential. What is being truly stated would not be "Mercury is in Capricorn here and now ", being that "here and now" a sort of complement. Present time and place are the subject of pA.

[7] Some objections have been made to the application by astrology of a geocentric system. These observations apply a petition of principles in favor of the heliocentric system for representation. Such criticism could only be maintained if, to the specific ends of astrology, the heliocentric calculations were proved to be more exact as to the establishment of mutual relationships between the elements considered, something that does not seem evident in the present state of the astrological discipline. Other criticism which condemns geocentrism as "dated", etc., do not address the relevant point.

[8] Cf. Michel Gauquelin, *Cosmic Clocks*, 1967; Bruno and Louise Huber, *Lebesuhr im Horoskop*, 1980; Stephen Arroyo, *Relationships & Life Cycles*, 1979; etc.

[9] Naturally, if one goes to the interpretation phase, an astrological map as it is presented to us, once considered in its full development as a sign, is an argument, a sign which is capable of determining its own interpretants, and which is formed by a group of propositions or Dicent Symbols. Further on we shall refer to this feature of the astrological chart as a myth, weft or spiderweb. Precisely, that is, to many, "the spiderweb of Fate".

[10] See Rudhyar (1936), Arroyo (1975), Rudhyar (1976), Carter (1982), Greene (1983), Arroyo and Greene (1984), Jones (1977: specially chapters V-XII), Adler (1992), Jones (1993). An historical view in Tester (1990).

[11] We refer the interested reader, among many examples, specially to Rudhyar (1936), Rudhyar (1974), part One in particular, Arroyo (1975), Adler (1992).

[12] For a discussion of astrology and current scientific paradigmas, cf. Perry, 1995; for the skeptical view of astrology from science, cf. Dean, Mather and Kelly (1996), and Culver and Ianna (1988).

[13] There is a diachronic view of the evolution of these arguments in Tester (1990).

[14] A current discussion of metaphor interpretation with references to modern authors may be found, for instance, in Eco (1990: 3.3).

[15] "More precisely, every stimulus produces a corresponding 'quality of feeling' and these simple qualities of feelings created by the outside word are selected according to their 'persuasion' and 'forcefulness' that is to say according to the subject's more or less developed receptivity based on his previous experiences or on the intrinsic capacity of the stimulus to impose itself on the subject's perception by its own power. Perceptual judgements are produced in the subject's own interior world and, in essence, they consist of bundles of qualities of feelings which constitute a sort of unit of a superior order. Accordingly, we formalize the perception phenomena considering abstract sets corresponding to the qualities of feelings on the one hand, and bundles of these qualities of feelings which are linked together by a complex group of relationships on the other hand corresponding to the perceptual judgements." (Marty, 1999)

[16] For a discussion summarizing several analyses, see Cirlot, 1988: p. 39-47

[17] It will be made evident that we do not share some of the extreme positions which seem to discredit in totum any use of discourse based on likeness on the charge of a paranoid attitude. This is a reading which, despite having foreseen this objection, seems to us that Eco ends up making about every form of hermetic semiosis. This is specially concentrated in Eco, 1990, chapter 2.

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